



Farewell, My Brother . . .



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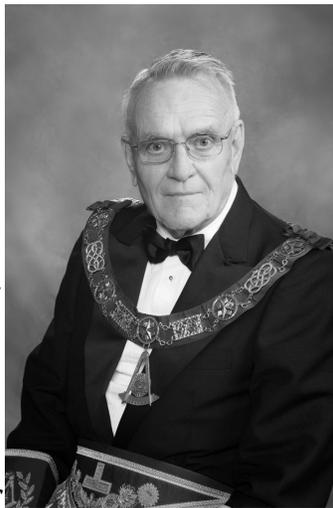
MWBro Gordon Rex Dawson

2 December, 1926 – 12 October, 2020

It is with sadness that we note the passing of MWBro Rex Dawson to the Grand Lodge Above. Made a Mason in Westlock Lodge No.114 on the first of October 1970, MWBro Dawson shared generously of his time and his talents with his both Lodge and, during his years as a Grand Lodge officer, Freemasonry itself throughout Alberta. He was an inspiration to all who knew him, and he served this Craft with distinction.

Most Worshipful Brother Dawson was the Most Worshipful the Grand Master of Alberta during 2005 – 2006.

He became Worshipful Master of Westlock Lodge in 1980 and served as its Secretary for thirteen years. Appointed Junior Grand Deacon in 1986, he became Chairman of the Masonic Spring Workshop 1990, DDGM of District 19 also in 1990, Grand Treasurer from 1991 to 2002, and was elected Senior Grand Warden in 2003. He also received the 4th to 32nd Degrees of the A&ASR in 1984. He had received honorary life memberships from three Alberta lodges: Palestine Lodge No.46 in Tofield, King



Hiram Lodge No.21 in Didsbury, and Dominion Lodge No.117 in Edmonton.

MWBro Dawson also gave generously of his time and energy to assist and mentor other Masons, and to many of the boards and committees that quietly provide the substantial background effort that makes Freemasonry possible.

He leaves Marjory, his wife of 71 years, his three daughters and their husbands, seven grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. His home community of Westlock remembers him as the owner of Rex Dawson

Ford, the dealership that he ran for thirty-four years, and as a former Town Councilor with involvement in both the Rotary Club and the United Church. In his spare time, he loved photography, woodworking and piano. With Marjory, he was also a world traveler, and among friends, a great conversationalist.

The passing of Rex Dawson, who to us was MWBro Dawson, is difficult for both his family and for Freemasonry. His quiet voice will be missed.



October 27, 2020

Grand Master's Message

Brethren,

It will go down in our history that the effects of Covid-19 have been unprecedented with the possible exception of the Spanish Flu of 1918. Beginning with our forced shut-down in March 2020 and then the slow re-opening which began in July, our fraternity has been under stress with the challenges of reopening and working with Covid-19. While the major centers of Edmonton and Calgary have been hardest hit with infection, the rural areas too have suffered from the restrictions and dealing with the fear of infection - this was how my term as Grand Master began and continues.

We as a Grand Lodge are fortunate that we have a cohesive team working to move us through 2020 and into 2021; this team includes our Grand Line, the Board of General Purposes and our committees. We have all entered or continued in roles where we must tackle Covid-19 and move forward to make a stronger Grand Lodge; this option is the much more preferred choice over to that of once again closing lodges and possibly the operations of our Grand Lodge. In all of our deliberations on how to resume operations after the forced closure in March, we focused on the health and wellbeing of our membership. We empowered the lodges in this jurisdiction to make decisions based on their membership and laid out a framework of guidelines to optimize member safety and ensure their wellbeing, these guidelines had to be stringent and yet flexibly enough to be adopted as safe practices by our lodges and members. To this end we have seen most lodges resume their work and have supported those that have chosen to remain shut down as Covid-19 enters into its second wave.

