

JUNE 2021

# rite now

THE MAGAZINE OF THE VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH



THE MASONIC LIFESTYLE

[valleyofpittsburgh.org](http://valleyofpittsburgh.org)

## In Memoriam

Since our last issue, the following members of the Valley of Pittsburgh have been called home:

**Ill. Richard L. Hudson, MSA, 33°**

**Ill. Owen L. Lewis Jr., MSA, 33°**

William W. Aggers  
Douglas A. Armbrust  
Edward J. Blasco  
George G. Broadright  
Robert E. Clager Jr.  
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John Robert Grayson  
Donald Jack Hepler  
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John W. Klooster  
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Clarence H. Ritter Jr.  
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**rite**now

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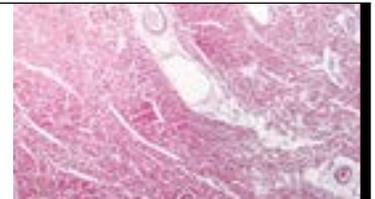
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## on the cover

The Scottish Rite's "Not Just a Man. A Mason." campaign (NotJustAMan.org) shows so many facets of what it means to live a Masonic life—perhaps none more than the one on our cover which is accompanied by the tagline, "It's amazing how much you get back when you give." That is the true lifestyle of a Mason. I encourage you to take a look at the rest of the images. Use them on your social media pages. Show the world that you are a part of something amazing.

# The Active

A message from the Supreme Council Active for Pennsylvania

SUPREME COUNCIL

## A Breed Apart

By Paul J. Roup, 33°

As we close out the requested 15 ~~days~~ ~~weeks~~ months to flatten the curve, one thing is clear in my mind: Masons are good. It's not as if this came as a startling revelation—I was sure of it even before I knelt at the altar nearly 24 years ago. It's just that the pitfalls, peculiarities, and problems of the pandemic have brought it into crisp focus. The great toilet paper shortage of 2020 seems like a fuzzy memory if not a dream. I know that some self-absorbed people bought more meat than they could consume in a year, hoarded cleaning supplies as if they would be the sole survivors of the coming apocalypse, and when they realized their mistake, compounded it by trying to cash in by gouging those who truly needed those things.

Those memories have faded a bit for me, but the kindness of the men who have chosen to live the Masonic lifestyle still live vividly in the forefront of my mind. Instead of profiting from the crisis, Masons gave their surplus PPE to their Brothers to help them stay safe. Some delivered groceries to our more at-risk members, and others spent time and money helping their Brothers take care of things like

haircuts, home repairs, and other items that businesses labeled “non-essential” were not permitted to provide at the time.

In short, we lived true to our teachings. We viewed the Masonic ideals of Brotherly Love, Relief, and

We viewed the Masonic ideals of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth as a meaningful part of our oath rather than some loose concept that we pay lip service to.

Truth as a meaningful part of our oath rather than some loose concept that we pay lip service to. Further, we used the Core Values of Integrity, Justice, Tolerance, Love of God, Devotion to Country, and Service as ways to measure our actions in the face of the unknown we were facing as a people.

We stood true to those concepts. We stood true and the world noticed. During a time that everyone else

chose to pull inward, we reached out. The result was an influx—small, but an influx nonetheless. We brought in members when others were busy shaking their heads and bemoaning their fate. We are a long way from saying the decline in membership is over, but we stand at a crossroad of opportunity. We need to continue to demonstrate to the world outside just who the Masons are. Live true to our tenets. Be a light in a dark time. Show them that Freemasons are a breed apart. □



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# The Chief

A message from the Commander-in-Chief of the Valley of Pittsburgh

CONSISTORY

## Pride (In the Name of Love)

By Rodney E. Boyce, 33°

Many of you probably got the (not so) subtle reference to my favorite band, U2, in the title of this article...

*One man come in the name of love,  
One man come and go,  
One man come, he to justify,  
One man to overthrow.*

It's a great song. And I couldn't think of a more fitting title for this article.

It never ceases to amaze me. As I was creating the layout for this issue of *RiteNow* focusing on the Masonic Lifestyle how truly thankful I am—and that we all are as a Valley—to have a solid rank of officers and volunteers who give greatly of their time and energy to such a magnificent magazine.

Over the past several issues, our presiding officers have shared lasting memories and personal experiences with us. They have striven to keep our valued members engaged during these difficult times of limited in-person gatherings.

Our contributors have continued to bring content of great interest and value. They are a great group of Scottish Rite Masons who are willing to share personal and professional skills, experiences, and knowledge with us in each issue.

We get to hear about the great works of our Children's Dyslexia Center. We get updates on how we are still able to provide services during the pandemic through the creativity of the staff and volunteers. And we get to read the personal thank yous of many of the young people we have helped.

