



## In Memoriam

### MWBro Robert Eugene Juthner 4 March 1923 – 26 September 2016

It is with profound sadness that *The Alberta Freemason* informs you our Editor emeritus, MWBro Robert E. Juthner, Grand Master of Alberta in 1987–88, passed to the Grand Lodge Above on 26 September 2016. He was Editor of this publication from 1996 to 2008 and had continued as a member of our Editorial Committee and as our proofreader until his untimely death.

Robert was born on 4 March 1923 at Warnsdorf, Czechoslovakia. He grew up in Prague where he developed his love of horses and joined the Czech fast division cavalry which was disbanded in March 1939 after the German invasion. During WWII, he served five years as an officer, fast battalion CDR, in the Russian conflicts. After barely surviving the war, he returned home to serve three years with US Army Counter Intelligence Corps.

Robert later moved to Klagenfurt, Austria where he met the love of his life, Luky (Erika) Huegel. The two married on 22 June 1950 and relocated to Salzburg before moving to Edmonton in 1954. They have three children — Michael (Brenda-Lee) Juthner, Patty (Brent) Clark and Marietta Louch — 11 Grandchildren and 12 Great-grandchildren.

After achieving his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Education at the University of Alberta, he worked with Alberta Land Surveyors & Town Planners. He then served 24 years as senior instructor of Engineering Design and Drafting Technology at NAIT.

Robert had been active in his church and community and was very involved with Schlaraffia, a global German fraternal organization.

Robert was initiated into Freemasonry on 26 April 1954 in Kette Lodge No. 430, United Grand Lodges of Germany (Vereinigte Großlogen von Deutschland). He affiliated with Commercial Lodge No. 81 on 3 January 1959 and was

Worshipful Master in 1973. He was also a Charter Member and Founding Senior Warden of Fiat Lux Lodge of Research No. 1980 and was its WM in 1981–82.

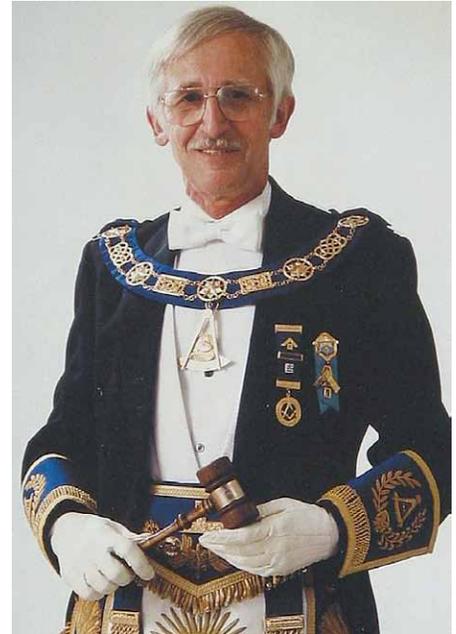
Robert's Grand Lodge Career includes: DDGM of District 20 in 1977–78; Grand Representative of the Grand Lodge of Austria 1978 to present, for which service he was presented a Long Service Ribbon and Jewel on the floor of the Austrian Annual Communication in October 2006; Grand Representative of the Czech Republic (from its formation) 2002 to present; and elected Junior Grand Warden in 1986. He holds Honorary Grand Lodge appointments in Saskatchewan, Idaho and Montana.

With the consent of Rideau Hall, MWBro Juthner was awarded the **Decoration of Merit in Gold of the Republic of Austria**, by Heinz Fischer, the President of Austria, dated 24 May 2006. It was presented to him 3 February 2007 by Consul Robert Sinnhuber of the Austrian Embassy in Ottawa before an audience of over 300.

In September 2006, he was awarded the **Golden Decoration of Honour** by the World Federation of Austrians Abroad (AÖWB) in Klagenfurt.

Robert served on several Grand Lodge committees including the Bulletin Committee, Forms and Publications and Board of General Purposes.

