



R.W. Brother Gerhard W. Severin

*Directly*  
*from the*  
*Grand Master*

American Canadian Grand Lodge AF & AM

A collection of articles written by Right Worshipful Gerhard W. Severin during his term of office as Grand Master of the American Canadian Grand Lodge, AF & AM - 1986-1987

# Contents

<b>Memorial Day 1986 .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Mason in a Museum? .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Happy Birthday! .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>You are Responsible! .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Let us celebrate St. John's Day! .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Beyond Clichés! .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Our Mission As Masons .....</b>	<b>17</b>



# American Canadian Grand Lodge AF & AM

*Directly from the Grand Master*

## Memorial Day 1986

Man, for the most part, recognizes and accepts the inevitability of death. Yet, even as he has accepted this inescapable fact of life, he has always resisted its finality by emphasizing both the immortality of the soul promised him by God, and, by observing that as long as a man is remembered, he lives in the hearts and minds of those who remember him. Even the Great Architect of the Universe enjoined man to set aside days of remembrance, as he directed the ancient Hebrews to do in memory of the Passover: "And this day shall be unto you for memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever."

It is fitting that the day set aside in the United States should be a day first dedicated by a Freemason and soldier. General John A. Logan, a Brother from Benton Lodge 64 in Illinois, Commander in Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic (and, Later Congressman and United States Senator) named May 30, 1868 as day for decorating the graves of Union. Originally called Decoration Day, it is now known as Memorial Day, and honors the dead of all wars. It is even recognized overseas, where the graves of American soldiers in France are decorated on this day by both Frenchmen and Americans.

Memorial Day should have a special meaning to Masons of the American Canadian Grand Lodge, because — while there is no such thing as a military Grand Lodge — we are a Grand Lodge with close military attachments. Most of our members are active or retired members of the Armed Forces of the United States and Canada, and even most of those who are not have been closely associated with the military. To our members, then, the costs of war are not far out of mind, and for many the sacrifices have been personal. While we can — and should — decorate graves, hold memorial services, and perhaps even aid in the construction of monuments, there is little we can do for those we memorialize on this day. They are gone, except in memory, and are now in the hands of God. But we can make a contribution

where we can still do something more than place flowers and conduct memorial services.

This has always been a day when we honored those who gave their all for their country — those who died in the service of liberty. There is, however, another group of servicemen, still living, who gave and are still giving — and who need our human help. Many of them are Brothers, and many of them are alone, crippled, old, and sick. We cannot help with the human frailties, but there is much we can do ease the loneliness.

During WWI, Masons attempted to offer their services in support of our soldiers overseas, but since the government was unwilling to work through 48 separate organizations (the individual Grand Lodges), the Masonic Fraternity was unable to make any contribution. This situation prompted a famous Mason to write that *“I was a Captain in the World War, and all the fraternal connections that I received during the time I was in the service — from the time it started until May 6, 1919 — was the fraternal work done by the Knights of Columbus. The reason that was so was because no one organization could speak for Freemasonry.”* That captain, Harry S. Truman, accordingly offered his support for the establishment of the Masonic Service Association, which today speaks for Masonry in the United States, and which works to ease the loneliness of our hospitalized veterans.

The MSA operates a Hospital Visitation Program which endeavors to place a Masonic field service agent in each veteran’s hospital. These agents visit the patients in the hospital — whether Masons or not — offering them company, playing games with them, reading to them, writing letters, and by doing whatever else the veteran may need. They also offer fraternal support for Masons in the hospital, coordinate visits by individual Masons and Lodge and Grand Lodge officers, and when the time comes, arrange for Masonic funeral services. This program has been so successful that Brother Truman, while the Vice President of the United States wrote, *“I commend the enviable record made during the war by the Association, acting as the agent for the Grand Lodges and other Masonic bodies; especially I am interested in your plans for expansion of Masonry’s Hospital Visitation service. Surely Freemasonry can—not do enough for those brave men who have sacrificed so much for our beloved country.”*