While Covid-19 never went away, it is again invading our communities and Alberta Health is tightening conditions on small assemblies and social gatherings in order to try and control the spread of this infection. Like with most jurisdictions across Canada we are seeing the need to try and strike a balance on social gathering and the need to keep our economy open – as always there are those that will deny that Covid-19 is real or a threat to them, others are living in fear and that fear is having a pronounced effect on the wellbeing of many. Both of our major cities (Edmonton and Calgary) have now implemented mandatory restrictions on social gathering for the next 30 days where 15 is the maximum that can attend for social functions. Structured events have the option to continue but with less severe restrictions – an extract from AHS & Dr. Hinshaw's order is copied below:

“This limit applies to gatherings where people are mixing and mingling, such as dinner parties, birthday parties, social events, and wedding and funeral receptions.

It also applies to special event celebrations like retirement events, baby showers, and other social gatherings.

This limit does not change the measures currently in place for events that are structured such as ordinary dining in restaurants, theatres, worship services, or wedding and funeral ceremonies.

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However, it would apply to gatherings that may occur before or after these events, such as wedding receptions or a social event at a restaurant or another site.”

While we have done well within our lodge meetings to follow protocols, our nature is to mingle before and after each meeting – this is where we must be more vigilant. We are now entering into a very busy season where Lodge Installations are common and soon to follow will be functions to celebrate Christmas and our favorite poet Robbie Burns. While I can sanction and approve operations for Lodge meetings, I as Grand Master cannot approve or dictate private functions that may be held by Lodges within the Jurisdiction. These private functions are deemed social and fall under the restrictions and guidelines imposed by Alberta Health. I can only suggest that prudence be your guide and that you all look to the safety of the community at large. WE have made it through the first eight months of this pandemic and we have no idea of how bad the second wave will be or if there will be a third or fourth wave – all I know is we must continue to be patient, work together and be proactive in our approach.

With all of the above being considered, we as a team will continue to work to ensure our membership remains safe by continuing to develop and support initiatives for use in our jurisdiction. An example of one of these initiatives has been the format for District Meetings – due to Covid-19 and the need to offer members a fair choice in electing their next DDGM we have brought in electronic balloting; while not every district had the requirement to use Election Buddy, those that have shown an increase in participation by the number of ballots cast. In addition we look forward to once again bringing you an update through a Town Hall Session in December; this proved to be well received in September when it was first attempted and based on feedback we think should be continued.

Brethren, I wish you all safe passage as we navigate this new world. My hope is that we cross paths in the near future and have the ability to offer a hand in friendship and grasp it firmly and have no fear in doing.

Fraternally,

Reg Karbonik, Grand Master

Here is a definition of a word found within Masonic ritual that is not common outside of our Lodge rooms.

Preferment. This is an uncommon word today and someone hearing for the first time might think it is a ‘preference’ or a sign of favoritism. Indeed, such a mis-understand could feed into conspiracy theories about our Craft, or the false idea that to become a Mason is a path to fame and fortune. To the educated man well-studied in English history or well-read in English literature, ‘preferment’ means one who has received an appointment to a higher position in the English court or the Church of England. In this sense, a preferment is synonymous with a promotion. A well-studied Mason will recognize within our Ritual that we congratulate a candidate for his preferment and remind him that his behavior and actions have earned the honour which leads him to have a new character or identity. It is not favoritism. To a Mason the word ‘preferment’ means a rank he has earned by his own labour and with the assistance of his Lodge. The challenge to all Masons is to assure ourselves we are assisting each candidate for our mysteries to attain their preferment. We should honour those who by merit and ability have earned preferment and rank as Grand Lodge officers.

Provided for your daily advancement in Masonic knowledge from the Sarnia District Masonic Library.

WBro Marshall Kern, Librarian & Historian. My blog is at :

<https://masterseblem.wordpress.com/>



AND CROWN THY GOOD WITH BROTHER- HOOD



by Bro Julian Rees

*Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good*

Alfred, Lord Tennyson 1809—1892

Have you read Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* recently? It's what they call a cracking good tale. But there is a passage which, for many years, I found profoundly depressing. It is this:

*'the evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones''*

I found in these words a huge measure of despair. They are certainly true of such as Josef Stalin, Adolf Hitler or any serial murderer.