Robert has been active in several concordant bodies including: A&ASR Valley of Edmonton (Honorary Inspector General 33°); Royal Arch Masons; Royal and Select Masters; Royal Ark Mariners; Al Azhar Temple AAONMS in 1963–85 and Founding Member of Al Shamal Temple in 1985.



**MWBro Robert E. Juthner**  
**Grand Master 1987–1988**  
*Editor emeritus*  
The Alberta Freemason

## Lest We Forget



**The Friend to Friend Masonic National Memorial** at Gettysburg, PA, reminds us that Masonic Friendship even crosses the lines of battle. Here, Confederate Brigadier-General Lewis Addison Armistead, mortally wounded during Pickett's Charge, entrusts his personal effects to Union Captain Henry Bingham to be given to his long-time friend, Union Major-General Winfield Scott Hancock, also wounded. Hancock survived the war and sent the effects to Armistead's family. All three were Freemasons. The sculpture by Bro Ron Tunison of New York was dedicated by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania on 21 August 1993.

# Symbols of Time

## *One of Masonry's persistent allegories is that of Time*

RWBro Mason Jardine, Editor, *Masonry in Manitoba*, Summer Edition 2016

Time is conceived of in Masonic symbolism in two different ways, each of which contains an important moral lesson. The first is suggested by Aristotle's descriptions of a play having a beginning, a middle, and an end. So too can we look at a specific period of time having a beginning, middle, and end which define it. And each of these parts has its own symbolic value. One such period of time is the day.

Thus as the sun rises in the east to open and enliven the day, we look to the east for new insights and new knowledge. From the point of view of Europe, where Masonry had its origin, all revealed religion came from the east, from across that vast expanse which ends only at the China Sea. India, Persia, the Middle East and Arabia are the source of the revealed religions. Likewise, to the Renaissance mind, secular knowledge came from the Persians, the Greeks, the Egyptians and the Arabs. The connection between knowledge and the sunrise is specifically stated in the work and is connected with the typical alignment of the cathedrals where our operative forebears toiled.

As the sun reaches its meridian at the middle of the day, it is High Twelve, or as some want to say, high noon. The impulse to refer to a gunfighter showdown is correct, for High Twelve is a time of confrontation. We remember that Hiram Abiff met his untimely death just after praying, as was his wonted custom, at High Twelve. High Twelve, when the sun is in the south (for anyone living in the northern hemisphere), is also the time for taking refreshment and rest from labour.

As the sun sets in the west, the day ends. It is time to receive your daily wages, to receive your just reward for the good work which you have done during the day.

The principal officers of the Lodge stand for these three times of day. The Master in the east is the rising sun. The Junior Warden in the south is connected

with mid-day. His jewel, the plumb rule, is to test verticals and is rightly associated with a time when the sun is, or would be if we were at the correct latitude and there were no time zones or daylight saving time, directly overhead, describing a perfect vertical. The Senior Warden in the west is connected with sundown. The setting sun reminds us of equality because it is connected with the Senior Warden and the level, and it is the time when every Brother gets his just due, and all inequalities are mended.

The symbolism of the duration of a day is paralleled by the symbolism of the Lodge meeting, which opens from the east, is controlled in the middle from the south, and is closed in the west. And both of these are paralleled by the symbolism of the duration of a lifetime. A lifetime, too, has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The symbol of three steps refers to these three stages in life: youth, maturity, and age. We think of the riddle of the Sphinx, which asks what creature walks on four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three at night. The answer is the man who crawls as a child, walks on two legs as an adult, and in his old age walks with a cane. Note the parallel between the three stages of life here and the three parts of the day. We might think also of the Neopagan triple goddess of maiden, mother, and crone, expressing the same three parts of a lifetime. The symbolism here is often related to the three parts of a month: waxing, full moon, and waning. Again, a lifetime is related to a shorter time period, in this case, a month. In some cases, the symbols of a lifetime are related to those of a year, as at New Year's, when the outgoing year is depicted as an old man armed with the Scythe of Time, and the new year as a baby.