A Grand Lodge so closely associated with the military would clearly want to insure that Freemasonry’s contributions to “these brave men” amounted to more than the mere placement of flowers and holding of memorial services. If every Lodge in the ACGL would contribute just one dollar per member this year, thousands of our brave men and hundreds of our dear Brothers would receive

— while they still lived — the gratitude of grateful fellow citizens, soldiers, and Masons. Hear the words of Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae, a Canadian soldier who died in France on January 28, 1918, after four years of service on the western front:

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

Surely, we can afford a single dollar to keep the faith with those who died, and with those who yet live but are too often forgotten. Won't you pledge your Lodge to send one dollar per member to the Grand Secretary before the end of this year?

Heidellberg,  
17 May 1986

*Thanking you in advance  
I remain fraternally,  
Gerhard W. Seierin*  
" GM "



R.W. Gerhard Severin  
Grand Master

*Directly from the Grand Master*  
American Canadian Grand Lodge AF & AM

## MASON IN A MUSEUM?

Christmas is the season for giving and for agonizing over what to give. We've all been through it; guessing at what would be appropriate, what would be enjoyed, and what would last. No doubt your wife or other loved one is now agonizing over the same question in the search for a gift for you.

Choosing that gift can be tough. While your lady may be familiar with many of your hobbies and interests, she probably doesn't understand some of those which are most important in your life. She's probably still trying to figure out what the Tall Cedars of Lebanon have to do with Masonry, or what the "Grotto" is. And she certainly doesn't understand all those odd pins and other symbols. But I expect she will understand the attraction of Masonic literature. She may even read some of it herself, and be thus more understanding of at least one of those activities which sometimes keeps you away from her at night.

There is a wealth of Masonic literature available in the world, in the form of books and periodicals. Periodicals can serve as a gift that lasts for a full year, or longer, and books last for a lifetime. More importantly, these are gifts which can help you more fully understand your Fraternity. Did you know, for example, that a Mason was once stuffed and mounted in a royal museum? Are you aware that those penalties you first encountered in the Entered Apprentice Degree have been removed from the ritual in several Grand Lodges? And have you ever heard of ritual forms where the Wardens don't sit in the South and West and the Lodge color isn't even blue it's red?!

Even if you don't think you can get that lovely lady to recognize and follow up on your not so subtle hints, wouldn't you still like to know more about your Fraternity? You might consider giving yourself one of these fine gifts.

The first place you should look is in a little green flyer entitled Publications of The Masonic Service Association of the United States. More commonly referred to as the "Index of Short Talk Bulletins", this little pamphlet lists some of the greatest bargains in Masonry, beginning with the Short Talk Bulletin itself.

The Short Talk Bulletin is a monthly publication which addresses different Masonic topics, and which often draws on the best of the Masonic world by reprinting speeches and brief articles from a wide variety of Masonic services. Among topics addressed over the years have been "Our Relations with the Knights of Columbus", "Why Masonry Has Enemies", "What to Tell Your Wife", and many others - one each month for some 60 years now. You can subscribe for only \$2.50 per year to an APO address or \$3.50 to an economy address, and you'll also receive The Hospital Visitor at regular intervals.

You may also want to purchase From Operative to Speculative, a small book which provides an essential grounding in the history of the Fraternity, or a Masonic Dictionary which explains all those odd words in the ritual. The first costs only \$2.65, and the second only a dollar.

Then you should consider The Philaethes, the premier North American research publication. Every well known name in American Freemasonry has appeared in this magazine, from Alphonse Cerza to Al Roberts. It appears bi-monthly, is a full-sized magazine, and has included articles on the esoteric ("The Effect of Victorian Obscenity Laws on Masonic Historians") to issues of current importance ("Freemasonry Under Attack - Still", and "The Catholic Bishops' Report on Freemasonry"). Included are reviews of new books on Masonry, and fascinating historical photographs. A subscription runs \$15.00 and membership in the Philaethes Society (which includes a subscription) is \$20.00.