My youngest son read *Julius Ceaser* for A level English Literature, and I told him then how profoundly nihilist I found the statement. He disagreed, pointing out that Mark Antony, or Shakespeare, was in fact expressing no more than a deeply-held irony. How much we do learn from the younger generation! That reignited for me the spark of the spirit that affirms, in sum, that good is greater than evil. If we accept the responsibility for our thoughts and actions that being an individual free spirit invites us to assume, then we can—we must—continue to reject the tragic nonsense we so often see being perpetrated in the world. And, as that very individual, we can do it on our own, whether or not those around us are on our side. The fluttering of a butterfly in South America may well induce a storm in Alaska.

But at the same time, action undertaken collectively with others is often more purposeful and effective than individual striving. I have been reading Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love*. I won't spoil the story if you have yet to read it, but in the first chapter there is a

situation where six men try to hold down a helium balloon to prevent it soaring away with a small boy marooned in the basket. While the six hold on, there is a chance the balloon may not break free, but in all their minds there is doubt; doubt that the six of them may not be enough to hold the balloon down, but also doubt about each one's physical ability to hold on. A nice dilemma. The first one to let go effectively scuppers the rescue attempt of the remaining five, four of whom then let go, one after the other. The last, who perseveres on his own, only let go when he can physically hold on no longer, by which time it is too late and he falls to his death.

I need hardly spell out the moral for you. Not only can we achieve collectively far more than we can individually, but an endeavor may only be attainable if we don't let go, if we work together and in harmony of purpose and action. Freemasonry allows us, encourages us, to conduct our campaign collectively. We can't afford to let ego or self-interest intrude. As a brother once reminded me, speaking of a lodge where two of the brethren were at loggerheads, 'when all is said and done, the lodge is greater than the sum of its several parts'.

This principle was codified by Laurence Dermott, the first Grand Secretary of the 'Ancients' Grand Lodge. Who wrote, in the *Ahiman Rezion*, part of the Book of Constitutions:

*For human society cannot subsist without concord,
and the maintenance of mutual good offices; for, like
the working of a arch of stone, it would fall t the
ground provided one piece did not properly support
another.*

The keystone at the top is not called the 'key' for nothing—remove it and, no matter how big the other stones, or how many there are, the arch collapses. Is this to be interpreted as simple mutuality - help others in order to help myself? Well, I do prefer to remove the 'myself' from that equation. There is a lodge in London, and this is not an isolated example, whose members are working tirelessly to fund a hospice for the terminally ill in southern India. I know these brethren personally, and I know that none of them is doing this in the hope of some sort of recognition - it would be an insult even to suggest it.

No, I prefer to say, without being a utopian idealist, that by working with one's brethren towards a better world we can reach for the stars. We can create,

through our precepts and the richness that is real Freemasonry, true goodness and harmony and light.

Let's realize our own potential, and see what a whirlwind we can, together, raise in Alaska. The sparks of divinity within each one of us were not put there for nothing.

Julian Rees was initiated in the Kirby Lodge No. 2818, under the United Grand Lodge of England, in London in 1968. He was a regular contributor to the quarterly magazine *Freemasonry Today* since its founding in 1997, and from 2003 to 2007 he was Deputy and News Editor. Julian was honoured by the *Institut Maçonique de France with the Ordre Maçonique de Lafayette*.

Ed' The article was first published in the Freemasonry Today magazine in the winter edition of 2003. I managed to contact Bro Rees last year and he gave me permission to bring his work to the AF, you will see more of his work in future editions. You can see more about Julian on his webpage julianrees.com

Grand Masters itinerary - November 2020

<https://freemasons.ab.ca/index.php/grand-masters-schedule/>

Always double check the timings with the lodge as there may be local changes during the month.



Letter to the editor

Reference the Point within a Circle article

Great article by Brother Bachir, thank you.

VWBro Ken Madden

Dear Sir and Brother;

I really enjoyed October's article on 'what is a centre'. I couldn't read it fast enough.

Please find attached my article about 'Ecclesiastes XII'. I know it is short, just under 500 words. My source of reference is my own Masonic Bible.

I hope this little essay is suitable and am concerned that perhaps it should not be seen by my brethren who are not yet master masons.

Please feel free to contact me either by email or phone to let me know

your assessment of this my first attempt. I live in Medicine Hat.

Sincerely,

VWBro. Brian Martin

Ed' VWBro Brian, this is a very good article and I would recommend it to all Master Masons. I am weighing up when I can actually publish (the AF, in my research hasn't made a direct reference to any of the degrees). If there are secretaries who are interested for the edification of your MM's then by all means contact me and I will forward the article. Brian, please carry on your research and forward your future articles, I look forward to receiving them.