Thus death is depicted as "Low Twelve," a time when all is in darkness, save the glimmering light of the stars,

because the day is done and the sun has set and is hidden. We are admonished to perform our allotted tasks while it is yet day, before the sun sets.

Our three degrees likewise allude to the three stages of life, to birth as an Apprentice, to mid-life as a Craftsman, and to the completion of our life's work and our just reward as a Master.

But there is another view of time which involves another set of symbols. Rather than a period of time being viewed as having a beginning, middle and end, time is often viewed as cyclical, where every period of time only brings one back to where we were at the beginning: the days pass, the moon waxes and wanes and the seasons come and go. We see symbols of time as a cycle in the circumambulation of the Lodge, passing by each of the cardinal directions in turn. Our actions imitate the earth as it circles the sun, represented by the altar. Their clockwise motion also depicts the apparent movement of the sun from the rotating earth. If we stood at the north pole in mid-June, we would see the sun move around the horizon in a clockwise manner.

As we do this, we create a circle around a fixed point, in the same way that the compasses do. And the point within the circle, the result of the use of the compasses, is a symbol of extreme depth and has many meanings in our work. One such meaning is the year. The point within the circle is often depicted, especially in Ancient work, as being bounded by two parallel lines, both tangent to the circle. In terms of the orbit of the earth, these would represent two dates at opposite ends of the calendar. Those two parallel lines are likened to the Holy Saints John, whose feast days are June 24 and December 27, approximating the solstices which are indeed found at opposite ends of the calendar.

So for each High Twelve, there is also a Low Twelve, just as for each St. John the Baptist day there is an equal and opposite St. John the Evangelist day.

Our most familiar allusion to the  
See **Symbols**, page 3.

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330 - 12 Avenue SW, Calgary, Alberta T2R 0H2  
Tel 403-262-1140

[www.freemasons.ab.ca](http://www.freemasons.ab.ca)

Grand Master	MWBro James Ratchford
Deputy Grand Master	RWBro Gordon Berard
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#### **Editor: RWBro George Tapley**

339 Whitefield Dr NE, Calgary, AB T1Y 5S2

Tel 403-280-6776

e-mail: [editor@freemasons.ab.ca](mailto:editor@freemasons.ab.ca)

#### **The Committee on the Grand Lodge Bulletin**

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# Esotericism — A Matter of Degrees

Bro Arturo de Hoyos, *The Short Talk Bulletin*, Volume 94 No. 4, April 2016

*The author is Grand Archivist and Grand Historian of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Masonic Jurisdiction; Past Master of McAllen Lodge No. 1110 in Texas; Thirty-Third Degree; Grand Cross; and Knight of the York Cross of Honour.*

Is Freemasonry esoteric, or not?

The short answer is “Yes, no, maybe.”

By definition, esotericism is any topic “intended for or likely to be understood by only a small number of people with a specialized knowledge or interest.” This certainly applies to Masonry; but on a deeper level, and in a Masonic context, it’s usually taken to mean that our ceremonies and rituals allude to realities and/or truths not generally understood, or which may have a spiritual component to them.

The term is tainted to some people, and acceptable to others; hence, it may not be easy to wholly accept or discard the term “esoteric Masonry.” Like an onion, each “esoteric” layer successively builds upon the other. We can all agree that Masonry is intended to be understood by few, and that it’s a kind of specialized knowledge.

But the questions are what *kind* of specialized knowledge, and are they real “secrets?” Depending upon one’s inclinations, the Master Mason Degree has been interpreted in a variety of different ways by different persons. For some, it’s a story of fidelity; for others, it teaches hope in the immortality of the soul; for still others, it’s a lesson in alchemy; and yet for still others, it alludes to the discovery of entheogens. Some see it as multi-faceted, or a combination of various things. But we should avoid trying to enshrine our interpretations as the “true” one.