*In the name of love,  
What more in the name of love,  
In the name of love,*

*What more in the name of love.*

I'm sure I  
am not alone  
when I say  
you have made  
me better.

This song was written about the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968. I would also like to use these words to honor all of you in 2021: the officers, the volunteers, the

contributors, and most especially YOU—the members of this Valley.

I'm sure I am not alone when I say you have made me better.

It is a pleasure to serve as your Commander in Chief, and I so look forward to the next few months as we return to in-person gatherings and some form of normalcy.

That is the Masonic Lifestyle for me. And I hope for you too.

**together we are one.**



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# The Potent

A message from the Thrice Potent Master of the Gourgas Lodge of Perfection

LODGE OF PERFECTION

## Circle of Friends

By David L. Moore, 33°

I truly hope that by the time you read this article, we have been able to meet in person for the June Stated meeting and have had the ability to somewhat get back on track as a Valley and as friends. When I think about the Masonic lifestyle, the first thing that comes to mind is the relationships that I have built during my time as a Freemason.

We often hear people talk about what it means to them to be a Mason. There are many kinds of Masons. There are those who search for the esoteric meanings of the degrees. There are Masons who love to perform the ritual for others—either on stage or in the Blue Lodge. There are those who are here for the social activities and fun. That is one of the greatest things about Freemasonry and especially the Scottish Rite: we can meet the needs of all those groups.

For those scholarly types, we have the *Hauts Grades Academy* and several online forums that search for the deeper meanings of our work. For those who love the degree work and putting on the show, we have opportunities to participate in the reunions or Ghost Light Productions. For those who look for opportunities

for service, we have the Children's Dyslexia Center and the work of the Hospitaler. For those looking for social activities, we have the Car Club, the CigaRite, the Rite Lightning events, and the fellowship of our

regular gatherings. Having all of these opportunities in one place is what makes the Scottish Rite so great. Like most of you, I belong to many Masonic organizations. Some of them are dedicated to the study and research of the Fraternity and its deeper meanings, while others are mainly focused on the social and fun aspects found in Masonic fellowship. The difference between those organizations and Scottish Rite is that we are a one-

stop shop. We are kind of like the Walmart of Freemasonry. We have some of everything to help you make Freemasonry fit your needs and desires.

As I look back over the last year, the things that I have missed the most are the things that I do with the Scottish Rite.

As I look back over the last year, the things that I have missed the most are the things that I do with the Scottish Rite. I have not felt a loss in my life because I could not go to my Blue Lodge and listen to the same meeting that I have heard every month for the past 23 years; what I have missed very much are the reunions and the



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practices leading up to them. Some the best Scottish Rite stories happen because of mishaps at practices. The social events, like the music acts and the Ghost Light shows, are always great programs that bring us all together on a different level.

As a nurse, I work in a predominantly female environment. Because of that, my time at Masonic functions is my primary social time with the guys. So, when I think about the Masonic lifestyle, this is what frames the context for me. I

used to get my male social time through my activities with the Volunteer Fire Department. But as my situation changed due to work and family commitments, it became more difficult to remain involved. I had belonged to the lodge for several years but had never been active. One night, I decided to go to a lodge practice to see what it was all about. I was very quickly hooked. A short time later, I convinced my

father to come to a practice with me, and he got the bug also. We both started getting more involved and went through the chairs together. What I found in the lodge was a new circle of friends that had a common interest in Freemasonry and had such varied personal and work life backgrounds. This new circle of friends became some of the most influential people in my life; They were friends and mentors to me in so many ways. They taught me degree work and how to be a good officer, but along the way, I

also got valuable information on how to be a better man. When we hear “Masons make good men better,” we may think that that is a hokey response people give because they don’t really know how to answer questions about what we do. However, nothing could be further from the truth. We do make good men better.

As I get older and look back on that time of learning the work and progressing through the chairs, I realize that nobody ever said, “Here.

You need to learn this to be a better man.” But I learned a lot of valuable lessons without even realizing it. These lessons are not ones that can be taught like memorizing lines. They are learned from watching the venerable old sage who has loads of knowledge; he never has a bad word to say about anyone and can always make you see the other side of an argument. The same can be said about the wise cracker who

is always ready with a joke and a smile that can brighten your day regardless of how bad it seems. Even the grumpy old Past Master who is quick to let you know, “That’s not how we did it in my day” has a lesson to teach us. These are the things that make us better men.