If you subscribe to both, you will have provided yourself with a year of pleasant reading for less than \$20.00. For only \$3.00 more, you can subscribe to Knight Templar Magazine (Knights Templar get it free), or the Royal Arch Mason, both of which are publications of York Rite Masonry but which address every facet of the Masonic world. To get a good - and current - look at the world of Masonry outside North America (with an emphasis on English and European Masonic affairs), you can subscribe to The Masonic Square for only \$9.00 annually. Published four times a year, it offers a remarkable range of fascinating Masonic tidbits and advertising useful in finding sources for some of those odd but interesting bits of regalia.

If you're really interested in books, you can actually enter a subscription for them. Each year, the Missouri Lodge of Research publishes two books for its members - a hard back volume on a topic of special interest, and a paperback review of all the interesting happenings in almost every Grand Lodge in the world. If something controversial has occurred in Masonry

anywhere in the world, it will appear in this review. The book and review together cost only \$15.00 per year.

For \$25.00 a year, you can join the correspondence circle of the oldest and most famous of all research lodges - Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076. Every year members receive nicely bound volumes of the Transactions of this Lodge, and about once a quarter a summons to meetings. But these are summonses with a difference. Each comes in a large packet of offerings of fine books published under the auspices of the AQC (as the lodge is usually called), and each contains answers to questions about some of the finer points of Masonry.

I've only scratched the surface. The MSA will send you, for only fifty cents, a complete listing of nearly every North American Masonic publication, or a listing of every research lodge. Look over the list attached below, and provide yourself a gift that will last lifetime.

*Happy Holiday Season! Guberal*  
*GH*

Short Talk Bulletin  
Masonic Service Association  
8120 Fenton Street  
Silver Spring, MD 20910-471

Royal Arch Mason  
Box 564  
Trenton, Missouri 64683

Missouri Lodge of Research  
P.O. Box 480  
Fulton, MO 65251-0480

The Philaethes  
Allen E. Roberts, Secretary  
Drawer 70  
Highland Springs, VA 23075

The Masonic Square  
Terminal House  
Shepparton TW178AS, England

Masonic Book Club (\$20/year)  
Box 1563  
Bloomington, IL 61701

Knight Templar  
Suite 1700  
14 East Jackson Blvd  
Chicago, IL 60604-2293

Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076  
60 Great Queen St.  
London WC2B SBA, England

The New Age (\$4/year)  
1733-16th St., N.W., Rm 503  
Washington, D.C. 20009



R.W. Gerhard Severin  
Grand Master

*Directly from the Grand Master*  
American Canadian Grand Lodge AF & AM

Happy Birthday !

This day marks the twenty-fourth anniversary of our Grand Lodge and the first day of the year that will mark the end of our first quarter century of Masonic work. It is appropriate on a day which commemorates so much ACGL history that we should reflect briefly on whence we came, where we are now, and where we hope to go.

While German Freemasonry dates from the early 1700s, the ACGL arrived on the scene much later. Its history, of course, is closely tied to the first American lodges formed just after WWII. The first, Oregon Military Lodge U. D., was chartered by the Grand Lodge of Oregon barely fourteen months after the close of the war. Berlin Lodge arrived on the scene in 1947 with a charter from the Grand Lodge of Rhode Island, and the Grand Lodge of Connecticut provided the charter which empowered the Stuttgart American Lodge to begin working. Those were heady days, as a young and vibrant Masonry began to form in a nation busy rebuilding after years of war. It should not surprise ACGL Masons, then, to discover that much was unique about these early Lodges. For example, Stuttgart American Lodge's original charter was modelled, in many respects, after the military Lodges of earlier centuries; its 'traveling or circuit charter' enabled the Master to open his lodge and confer degrees anywhere in Germany.

Things really began to roll when, on 15 July, 1954, the VGL — under which we now operate — warranted Galilei Lodge No. 810A. Just over a year later, an American District was formed within the VGL, AF&AM. Then, on 2 June, 1962, representatives of the American and Canadian lodges in Germany met, obtained a promise for the formation of a provincial grand lodge, and elected Peter M. Rasmussen to be the provincial grand master when it was formed. Finally, on 29 September, 1962, the Warrant establishing the American Canadian Provincial Grand Lodge was presented to R. W. Bro. Peter M. Rasmussen at Frankfurt am Main.