Since 1717 there have been *more than 1,000* “Masonic” degrees created. The most popular survived and are included in many of the Rites, Orders, Systems we know today. Like a meal, each degree is only as good as its creator. The recipe may include many of the same ingredients as other meals, yet taste completely different. By analogy, we

**Symbols**, from page 2.

circular nature of events is our hope and belief that no matter how much sorrow we may encounter, even should we be separated from each other by death, we will return to the happy state with which we started. And so, it is “Happy to meet; Sorry to part; Happy to meet again.”

may see many of the same “ingredients” (features) in a number of degrees, which teach completely different things.

The predilections of a degree’s author affect the content as much as the taste buds of a chef. Hence, the “flavour” of the foundational Craft Degrees in various rites, orders and systems (Webb working, Scottish Rite, York Rite, Swedish Rite, R.E.R., etc.), differs immensely, and in the “higher degrees,” the differences are even more dramatic and pronounced: some are philosophical, others practical; some present allegory, and others offer discourses on symbolism or (quasi-)historical themes. In something like the Scottish Rite, the same degree may have dramatically different rituals, depending upon the jurisdiction (compare, for example, the 20<sup>th</sup> degree in the Southern Jurisdiction and Northern Masonic Jurisdiction — they are *nothing* alike).

But, when someone describes himself as an “esoteric Mason,” it quite often means that he sees, and embraces, what appear to be aspects of the “Western Esoteric Tradition” in our rituals; i.e., some affinity to the symbolism of Hermeticism, Gnosticism, Neo-Platonism, Kabbalah, etc.

Freemasonry is an eclectic organization and, at various times, we have borrowed the language and symbols of these and other traditions. The question becomes, “Do our rituals *teach* these things as ‘realities’ or do we use them to stimulate thought or both?” We are wisely counselled not to mistake a symbol for the thing symbolized but, in some cases, I believe that is what has happened. In other cases, I believe we do indeed have vestiges of other traditions. But even when they are there, they may be only one layer thick on our Masonic onion.

The problem is twofold: some deny any esoteric influences at all, or assert they are just used symbolically, while others claim it’s the main part of the onion. If the matter is open to interpretation (not defined by the ritual itself), who has the right to decide?

This much we know: many of Freemasonry’s symbols were used before the modern fraternity existed (1717) and appeared in a variety of books. Some were educational and philosophical (such as the *Choice Emblems* books); others were indeed Hermetic (e.g., Alchemical texts). As I said, we’re an eclectic

organization. How many times have you seen the Square and Compasses or All-Seeing Eye used and abused in Hollywood and elsewhere because it looks “cool?”

Well, I’m willing to bet that at least *some* of our symbols migrated into the fraternity the same way. An unknown degree maker in the 1700s saw something that looked cool to him, and dropped it into the ritual. Not necessarily bad, but 225 years later his personal predilection turns into a debate.

Certainly, there are clear examples of borrowings from esoteric texts. For example, I am aware of an older version (early 1800s) of a Scottish Rite degree which includes a large portion extracted from Cornelius Agrippa’s *De Occulta Philosophia* (1531–33). If asked if that degree was esoteric I would say “yes,” while to its counterpart in a later version or in another Supreme Council, I would say, “no.”

My point is to quit quibbling over such things, and find the common ground where we “can best work and best agree.” If esotericism interests you, that’s fine; if not, that’s also fine. My personal library is well-stocked with enough material on both sides to make anyone think in favour of, or against, any position.

The important thing is to be well educated, and understand what we know first. Before you reach for the stars, make sure your feet are firmly planted on the ground. Make yourself into someone who can be taken seriously. Learn the facts about our origins based upon what we know.

I sometimes speak about “historical records” versus “hysterical documents.” Before you buy into such fantasies as “Freemasonry descended from the ancient Egyptians,” get a quick education.