The thing that I have found to be most satisfying about my Masonic lifestyle has been to always keep expanding my circle of friends. I started with a circle at the Blue Lodge, then expanded it to the

The thing that I have found to be most satisfying about my Masonic lifestyle has been to always keep expanding my circle of friends.

district level, then to the Valley, and eventually, the state. The bigger the circle gets, the more I have learned along the way and the more rewarding I have found Freemasonry to be. Each expansion of the circle has brought new people into my life. They have taught me new lessons and exposed me to new experiences—all of which continue to reward me in one way or another. This has allowed me to meet and become friends with people I would never have met in my everyday life. As I examine my life over the time that I have been active with Freemasonry, my group of friends that are non-Masons has shrunk year after year—either because we have drifted apart or they have become part of the fraternity. My wife and I frequently vacation with our Masonic friends, and we make it a point to visit those who have moved away if we happen to be in their vicinity. Over the years, *my* Masonic circle of friends has evolved into our Masonic circle of friends, and we have had some great times and made some great memories because of this ever-expanding circle.

I look forward to getting back to meeting in-person and being able to grow my circle. I encourage each of you to look at your circle of friends. Is it time to expand your circle and try something new? If you decide that it is, I am sure there is an activity or project at the Valley of Pittsburgh that will provide you the opportunity that you are looking for. As we get busy with the events of opening the Valley for business, I encourage you to get involved, get busy, and reach out of your comfort zone to expand your circle.

□

# The Sovereign

A message from the Sovereign Prince of the Pennsylvania Council of Princes of Jerusalem

PRINCES OF JERUSALEM

## The Anguish of Moses

By Mitchell D. Goldstein, 32°

Growing up in a Jewish-Irish section of Brooklyn, I was privileged to go to a Yeshiva—a rather orthodox Jewish parochial school—for 2nd and 3rd grades. Being part of an orthodox community has always underlaid my adult feelings about my relationship with the Great Architect and colored my understanding of the Torah and what it means to me.

My life has changed so dramatically from those days. My parents are gone, my brother lives in California, and my sister, in Maryland. I have no relatives (with whom I would associate) remaining in Brooklyn, and only my nephew and my good college friends remain in New Jersey.

As part of the Yeshiva curriculum, we typically divided the day—as most parochial schools—into religious studies for a half-day and secular studies for the remainder. We usually began with daily prayers for about fifteen minutes, loudly singing and chanting at the top of our lungs. Next, we opened our hard-cover versions of the Torah scrolls which we call a *chumash*—a word meaning ‘five’ and relating to the five major divisions of that holy work. In 2nd grade, soon after learning the very basics of Hebrew (a rather difficult and cumbersome language read in the opposite direction, unfamiliar characters, symbolic vowels and all), we dove into *Bereshit*—the Hebrew name for the first book—denoting its first word, translated as ‘In the Beginning’.

As that year wore on, we worked our way through the entirety of *Bereshit*—the details of the *Mabool* (the great flood), the lives of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs, and ending in stunning fashion with the rather fascinating life of Joseph, Israel’s most beloved son. Joseph, unlike his father, was not a prophet and never spoke to the Lord. He was, however, a man of great intellect and imagination and managed to advance his station in life from being the daydreaming and beloved son of a wealthy nomad to being flung in a pit, to indentured slavery, to becoming an interpreter of dreams, to being a chief adviser to the great Pharaoh. The book ends with Joseph reconciling with his brothers and uttering his last wish: to be buried in the land of his fathers.

Toward springtime, we started to work on the second book of the Torah, which we call *Sh’mot*, from the first words of that book “And these are the names [*sh’mot*] of the Children of Israel.” This book begins with a reminder of Joseph by introducing a new Pharaoh who “did not know Joseph” and either eschewed his nocturnal interpretations or took power after Joseph’s demise. In any case, the setting for the birth of Moses is explained. Moses is born, and once again, a child of Israel is taken into the house of Pharaoh. Like Joseph, Moses’ life will be anything but dull. Unlike Moses, Joseph ultimately returns to the land of the Patriarchs.

Although not widely known by



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those outside Judaism, there are additional stories that we study when we learn Torah called *Midrash* (plural: *Midrashim*) that are intended as commentary to the Torah. These stories frequently fill the sparse areas in the Torah timeline. One of the most well-known *midrash* is the story of Abraham as a child. As a son of a sculptor of idols, he had his revolutionary vision of monotheism very early in his life. As a rebuke to the idolatry of his father, he smashed all of the idols with a wooden club. He left one idol intact and placed the club in that idol's hands. When his outraged father returned, the young Abraham confessed (on the behalf of the remaining idol) that the remaining idol had to be the culprit.



There is a similar *midrash* regarding the early life of Moses, and it is intended to explain why Moses was reluctant, even before the spirit of the Lord in the burning bush, to speak on His behalf. To me, it sets up a life of someone chosen by God for greatness who must at times suffer on the road to doing God's great purpose.

When Moses was a child in the palace of the Pharaoh, he came upon the Pharaoh's crown in his chamber and

placed it on his head. This stunned the court and alarmed the Pharaoh's ministers greatly with concerns that an adopted son might usurp the royal line.