Obviously, our history is one we can all be proud of, but we should never be willing to rest on our laurels.

In April, I challenged each lodge to return to the basics to achieve these goals:

- Better care for our Brethren, especially for their widows and our old and infirm members;
- Support of the Masonic Service Association's Hospital Visitation Program;
- Establishment of a presence in the community (making the community care about your presence and your charter);
- Improved ritual exemplification and meaningful Masonic instruction in every meeting;
- Recognition of worthy Brothers through the awards program of the ACGL, and the establishment of an awards program in your own lodge; and
- Better communication with the Brethren here and overseas.

I also promised the Grand Lodge would help you achieve each of these goals, recognizing all the while that the final success of any effort is squarely in the hands of the officers and members of the individual lodges. Accordingly, Grand Lodge has:

- Set up a charity to support the Hospital Visitation Program of the MSA, to which many Lodges have already contributed one dollar per member;
- Established an active public relations program which has produced news releases on Masonic activities in military publications like the Stars and Stripes and local post publications, in local German newspapers, and even in Masonic publications in the United States;
- Begun preparation of TACT ("The American Canadian Trestleboard"), an ACGL magazine which will be provided to each lodge in quantities sufficient to provide one to each member.
- Developed a Grand Lodge Lecture System, published a guidebook and provided a speaker to explain the program at district workshops and lodges; and
- Provided "Directly from the Grand Master" to each lodge each month, articles in The ACGL Communicator, and an explanation of Solicitation, all of which were suitable for and should have been used for lodge instruction.

Now, every Mason should ask whether his lodge has taken advantage of the programs offered by the Grand Lodge; whether it has improved its work in the community and its efforts on behalf of its members; and whether it has done an adequate job of seeing that worthy brothers are recognized with ACGL or lodge awards. Positive answers to all three of these questions are needed if we are to move forward.

So, where is it we want to go?

- Toward the achievement of our goal of a one dollar per member donation to the support of the MSA Hospital Visitation Program;
- Toward development of a viable Drug and Alcohol Education for Youth Program;
- Into a closer bond with our German Brothers and with our Brothers at home through active intervisitation and effective trestleboards;
- Into the eye of the public, by making your lodge a visible and important partner of your community;
- Onward in our search for light, toward a Fraternity well grounded in the basics of Masonic education;
- Closer to that fast approaching goal of having a home of our own for our Grand Lodge;
- Full steam ahead on the Grand Lodge Lecture System; and, finally
- Into the next year with hope and enthusiasm as we prepare to celebrate the culmination of a full quarter of a century of English speaking Masonry in Germany.

For most Lodges in the ACGL, this date falls in the first month of the term of office of the new officers, and I congratulate each and every one. But don't forget in the excitement of your installation that this is the time for all of us to look ahead to meeting the goals of tomorrow. These are now your challenges.'

So, Happy Birthday this

29<sup>th</sup> day of September 1986



R.W. Gerhard Severin  
Grand Master

*Directly from the Grand Master*  
American Canadian Grand Lodge AF & AM

## You are Responsible !

September is the month of elections in this Grand Jurisdiction, the month each Lodge selects the men who will lead it through the coming Masonic year. There is no more critical event in the life of any Lodge than this one. The men you choose on this occasion will determine the quality of the coming year, and may even determine whether your Lodge survives at all. It is essential, therefore, that the Lodge choose wisely, selecting men who understand the very foundations of Masonry, and who — far more importantly — have some vision of what the Lodge and Masonry can accomplish.

It is not unusual in Masonic Lodges to move officers on from one appointed or elected position to another at the annual election. In the majority of cases this custom may work to the advantage of the Lodge if fitness is manifest. However, there is neither law nor tradition which gives any officer of the Lodge a “right” to be thus advanced!

