

THE SPRIG

JANUARY 2011

ACACIA LODGE 94 ANCIENT FREE MASONS COLUMBIA, SC

Volume 16 Issue 1

2011 OFFICERS

Jeffrey Hall WM
Rick Sirmons SW
Richard Miner JW
Art Ford Treas.
Jack Coker Sec.
Doug Hall SD
John Rotureau JD
Tom Rotureau Stew
Roger Doyon Stew
Thomas Baker Tyler
Charles Marthers Organ

JANUARY BRITHDAYS

Jack Parker, Jr
Dr. J. Leonard Balsler
Samuel E. G. Linyard
G. Larry Railey
Jason Chitum
Charles D. Williamson
Robert K. Strickland
Thomas Monahan
James T. Davis

ANNIVERSARIES

Mr. & Mrs. Roger Doyon
65 Years
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Coker
57 Years

NEWS OF INTEREST

Condolences to Bro Bill Chichester and his family on the death of his father-in-law

Sickness:

W/B Ivan Wells spent some time in the hospital with complications from a previous foot injury and surgery.

FROM THE EAST By JEFF HALL WM

Welcome to the first edition of the Sprig of Acacia for 2011. I hope everyone had a joyous Holiday Season and enjoyed some down time with friends and family. I am excited about the ensuing Masonic Year and I look forward to serving you as Worshipful Master for 2011. I am both thankful and humbled by this high honor and I pray that I will live up to your expectations.

Congratulations go out to Bro. Travis Whitfield and Bro. Jared Smith on the birth of their baby girls. It's a special bond that Dad's share with their daughters and I know you both are proud new Dad's. I hope the Mom's and new girls are all doing well. We have a special place reserved for pictures of these little angels when we get them.

I would also like to con-

gratulate Bro. Roger Doyon and Mrs. Edwina who celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary on December 12th and also, congratulations go out to WB Jack Coker and Mrs. Carol who celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary on December 18th. This is quite an accomplishment and I wish you all many more happy years together.

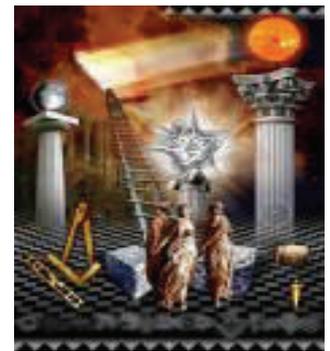
Congratulations are also in order to Bro. Roger Doyon who was honored at our Ladies and Awards night. On behalf of the Past Masters of Acacia Lodge, WB Jack Coker presented Brother Roger with a plaque honoring his dedication and support of Acacia Lodge and conferred upon him the title of Honorary Past Master.

I am looking forward to our two new Brothers taking their second step in Masonry on January 20th when we will

confer the Fellow Craft Degree pending a favorable ballot and suitable proficiency.

Lastly, the 10th District Instructional meeting will be held at the Scottish Rite Temple on Friday, January 21st at 6:30pm. A meal will be served at no cost. All Lodge officers are required to attend.

Happy New Year to you one and all and, may the Supreme Architect continue to guide us and bless our great Fraternity.



FROM THE WEST By Rick Sirmons PM

Masonic Education

1. WALKING BETWEEN THE ALTAR AND THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER:

Brethren do not pass between the Altar and the East when the lodge is open except in the work of the Lodge.

Why? As a courtesy to the Master, it is necessary that the three Great Lights which shine their eternal light and wisdom upon the Master to help him govern the lodge

should never be in shadow, not even for a millisecond, during the processes of an initiation or degree work.

2. SITTING IN THE EAST:

Brethren do not take a seat in the East without an invitation... even if all other seats are full.

Why? While all Brethren within a tiled room are equal to one another, and the officers are servants of the brethren, all lodge officers have worked and studied long and hard for their lodge. It is, therefore, the Master's prerogative to recog-

nize this devotion and their loyalty by inviting distinguished visitors or a special member whom the Master wishes to honor to sit with him in the East.

3. ALWAYS FULLY DRESSED:

Brethren do not enter their Lodge room either without their apron nor while putting on that apron... not even the tying of its strings.