Here are three books to give you a reality check: 1) Harry Carr, *World of Freemasonry*, 2) Bernard E. Jones, *Freemasons Guide and Compendium*, and 3) David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland’s Century 1590–1710*. When you can speak intelligently about the Old Charges (Gothic Constitutions), early Freemasonry in Scotland, the formation of the first Grand Lodge, and how and when the degrees developed, people may be inclined to listen to you, when you start to talk about more exotic things.

Educate yourself well enough to argue both sides of the argument.

Take due notice thereof and govern yourselves accordingly.

## **Why am I a Freemason?**

Bro Christopher Coome, Richardson Lodge No. 136, York District, Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario

Why am I a Freemason? That is a hard question and, before I answer, I should stress that I am a young Mason. When I was initiated, my Lodge joked that until someone younger was initiated, I was the youngest Mason in Hamilton. At 25, I've still yet to meet that younger Mason, though I'm sure he's out there somewhere. I say this because, as a young man, I come from a different world than those of my more mature Brethren, and this different, often alien world, has drastic implications for my understanding and appreciation of the Craft that is so dear to my heart. For the sake of this discussion, I'm assuming you're a young man as well.

Why am I a Mason? Well I suppose that first and foremost it was curiosity that brought me to the doors of the Lodge. A mentor of my father had been a Mason, a man that, if he admired, I admired. We met, chatted, he asked me the three questions and told me the Lodge would love to have me. Unfortunately, he died several days after, at a ripe old age I assure you, but it left me rather in the dark. I was forced to email Grand Lodge and explain my situation. They hooked me up with a local Lodge, and away I went. I bring this up because I want to stress the odd situation of petitioning a Lodge without knowing a single living Mason. And more importantly for you, don't worry about needing friends, you will make them quickly, for I have never found a more welcoming gathering of gentlemen than those that meet, on the level, every month.

"What is Freemasonry?" I hear you ask. That's another hard question. I'd say that, at least in spirit, Freemasonry is an institution, grounded in the Western mystery tradition, aimed at improving your moral character through a greater understanding of yourself and your situation within society, if not the cosmos as a whole. Although I must tell you, we can only make good men better.

"But, why do you need that?" I also hear you ask. And now again, I must stress that the two of us are young men. For as young men we are part of a generation dominated by an addiction to video games and the lewder parts of the internet. We are a generation of men that has fallen so far behind our female

counterparts in academia that there are now councils being organized to see what is wrong. In sum, we are one of the most lost generations of men in Western history. Never before has the world been so understood and yet so confounding at the same time. Everything is being questioned, and that is a good thing, but the stable world that our forefathers stood upon to build their lives is not but a creaking mess of cracking ground and shifting opinions. We, as a generation, have so little to hold on to, and so little to understand. And how do we find our way out of this? Most of our generation, young men, would rather focus on their fleeting distractions than on finding a way to transcend them.

But if you are here, discussing this with me, then I know that you are not exactly one of those men. You want more. You want more than those distractions. You want progress, stability, society. You want to find the beauty in the world and expand it. And for you, dear Brother, I introduce the society of Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons. For it is in the solution to these problems that I am a Freemason. When you see an entire family glued to their cell phones, rather than talking to each other, I offer you an institution where men meet the way they have for centuries, to talk, to fraternize, and to learn to be better. I offer you the very quintessence of human interaction, free from computer screens and the intoxicating buzzing of a million whining gadgets; I offer you an experience that will change your life.

And please, don't misinterpret me to

be misanthropic regarding our generation and our age, for we are achieving wonders that our forefathers wouldn't have even dreamed. But, with every step forward, something is lost, and sometimes, we can lose too much. We can get so lost in the machine, that we can forget what it actually means to be human. Freemasonry is human, for Freemasonry is humanity.

I will conclude by saying that I have seen, in Lodges all across North America, the effect of this new age on Freemasonry. Membership is dwindling, ritual that was so flawlessly memorized becomes hackneyed, and Brethren everywhere are asking how to fix this. Some say that we need to modernize and surrender the shroud of mystery that surrounds our order. I say bah humbug! If we sacrifice the soul of Masonry and become nothing more than the Rotary Club under a new name, then we are finished. Freemasonry will not thrive by "modernizing," it will thrive by its traditions as it always has. For as long as there are good men looking to become better, then our order will always have a place in this world.