There is no advancement by right. Just as the Vice President of the United States has no “right to advancement”, neither does any elected or appointed Masonic officer. If an officer should not be advanced, neither he nor his friends should take offense. A Brother may be unqualified to hold any Masonic office for any number of reasons, all of them creditable to himself; such a thing could be said of many excellent Masons. They are not cast for office holding, and will themselves be happier, and their Lodge is the better, if they use other opportunities for service. If a Lodge cannot “drop from the line” any incumbent without engendering ill feelings there-by, it needs to instill into its members a clearer conception of the Masonic system and a feeling of greater loyalty to its welfare.

It is clear why we cannot ever acknowledge an automatic right of advancement. To do so would say to a newly elected or appointed officer, “no matter how weak, or untalented, or lazy, or disruptive you may be, when the time comes you will be moved on.” Such an attitude flies in the face of that directive which charges us to always strive to emulate “who

best can work and best agree.” Our institution is too important for anyone ever to believe he has a right to advancement, whether he serves at the Lodge or Grand Lodge level.

The final responsibility for the quality of the leadership of your Lodge or Grand Lodge rests entirely with you. If you elect good men, yours will be a vibrant, exciting Lodge. It is your responsibility to ensure that you elect the best qualified men for each of the offices in your Lodge.

I would like to see a Brother in office who can motivate and lead by precept and example; one who is a Master of the work in every respect. Do not vote for “good ole’ Joe”. Look for the right Brother for the right job. Whether you are accepting an office or casting a ballot, do not short change your Lodge!

Harmony is the strength and support of all institutions, especially this of ours, and you do your Lodge, Masonry, and yourself a great disservice if you walk out on your Brothers because you did not get an elected or appointed office, or if you did not vote solely for the good of the Lodge.



R.W. Gerhard Severin  
Grand Master

*Directly from the Grand Master*  
American Canadian Grand Lodge AF & AM

Let us celebrate St. John's Day !

The early Christian church adopted the two pagan celebrations of the summer and winter solstices and consecrated them as St. John the Baptist Day in summer and St. John the Evangelist Day in winter. On our modern calendar, these two celebrations fall on 24 June and 27 December, respectively.

In later years, as guilds and associations formed, civil law and religious ordinances began to require every chartered body of men to have a Patron Saint, to observe that Saint's day as a holiday, and to "march in procession as a body on that day . . . dressed in ceremonial clothing and carrying a banner". Consequently, by the 16th Century, Masonry had begun to associate herself with the Saints John, and it is from this association that our ritual draws that oft-repeated phrase. . . and dedicated to the memory of the Holy Saints John". Therefore, it has been quite innocently assumed within the Craft — over a span of several centuries — that these two Saints were themselves members of the Fraternity. It was thus fitting and proper that on 24 June, 1717, it was at the "Assembly and Feast of the Free and Accepted Masons" in London that the first Grand Lodge of Free Masons was formed.

But have we ever taken the time to fully comprehend and appreciate just what this dedication symbolizes?

Although it is certainly appropriate to inquire whether Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist were really members of our Craft, and whether the "Lodge of the Holy Saints John of Jerusalem" ever really existed, it is not so much the pure fact about which we need be concerned. It is, rather, the truth of the tenets, principles, and ideals of our Fraternity — which are revealed within a system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols — which should interest us.

While Masonic scholars have clearly shown us that the Saints John were not Masons and that such a "Lodge of the Holy Saints John of Jerusalem" never existed, we cannot completely discard it as fiction. Our connection to these Patron Saints is an ideal and, to be sure, ideals make our Masonic growth exciting, refreshing and meaningful. What has resulted is our

commitment to a perfect and ideal lodge within an imperfect and unsure world. We therefore dedicate our Craft to Saint John the Baptist and Saint John the Evangelist whose virtues, rectitude of conduct and philosophies provide us a basis for emulation.