Why? In respect to the formalities of their lodge



Brother Roger Doyon Receives Honorary Past Master Award at Ladies and Awards Night



Part Grand Master G Ray Marsh presents Bro Teddy Orvin with his 40 year award



Part Grand Master G Ray Marsh presents Bro Edward R. Thomas, Sr. with his 50 year award



Richland County Sheriff Leon Lott speaks at Ladies and Awards Night

officers expect that the Brethren will have the courtesy to enter it fully dressed and ready for the labor. They should not have to wait for a member to be fully "dressed", even just tying or adjusting their apron, to salute that member. It is expected that you will be properly and entirely dressed when you pass by the Tiler and enter your lodge room.

4. STAND WHEN YOU SPEAK:

No man sits while speaking in the lodge room with the exception of the Worshipful Master, no matter if he addresses an officer or another brother.

Why? All lodge activity is based on each man in the lodge as being a servant of the Brethren. This includes the Worshipful Master and his officers. While the man, himself, who has been elected Worshipful Master does not gain any special honor,

personally, as the Worshipful Master, it is to the Worshipful Master as the Master of the Lodge that a member stands to address. It is simply a form of respect ...and no different than attending a shareholder's meeting or a City Council meeting. It is expected that if you wish to address the audience, you will stand so all may see who is speaking.

5. TALKING:

"Side" talk while a degree is being conferred is considered bad manners.

Why? The lodge room is a Temple of the Great Architect of the Universe. The brethren within are working to make the best ashlar (stones) for His spiritual temple. Just as it is impolite to talk in a church, synagogue or mosque service, so it is improper to distract the officers, the workers in the degree or the candidate. Talking without asking to do

shows irreverence for the proceedings. God's house is not for social conversation within the lodge room. It is for worship and learning the lesson of the day which is being taught. Unless you have requested of the Master to speak, silence is the rule. This also means no whispering.

HOW? If you have something of interest to say, raise your hand. When the Master recognizes you, you must stand up, and be recognized by the Master to speak. To address the brethren, you should say: "Worshipful Master, Right Worshipfuls, Worshipfuls, Wardens and Brethren". If the Most Worshipful Master is in attendance, you should say: "Worshipful Master, Most Worshipful, Right Worshipfuls, Worshipfuls, Wardens and Brethren.

FROM THE SOUTH By Richard Miner PM

Greetings from the South, I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas and I wish you a Happy and Healthy New Year.

My congratulations to our new Worshipful Master, Jeff Hall. I am looking forward to a great year with the leadership of our new officers.

Thanks to each of you for electing me to once again as your Junior Warren. It is my pleasure to be able to serve the Lodge, however I am going to need your help. In addition to the duties of Junior Warden, I will be publishing the Sprig newsletter each

month and encourage everyone to feel free to support our newsletter by submitting articles, particularly ones that tell something about you and your experiences. Each of us has a story about the history of the Lodge, or a personal experience about how Masonry has affected your life. Please share these stories with the brethren. WB Jim Neal has offered to be our editor so if you feel you are not perfect writers and need some help writing articles he is willing to assist. To stay on schedule, I need to receive your copy by the 15th of each month.

As most of you know, Carol Coker's knee surgery is planned for January 27. We need to keep her in our thoughts and prayers. However, this along with my limited culinary skills means that I will need any help you can provide in preparing our meals. If you can bring a dessert, a salad, or any other dish, it will be greatly appreciated by both me and the brethren. Just let me know in advance so that we do not all show up with the same dish.

Let's all get behind our new line of officers and make this another great year

ARTICLE SUBMITTED By WB JIM NEAL PM

Here's a 'today' Yule story that occurred 3 weeks ago ~ AND NOW, in time for the holidays, I bring you the best Christmas story you never heard.

It started last Christmas, when Bennett and Vivian Levin were overwhelmed by sadness while listening to radio reports of injured American troops. "We have to let them know we care," Vivian told Bennett. So they organized a trip to bring soldiers from Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Hospital to the annual Army-Navy football game in Philly, on Dec. 3.