If changing your life, broadening your mind, and expanding your friendships appeal to you; if you believe in a Supreme Being, if you believe that he will punish vice and reward virtue, and if you believe that this Being has revealed his will to man, then I offer you Freemasonry. Freemasonry, the group that by dint of its strict traditions, is the most cutting edge organization in Western civilization.

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### *Third Place Winner*

## **If a non-Mason asked you, "Why are you a Mason?" what would your answer be?**

Bro Brian Claytor Jr., Claude M. Kent Lodge No. 681, Hamilton 'A' District, Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario.

The Masonic degrees have provided much food for thought. Looking back after nine years, my experience in the Craft can best be described as being one of self-examination, self-rectification, and self-amelioration. My journey in Masonry has been truly transformational.

As I delve into the reasons which impelled me to cross the threshold, it is important to look at the significant fac-

tors which lead me to seek Masonic Light and to partake of its sublime mysteries.

Like many other Masons, the Craft had been present in my family. My paternal Grandfather and maternal Great-grandfather were Masons — one from England, the other from the former Yugoslavia. They were both known to be honest and hard working. They were

See **Claytor**, Page 6

# Your DDGMs 2016–2017

*We are pleased to introduce to our readers the District Deputy Grand Masters serving the Craft in Alberta during the 2016–2017 term. This will be continued in the next two issues of The Alberta Freemason.*

## Alpha District

**RWBro Murray V. Pay** was born April 1943 in London, England and immigrated to Canada in January 1948. He was raised in Winnipeg, then in September 1968 a job opportunity took him to Calgary. His first career was as a commercial artist/display artist. He then became the owner and operator of *Parade Display Productions Ltd*, and since 1992 has been a travel consultant specializing in personal and group travel arrangements, including organizing Grand Master's tours to Alaska, the Caribbean and China.



RWBro Pay was a Calgary Winter Olympic Games Volunteer, has been a White Hat Volunteer at the Calgary International Airport since 1997 and is also a Prostate Cancer Volunteer.

Murray married Elaine in April 1966 and they have two children, Cynthia Karlyne and Jason Cameron.

RWBro Pay was initiated, passed and raised in Bowmont Lodge No. 181 in 1970 and affiliated with St Mark's Lodge No. 118 in 1972, where he was Worshipful Master in 2007. He was appointed Grand Standard Bearer for the Grand Lodge of Alberta for 2004–2005 and was the Chairman for the 2009 Masonic Spring Workshop. He has been active in the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite, and was Coroneted Honorary Inspector General 33° in September 2004. He has been a member of Al Azhar Shriners since 1975 and a member of the Tin Lizzie Corp since 1988.

## Athabaska District

**RWBro Morris A. Nesdole** was born in Saskatoon, SK, in 1946, the eldest of seven children, with three brothers and three sisters. He attended the Saskatoon Technical Institute, Kelsey Institute and the University of Saskatchewan and was employed as a Mechanic, Refrigeration Engineer, Power Engineer and Millwright. In 1976, he moved to Fort McMurray to work with Syncrude Canada Ltd, where he held positions in Maintenance, Operations, Projects, Business Controls and Management.



In 1984, he married Nancy, his long-time friend and companion. They continued living and working in Fort McMurray until his retirement in 2008. They now make their home at the Summer Village of Sunset Beach on Baptiste Lake, located west of the town of Athabasca. They have one son, Robert, and two grandchildren.

RWBro Nesdole was initiated, passed and raised in Millennium Lodge No. 2000 in 1999, and served as Master of the Lodge in 2005–2006. He is a member of Hangingstone Chapter No. 40 Royal Arch Masons, Edmonton Preceptory No. 46 Knights Templar and the Al Shamal Shrine. After retiring, he affiliated with Tawatinaw Lodge No. 71 in Athabasca

and served as Master of the Lodge in 2015.