Since those early days, tradition has maintained our observance of the Day of our Patron Saint John the Baptist throughout the world and especially within Europe. Installations, annual communications, and feasts are held by our sister German Lodges as near 24 June as possible and provide us a unique opportunity to share with them in the celebration of Saint John the Baptist's Day. These celebrations, especially in what in Germany are called Johannes Logen, are special occasions to behold, and a Mason who does not avail himself of the opportunity to visit at this time of year does himself a great disservice.

The celebration usually begins with degree work in a tyled Lodge, and is then followed by a festive board which is not open to non-Masons. After the festive board (and sometimes during), family members are invited to join in the celebration. Quite often, the transfer of the Master's gavel occurs on this occasion, and in many areas several Lodges unite to make this an especially meaningful Masonic affair.

We, too, as English-speaking Masons within the United Grand Lodges of Germany, should pause and reflect on the significance of this special day—and join with our German Brothers in this tradition. I encourage every Master, Lodge officer and Brother to celebrate this day, and to coordinate with your sister Lodge(s) to ensure your Lodge is well represented in their Celebration and Feast of Saint John the Baptist.

Ours is a truly universal Brotherhood; how better to demonstrate that than to join with our German Brothers in this most traditional and august Masonic celebration during the month of June.



R.W. Gerhard Severin  
Grand Master

*Directly from the Grand Master*  
American Canadian Grand Lodge AF & AM

## BEYOND CLICHÉS !

Membership losses continue to be an issue of grave concern to Masonry everywhere. So serious are these losses that every Masonic organization — from Craft lodges to concordant and appendant bodies have expressed great concern.

The Masonic Service Association reports that, in 1985 alone, U.S. Grand Lodges lost a total of 77,662 members by death or suspensions. Only two Grand Lodges still had memberships over 200,000, and as of this year, only the Grand Lodge of Ohio stands at a number greater than that.

Only two Grand Lodges showed a gain in 1985 — Alaska with a gain of 132 (92 of those were only because Adak Lodge transferred from the Grand Lodge of Washington to the Grand Lodge of Alaska), and Nevada, which gained seven. In the past ten years, American Masonry has lost fully a quarter of its members — nearly a million Masons!

When faced with these stark numbers, we too often respond with that same old cliché — "I'd rather have quality than quantity", as though there is some law which dictates that you can't have both. It is time for us to forget those old clichés — which really serve as excuses for inaction — and do some-thing. That is why I am reprinting here an address by the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Northern Jurisdiction, U.S.A.. I believe he lays out the problem in a way that every caring Mason will understand.

Those of you who genuinely care about Freemasonry will take up his challenges and work to strengthen our institution; those of you who are satisfied with the old clichés will make no difference and probably should read no further.

*Gerhard W. Severin*  
Grand Master

# Our Mission As Masons

The following is an excerpt from the Allocution delivered by the Sovereign Grand Commander at the Annual Meeting of the Supreme Council at Cincinnati on September 23.

By FRANCIS G. PAUL, 33°

A year ago, Ill.: Stanley Fielding Maxwell, 33°, stood before you to deliver his last words as your Sovereign Grand Commander. He spoke to you from the perspective of two decades of outstanding leadership in Freemasonry and the Scottish Rite.

More than anything else, Commander Maxwell's commitment to Freemasonry and his accomplishments have served as a fitting beginning for my tenure as your Commander.

During this past year, I have spent much time traveling across the 15 states of our Northern Masonic Jurisdiction listening to Masonic leaders and members of the Scottish Rite, York Rite and Grand Lodges.

As a result of what I have heard over and over again, I can come to only one conclusion: Unless we take drastic and concerted action immediately, Freemasonry, as we have known it in this country, is faced with the possibility of virtual extinction within two generations.

A year ago, a special report to the Supreme Council underscored the seriousness of the decline in Masonic membership by labeling it "a fatal trend." Even though the words may cause us to wince, they force us to face the brutal truth of what is happening to Freemasonry at this very moment.

Unfortunately, there are forces within Freemasonry that would have us turn our heads whenever the membership issue is raised. We just cannot do that!