Presentation of donation to the JW of Strathmore Lodge WBro Tom McDonald, at a joint meeting held in Drumheller Freemasons Hall. From Creative Custom Gold a Plumb Bob Pendant that turns into a Square & Compasses.



RWBro Doug Wade

Alberta education

The Pursuit of Mediocracy or the Pursuit of Excellence -

How do we wish to define Masonry in the 21st Century

Presented by RW Bro Chris Uchman, SGW
Grand Lodge of Alberta A.F.&A.M.
Thursday October 15, 2020 - Western Canada
Conference

Brethren, it is my intension with this paper to shine a light on the current processes for accepting and mentoring new candidates into our lodges. It is an objective view of how mediocracy has infiltrated a vast number of lodges while excellence still prevails in others. In most cases the mediocracy creeps in overtime and has thus goes unnoticed until it is difficult to correct their actions. There is no better way to illustrate this than to follow the journey of two men into masonry. To prevent confusion, we will call them Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones. I will try to illustrate two likely scenarios that can take place. The first scenario will lead us down the path of unmet expectations, disappointment and a journey into mediocrity. The second will bring fulfilled expectations, engagement, inspiration, satisfaction and a journey of personal growth and excellence.

We claim to be the leading fraternal organization in the world with a commitment to universal brotherhood and self-improvement. We make statements such as "Masonry takes good men and makes them better" or "no institution can boast a more solid foundation than that on which freemasonry rests". Thus, when a man makes the decision to join freemasonry, he does it with the highest level of expectations.

While a number of our candidates seek out freemasonry due to a family connection this is no longer the case for majority of our new members. Many of our candidates are looking to belong to something greater and of importance to them. We must assume that every man who comes to freemasonry does so for many reasons. It may be to fulfill a quest for knowledge, they may be looking to satisfy a personal longing or to seek something they have not found elsewhere in life. For whatever reason, we can be sure they want to improve where they are socially and what they have emotionally, thereby creating a more fulfilling journey in life.

Prior to joining the craft many candidates desire to become more enlightened and increase their knowledge about freemasonry through research into

our organization, by reading countless articles regarding our history, organization and philosophies. They will comb the internet and books stores looking for all the information they can gather. This research continues to raise their expectations and their excitement over what could be if they join.

Finally, with great anticipation and excitement our future brethren have made their decision to join our ancient craft. To begin the process they will reach out either to a mason they already know or maybe to a masonic lodge nearby. This, my brethren, is where either the pursuit of mediocrity or excellence will occur. It all depends upon which of these following two scenarios plays out.

Let's assume that both potential candidates have nearly identical backgrounds and desires. They reach out to a different lodge in the same city and have the following experiences that shape their masonic journeys.

Mr. Smith reaches out to Lodge A by sending a message to the lodge's website to expresses his wish to meet with someone regarding his desire to join masonry. The next day he eagerly checks his email for a response to his inquiry. Mr. Smith is a little dismayed when there is no response. That is okay he thinks, it will come, they must be busy. I will give it a few days. After a week with no response Mr. Smith sends another inquiry to Lodge A telling himself that something must have happened to it or it got lost in cyberspace. Once again after another week passes with nothing but silence from the Lodge A, Mr. Smith sends his third inquiry to the lodge. The next morning, to his thrill there is finally a response in his email.

The email from the lodge secretary apologizes for the delay in responding. He explains that he only checks his email every few weeks. The secretary suggest that the candidate give him a call so they can set up a time and place to meet. Mr. Smith's excitement level raises once again so he immediately calls the secretary to setup the meeting and gets voicemail. Mr. Smith proceeds to leave a message with all his contact information with the secretary. Four days later, the lodge secretary, once again apologizing for taking so long to respond, explains that he was having trouble getting in contact with the master and the other members of the lodge's membership committee. The secretary informs Mr. Smith that the master of the lodge and two of the past masters would be happy to meet with him in person to discuss his desire to join. They agree to meet at a coffee shop the following week. Mr. Smith is thrilled that after almost a full month from his initial inquiry to Lodge A he will finally be meeting face to face with a group of masons from Lodge A.