He spends his leisure time enjoying his hobbies, which include making knives, photography, hunting and fishing.

## Beaverhills District

**RWBro George Wert** was born at Watrous, SK, in 1952. After receiving a Business Administration diploma from Red River College in Winnipeg, RWBro Wert joined Federated Insurance Company of Canada in 1978. He worked for this commercial insurance company in various marketing roles for 32 years. He retired in 2010, but still manages the accounts of 30 business clients on a contract basis.



RWBro Wert has been happily married to Kathy for over 40 years. They have three married children and six wonderful grandchildren. His interests include travel, sports, being happy and communicating that happiness to others.

RWBro Wert was initiated into Star of the West Lodge No. 34 in Leduc in November 1987. He progressed through the chairs and served as Worshipful Master in 1995. He has held other offices since being the Worshipful Master, including Secretary-Treasurer of his Lodge for 5 years.

In 2000 he was appointed Higher Education Bursary Chairman for Beaverhills District and in 2010 acted as the District Research & Education Chairman. RWBro Wert became a Very Worshipful Brother in 2011, serving as Grand Steward during Most Worshipful Brother Peter Dunlop's year as Grand Master.

RWBro Wert is a Noble in Al Shamal Shriners and a member of the Ponoka Fire Truck Unit. He is a 32<sup>nd</sup> Degree Mason, Edmonton Valley Chapter of the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite.

## Calgary-Highwood District

**RWBro Les Saggars** was born in 1955 in Hitchin, England. He received his undergraduate education at the University of Calgary and a Master's Degree in Health Science from Saint Joseph College in Maine. Les and his wife, Eda, live in southwest Calgary.

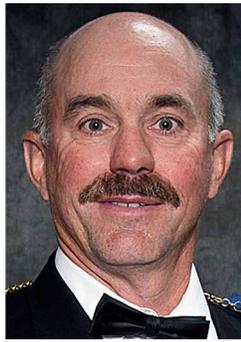


Professionally, RWBro Saggars has been employed throughout his career in the healthcare field, primarily in the finance, human resources and medical affairs areas, serving on a number of professional association boards and organizing two North American conferences. He was Director, Medical Affairs for Alberta Health System's Calgary Zone before attempting semi-retirement and, as was the case with his Lodge, then returning to work, this time as Director, Medical Affairs, South Zone.

He joined Calgary Lodge No. 23 in 1996, receiving his three Degrees in the spring of that year. He is a "Lewis" (the son of a Mason), served as Worshipful Master in 2003, 2005 and again in 2015 and is an active visitor to Lodges in the Calgary area.

## Central District

**RWBro Hal Neis** was born at Lacombe in 1958. After graduation from High School at Alix, Hal joined Millwrights LU 1460 in Edmonton, working many construction and maintenance jobs throughout Northern Alberta and the NWT. He received the Red Seal qualification for the Millwright trade in 1980. During the early 1990s he returned to work the family farm full time.



Hal was initiated, passed, and raised in Apollo Lodge No. 27 during the winter of 2002, serving as Worshipful Master 2007–08 and again from 2013–16. He joined Central Valley Lodge of Perfection, A&ASR in 2004, Mizpah Chapter Rose Croix in 2006, and Alberta Consistory in 2006. In 2008 he was appointed as a Grand Steward.

### Claytor, from Page 4

both devoted family men, respected in their communities, and were both of very good report. Although these two men never met one another, the invisible link which united them was that of Freemasonry.

Several years spent as a student of another esoteric order and having had the chance to interact with other members from that school who also happened to be Freemasons has given me the opportunity to be well acquainted with the Craft before petitioning for membership. I also came across Masonic literature which helped to further spark my interest. I recall reading about the significance of Masonic symbols as well as the great extent of Masonic charities. I must admit, however, that what inspired me most were two proverbial qualities, which I felt, duly characterized the fraternity. These were: that legendary, unbreakable Masonic bond which united all of its Brethren; and that transformative effect which Masonry induced on its initiates by making good men better.