But what worries me most is that we seem to be awash in a sea of lethargy. We are less than eager to face the arduous challenges. Tragically, we are simply passing on the Masonic membership problem from one man to another, from one era to the next. This has been going on for far too long and it must stop. If we continue on our present path the results will be disastrous.

I am here to suggest that unless we make membership a number one priority, the membership decline will indeed be fatal! Frankly, I do not want it said of me that I permitted the eventual formation of a "Last Man Lodge" because of my lack of commitment.

Almost a half century ago, it took a Pearl Harbor for this nation to realize that our country was in mortal jeopardy. What will it take for us to recognize that our fraternity is in danger of extinction? No one dare say that "I've done my part" No one dare think that this is someone else's problem. No one dare believe that a miracle will occur and "membership" will go automatically in the other direction.

The basic question before us is this: What are we going to do about “the fatal trend” both in membership and participation? Are we going to ignore these problems? Are we going to pretend they don’t exist? Are we going to pass them on to others? Or, are we going to accept the responsibility which is ours?

So far as I am concerned, there is no choice. We must go to work and save our Freemasonry from extinction. We must use our Scottish Rite leadership, talent, and resources to assist the Grand Lodges, as well as other Masonic bodies, whenever and wherever they ask for our help. Masons in America should be on the same team. Now, we must all go in the same direction—quickly.

As I have said, the most pressing task before us is overcoming the lethargy within Masonry. Whether we like to hear it or not, there are many of our own members who are less than convinced that our fraternity has a bright future. As a result, they lack zest and enthusiasm.

In the same way, we need to take a close look at our own personal commitment to Freemasonry. It is easy to find excuses for doing little or nothing. We must expect more from ourselves and all our Masonic leaders. Our standards of performance must be the highest. We must expand our horizons. If our fraternity is going to move forward, every step will be taken by those of us who are willing to work harder than ever.

The major task before us now is to demonstrate both to our members and to other good and true men across this nation that Masonry stands for something significant, something valuable, something worthwhile. We must become a fraternity with a renewed sense of mission.

At the very heart of that mission are our charitable endeavors. Just as we believe it possible for men to improve their character by dedicating themselves to the highest and best, so we must be committed to improving the world in which we live. We must communicate the important message that Masons care.

It is time for us to discover anew that charitable activity is not a burden thrust upon us, but an opportunity to demonstrate our Masonic Light. Unless Masons believe that our fraternity is making valuable contributions to the improvement of human life, they will continue to be less than motivated members. Unless men who share our beliefs can actually see what Masonry can do to improve the world, they will show no interest in becoming part of our fraternity.

---

***What are we going to do about “the fatal trend” both in membership and participation?***

---

---

***We must  
become a  
fraternity with a  
renewed sense  
of mission.***

---

When all else has been said, the final test is still performance. All that really endures is what we have accomplished.

Unless we act; unless we make a commitment to excellence; unless we use our resources to rebuild Freemasonry, there is a small handful of men at this moment in this country who may eventually become the members of the "Last Man Lodge."

So let us ask ourselves, is that to be our legacy? Is that how we are willing to be remembered? Is that your gift and mine to our great fraternity?

In a recent commencement address to the graduates of Wake Forest University, the famed satirist Garry Trudeau offered this simple assessment "One of the things that has always distinguished this country from many others is that we've always challenged ourselves to do better ... *This* is the true glory of America. This hope is what stirs me as a patriot"

This is the same hope that stirs me as a Mason. We have always believed that it is better to be better. That is our Masonic message. That is the true glory of Masonry.

With a new sense of dedication and a fervent commitment to excellence, we can and we will turn around "the fatal trend." It will not, and cannot, happen instantly, but it will happen.

If we are willing to give our best and to do our best, if we are willing to meet only the highest standards, then "the fatal trend" will fade into history. And, in its place will be a new and stronger Masonic movement. That's our goal. That's our mission. That's our task. The time to begin is now.

Reprinted from *The Northern Light*, November, 1986. *The Northern Light* is the official publication of the Supreme Council, 33° Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Northern Jurisdiction, U.S.A.