Around the same time that Mr. Smith sends his first inquiry to Lodge A, Mr. Jones also sends an inquiry regarding his desires to join masonry. Mr. Jones's inquiry, however, is also sent to Lodge B through its website. Lodge B's website has a very compressive form for potential candidates to fill out. The form requires Mr. Jones to give his contact information, a little information about him personally and also asks for a brief explanation of why he seeks admittance. To Mr. Jones's thrill a response comes via email mere moments after he clicks the send button of the form. The email thanks him for his interest in Lodge B and informs Mr. Jones that a member of Lodge B's membership committee would reach out to him within the next three days.

The very next evening Mr. Jones receives a phone call from the chair of Lodge B's membership committee. The ensuing hour and a half phone call is filled with conversations around Mr. Jones's personal aspirations and motivations that have led him to seek admission into the craft. The committee chair takes time to answer, to the best of his ability, all of Mr. Jones's questions regarding the craft in general but more importantly the process that is required to join. At the end of the conversation the committee chair offers to meet, along with other members of the committee, face to face with Mr. Jones to further their discussions.

A few days later Mr. Smith arrives 15 minutes early for his meeting with the members of Lodge A as he does not wish to be late. He knows that first impressions are important. Ten minutes after the agreed upon time has passed, three older gentlemen enter the coffee shop. Mr. Smith glances over at them and notices that one of them is wearing a cap with a square and compass on it. They join him at his table.

The group introduces themselves to Mr. Smith, never really apologizing for being late, and proceed to quickly explain the process of joining their lodge. The first question from Lodge A's members is if he can afford the initiation fee and yearly dues. He is then told the day they meet, is assured it is a once a month commitment and maybe twice a month if there is an emergent meeting. To his surprise he is given a petition for initiation. The Master assures him if he gets it filled out and returned immediately, they can read his name out at the next meeting and send out an investigating committee to his home. We will get you through quickly as we can use good men like you, they exclaim as they get up to leave. Mr. Smith thinks to himself that it would have been great to have more time to get to know them better. He proceeds to tell himself he will have time to discuss masonry at that investigation they mentioned.

Meanwhile across town at a small diner Mr. Jones arrives for his first face to face meeting with the members from Lodge B. He too arrives early as he also wishes to make a good impression. As he enters the diner, he is pleased to see a group of men of various ages sitting at the back table. One of the men immediately walks over to him, introduces himself as the one with whom he had the phone call and invites him to take a seat with the other brethren. As the remaining men introduce themselves to Mr. Jones, they explain to him that they all showed up a little early for the meeting to make a good impression on him. They spend the first half hour just getting to know Mr. Jones as well letting him get to know them. Once they feel he is comfortable in the group, they proceed to go into detail with him the multi-step process for receiving a petition for initiation from the lodge. They explain to him that good things take time so it is of the utmost importance that not only do they feel comfortable with him joining their lodge, but that he feels comfortable with them.

Let us now proceed to the evening of the investigations for our two potential candidates. The investigating committee from Lodge A arrives at the home of Mr. Smith. They introduce themselves to both Mr. Smith and his wife as they are not the same men that he met in the coffee shop. With very little conversation they went right into the investigation. They pull out a piece of paper with a number of questions on it and proceed to ask each question without any explanation as to why they are asking it or as to the importance of the question. After completing the form, they explain once again to Mr. Smith that after his initiation he is only expected to attend meetings if nothing in his personal or professional life gets in the way, but it would be nice if he came out to the meetings.

Let us compare this with the investigation of Mr. Jones. When the committee from Lodge B arrives at his home there is no need for long introductions as both Mr. Jones and his spouse have met the men numerous times at the various festive boards and mixed social events that the lodge has required him to attend prior to receiving his petition form. As the investigation gets under way the committee proceeds to explain to both Mr. Jones and his wife the importance of the investigation. They explain that it is a held in the home of the candidate with his wife present as the decision to join masonry must be a family choice and both parties must be comfortable with the decision to join. The committee goes over in detail not only the time commitment to the lodge but also the extent of the financial commitment. They explain to Mr. Jones that once he is initiated and as a member of the lodge

he will be expected to participate fully in the lodge. Nothing is hidden nor is anything minimized.