After initiation, I realized that becoming a Freemason meant being a builder. The ritual lectures were timeless, indispensable, transcendent. I understood at once that the ability to derive benefit from them depended, for the most part, on my own personal effort. “Wisdom to contrive, strength to support and beauty to adorn” — these profound words served as a reminder that if symmetry and proportion were ever to be forlorn, the temple I was building would be ungrounded and imbalanced. The four tassels became the guides which would aid me in keeping the structure upright. “You’ll only get out of it, what you put into it” were the prophetic words uttered by my Masonic mentor soon after my initiation. He also warned that being a member of our fraternity demanded an ongoing moral and social responsibility, both inside and outside the Lodge. He was right in both instances.

Another important realization was that the lodgeroom is a representation of the Universe, with all of its essential components, and that we, each one of the Brethren, are but a part of the whole. But no matter how infinitesimally small we might appear individually, the reality is that we are all integral parts, much like a single grain of sand is still a key constituent of the great desert. Being in Lodge inspires an awesome feeling of unity and belonging which has provided a new spiritual awareness, a new beginning, so to speak.

As a young man I remember reading an ancient Greek

aphorism inscribed at the entrance of the Temple of Apollo in Delphi which instructed its initiates to “Know Thyself.” Freemasonry has brought me into direct contact with that wisest of all aphorisms, one which has remained an indelible lesson and guiding force throughout most of my adult life.

Where else but in Masonry can a man come face to face with his own inner being, and develop such an intimate awareness of the fine fibre of his own inner nature?

Where else but in Masonry can the landscaper, the educator, the mechanic and the doctor find common ground by putting aside all worldly investitures, titles and rank; and work together in harmony with such brotherly love?

Where else but in Masonry can a man be afforded the opportunity to duly improve his moral character through a system of practical lessons and virtues which transcend the confines of time?

Where else but in Masonry can a man expect to be so blatantly encouraged to begin his search for truth by stepping out of the darkness and into the light?

Applying Masonic fundamentals to my personal relationships has been a highly rewarding aspect of membership. In life, these are the Masonic principles I rely on most often:

- As a Mason, I rely on the level which capacitates me to treat everyone I meet with the same degree of respect and courtesy.
- As a Mason, I rely on the square which encourages that my interactions with other human beings are met with the same degree of equanimity, honesty and straightforwardness.
- As a Mason, I rely on the compasses in order to circumnavigate around the rigid lines of preconceived notions; enabling me to reconcile differences of opinion with those whose ideas, customs and perceptions of truth may differ from mine.

During my time in Masonry the camaraderie and fraternal spirit which I had only heard of years prior to entering the Order, I have been fortunate to experience in person. Many deep and long lasting friendships have been forged in the Lodge. The effect of these endearing friendships has only helped to reinforce that feeling of unity as previously mentioned.

Earlier this year, the Craft bestowed upon me a truly unforgettable privilege. She opened her well-guarded gates to someone who’s very important to me. The person I am speaking of has played an influential role throughout my life. He has been a guide, a teacher, a mentor; but more importantly he has always been my friend. The Brother I’m referring to is my Father. His desire to become a Mason had always been latent inside of him; so when he was ready and the opportunity presented itself, it was my honour to become one of his sponsors.

So if a non-Mason asked me why I was a Mason, the most honest answer I could give him/her would be — I am a Mason because of the unique educational opportunities it provides. It’s a type of education unlike any other. It has taught me about myself and the place that I occupy in the Universe. It has taught me about the value of honesty, disinterestedness, and uprightness, particularly when applied to my dealings with other human beings. And last but not least, Masonry has taught me the importance of learning how to lead myself before ever attempting to lead others.

That is why I am a Mason!