The cool part is, they created their own train line to do it. Yes, there are people in this country who actually own real trains. Bennett Levin - native Philly guy, self-made millionaire and irascible former L&I commish - is one of them. He has three luxury rail cars. Think mahogany paneling, plush seating and white-linen dining areas. He also has two locomotives, which he stores at his Juniata Park train yard. One car, the elegant Pennsylvania, carried John F. Kennedy to the Army-Navy game in 1961 and '62. Later, it carried his brother Bobby's body to D. C. for burial. "That's a lot of history for one car," says Bennett.

He and Vivian wanted to revive a tradition that endured from 1936 to 1975, during which trains carried Army-Navy spectators from around the country directly to the stadium where the annual game is played. The Levin's could think of no better passengers to reinstate the ceremonial ride than the wounded men and women recovering at Walter Reed in D. C. and Bethesda, in Maryland. "We wanted to give them a first-class experience," says Bennett. "Gourmet meals on board, private transportation from the train to the stadium, perfect seats - real hero treatment."

Through the Army War College Foundation, of which he is a trustee, Bennett met with Walter Reed's commanding general, who loved the idea. But Bennett had some ground rules first, all designed to keep the focus on the troops alone: No press on the trip, lest the soldiers' day of pampering devolve into a media circus. No politicians either, because, says Bennett, "I didn't want some idiot making this trip into a campaign photo op" And no Pentagon suits on board, otherwise the soldiers would be too busy saluting superiors to relax. The general agreed to the conditions, and Bennett realized he had a problem on his hands. "I had to actually make this thing happen," he laughs.

Over the next months, he recruited owners of 15 other sumptuous rail cars from around the country - these people tend to know each other - into lending their vehicles for the day. The name of their temporary train? The Liberty Limited. Amtrak volunteered to transport the cars to D. C. - where they'd be coupled together for the round-trip ride to Philly - then back to their owners later.

Conrail offered to service the Liberty while it was in Philly. And SEPTA drivers would bus the disabled soldiers 200 yards from the train to Lincoln Financial Field, for the game. A benefactor from the War College ponied up 100 seats to the game - on the 50-yard line - and lunch in a hospitality suite. And corporate donors filled, for free and without asking for publicity, goodie bags for attendees:

From Woolrich, stadium blankets. From Wal-Mart, digital cameras. From Nikon, field glasses. From GEAR, down jackets. There was booty not just for the soldiers, but for their guests, too, since each was allowed to bring a friend or family member. The Marines, though, declined the offer. "They voted not to take guests with them, so they could take more Marines," says Levin, choking up at the memory.

Bennett's an emotional guy, so he was worried about how he'd react to meeting the 88 troops and guests at D. C.'s Union Station, where the trip originated. Some GIs were missing limbs. Others were wheelchair-bound or accompanied by medical personnel for the day. "They made it easy to be with them," he says. "They were all smiles on the ride to Philly. Not an ounce of self-pity from any of them. They're so full of life and determination."

At the stadium, the troops reveled in the game, recalls Bennett. Not even Army's lopsided loss to Navy could deflate the group's rollicking mood. Afterward, it was back to the train and yet another gourmet meal - heroes get hungry, says Levin - before returning to Walter Reed and Bethesda. "The day was spectacular," says Levin. "It was all about these kids. It was awesome to be part of it."

The most poignant moment for the Levin's was when 11 Marines hugged them goodbye, then sang them the Marine Hymn on the platform at Union Station. "One of the guys was blind, but he said, 'I can't see you, but man, you must be beautiful!'" Says Bennett. "I got a lump so big in my throat, I couldn't even answer him."

It's been three weeks, but the Levin's and their guests are still feeling the day's love. "My Christmas came early," says Levin, who is Jewish and who loves the Christmas season. "I can't describe the feeling in the air." Maybe it was hope. As one guest wrote in a thank-you note to Bennett and Vivian, "The fond memories generated last Saturday will sustain us all - whatever the future may bring." God bless the Levin's. And bless the troops, every one.

PUBLISHERS NOTE: Each month this space will be reserved for articles submitted by the brethren. Articles can be sent to rminer@sc.rr.com.