The day has finally come for our two candidates to be initiated into masonry. They both put on their best suits, full of excitement and even a little trepidation they arrive at their respective lodge buildings. Mr. Smith nervously enters Lodge A's building and notices that there are not nearly as many people present as he had envisioned. He stands inside the entry to building waiting to be noticed, as the lodge members visit with each other in little groups. After what feels like an eternity, one of the brethren finally notices him and greets him with "You must be the new guy, Welcome to our lodge". He is taken to get prepared for the ceremony, and told to wait, unattended while they prepare for the ceremony. He sits waiting "alone" wondering what will unfold next.

As Mr. Jones enters Lodge B's building, he is greeted immediately by all the brethren he has met over the preceding months of visitation and social outings. He is a little overwhelmed by the number of men how have come out to support him on his important night. Everyone is dressed in dark business suits or tuxedos with an air of formality that is missing from everyday society. The brethren continue to welcome him and assure him the evening will be something he will never forget. He is never left alone, even once the lodge members proceed into the lodge room to open the meeting as a brother stays with him to ensure that he feels comfortable or to answer his questions.

When Mr. Smith is finally brought into the lodge for the ceremony of his initiation, he cannot help but notice the lodge officers seem very unprepared and require a number of prompts throughout the entire evening. As he is shuffled through the ceremony, he found it difficult to concentrate on the lectures and instructions that are being given due to loud talking coming from everywhere in the lodge room. It also seemed that everyone except the person doing a particular piece of work knew the words as prompts came from everywhere in the lodge room. At the conclusion of the ceremony Bro. Smith was given an envelope containing his prove up materials. He was told to contact his sponsors for the missing words and prepare himself for the next degree. The entire evening appeared very chaotic and unsettling but it must have gone well because the Master of the lodge proceeded to congratulate all the officers on a job well done.

In stark contrast to the experience of Mr. Smith, the officers and members of Lodge B were very prepared for the evening, as Mr. Jones was guided through his ceremony of initiation, every lecture was given with

enthusiasm and reverence. He could tell that a great deal of work and preparation had gone into learning the various rolls and parts for the evening. On the rare occasion that a prompt was needed, it was given by the same individual and usually only a single word or phrase. Throughout the ceremony Mr. Jones never had any issues concentrating on the lectures or following his guide as there was complete silence on the sidelines of the lodge room. At the completion of the ceremony as he was handed his envelope, he was instructed that a group of brethren would help him prepare for his next degree.

While the ritual and words of the ceremony for both candidates may have been identical the outcome could not have been more different. Bro. Smith went home that evening and may already be questioning his decision to join Lodge A. He will most likely continue through the remaining degrees hoping that it has to get better or that the excellence he has always anticipated and expected will be found soon. Unfortunately, the mediocracy that has been prevalent since Bro. Smith's first inquiry into masonry via Lodge A's website will most likely continue. Unless Bro. Smith visits other lodges he may not even know that he is in a mediocre lodge as he has nothing to compare it to until he is exposed to a lodge with high levels of expectations from all its members.

Bro. Jones returned home after his first degree likely with completely different feelings than Bro. Smith. He felt humbled and a little over whelmed to have joined such an honoured institution as that of Freemasonry. He looks forward to his remaining degrees with even greater anticipation than he had prior to the start of the first evening as every expectation he had was met or exceeded. The pursuit of excellence has just begun for Bro. Jones.

To conclude my brethren, strong lodges that strive for excellence in every step of a petitioner's journey will be rewarded with strong good masons and true loyal brethren that will continue to build upon the excellent work of their predecessors. While weak and mediocre lodges that offer the bare minimum to their candidates while excepting mediocracy within their lodges continue to create weaker and weaker Masons.

Is your lodge closer to Lodge A or Lodge B?

Ed' Wow, brethren this can be an 'ah ah' moment. Remember a culture won't change by itself, it requires a decision to be made and perseverance to follow through. I have said before that the candidates for initiation are the lifeblood and future of our lodges; you determine the destiny of your lodge, there are some tools above. Don't forget the 7 step program if you don't have any guidelines in your lodge.