The ministers conspired to give baby Moses a test to see if he had wicked intent. They constructed a test by which gold bars and burning coals would be laid before Moses; if Moses reached for the gold, then the child was of evil imputation and would be dealt with. As Jews, we believe that God protects the ones He has chosen, and when the child went to reach for the shiny, pretty gold bars, an angel of the Lord came and moved the child's hand to the coals. Baby Moses grabbed a coal and put it in his mouth, saving his life but severely burning himself.

Standing before the spirit of the Living God on His holy mountain, Moses was bid by the voice of God to return to Egypt and liberate the Children of Israel. But in his great humility, he spoke: "Please, Lord, I am not now nor have I ever been eloquent, even since you have spoken to me. Heavy and slow are my mouth and my tongue." (Exodus 4:10). Could this be because Moses never recovered from the burns to his mouth? Many theologians and rabbis also speculate that Moses was a stutterer, something I also identify with. In many other cases, Moses asks his brother Aaron to speak to the Israelites on his behalf. Did he have stage fright?

The life of Moses was hard. He inflicted plague after plague upon the innocent Egyptians, whose own Pharaoh had brought upon them by his hardened heart. He endured the sound of death brought on by the last plague, which the Lord passed over the children of Israel and slew every first-born of Egypt. He uprooted and led his people from the only land they

knew to a place they had never been since the 400 years of their captivity. He had to lead them through the wilderness for forty years to expunge the generation who knew slavery. He watched as his people fashioned and bowed down to a golden calf at the foot of God's Mountain.

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"Please, Lord,  
I am not now nor  
have I ever been  
eloquent, even since  
you have spoken to  
me. Heavy and slow  
are my mouth and  
my tongue."

—Exodus 4:10

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Although we had moved from Brooklyn and I went thereafter to public school, I never again studied the Torah so intently. I did manage after some years to come to the end of all five books; Moses, now 120 years old, is standing alone on a solitary mountain and is permitted one short loving glance at the Promised Land before being whisked away to Heaven. A punishment? A special blessing? That is for each to decide for themselves. Joseph was buried near the well on his father's property, in the land promised by the Lord to Jacob's children.

When we come to the Passover season, we focus on the liberation aspect as well as the celebration of spring. We sometimes forget that at the center of this enormous series of fabulous, frightening crises, was one man, and that his personal sacrifice was symbolized by him seeing, but not personally achieving, his life's work.

□

# TheWise

A message from the Most Wise Master of the Pittsburgh Chapter Rose Croix

ROSE CROIX

## Until I Draw My Last Breath

By Kristin M. Douglas, 32°

Hello Brethren. As always, I am hoping this finds you and yours in fine health and enjoying this lovely beginning of summer. Over the past issues, our articles for this magazine have focused on different aspects of Masonry—from service to our fellow man to our own spirituality and onward to ethics and integrity. Each of these topics can be broken down and examined as to how they are influenced by our great Fraternity and its teachings. In this issue, we turn our attention to the overall impact Freemasonry and Scottish Rite have had on our individual lives. What have we learned from the ideals that have been imparted to us throughout our Masonic journeys? Has it been a positive influence in our lives?

Ask any Mason these questions and you will receive vastly different answers spanning the entire spectrum of possible responses. It is a helpful exercise for each of us to take pause and truly examine the impact Freemasonry has had on our lives. In my own experience, I can truthfully say that becoming a Mason was one of the most monumental decisions of my life.

When I think back to how I came to be involved in the Fraternity, I realize just how far I have evolved from my initial impressions. Like many good men before me, I was curious about my friends who wore Masonic rings

and spoke of goings-on at the local lodge. At first, I was tempted to ask about Freemasonry and to become involved simply out of a desire to belong and fit in. Little did I know what lay ahead in my journey. Many of the ideas I had about Freemasonry were completely off base.

When I was made a Mason, I stood in awe of the men before me and the degree work they were performing

from memory. It was only the passage of time and seeing the degrees performed again and again that I would come to understand fully the teachings they contained. Through this involvement, I formed friendships with so many gentlemen that I am blessed to call “Brother.” Along the way, I also found that I had a knack for memorizing ritual and had a deep desire to perform degrees for our new initiates to the best of my ability. It wasn’t long before I made the rounds through the chairs and became Master of my Lodge. My love of performing the work of the lodge can be counted as another positive impact

I can truthfully say that becoming a Mason was one of the most monumental decisions of my life.



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the fraternity has had on my life. My leadership skills have definitely benefited both from my time in the East and as lodge secretary.

My desire to continue my Masonic journey also led me to other appendant bodies including Scottish Rite. After seeing the Scottish Rite degrees performed live on stage, I knew I wanted to be a part of those productions as well. Joining Scottish Rite caused my Masonic circle of friends to explode. I now knew Brothers throughout the Pittsburgh area and its many lodges.

What's more, in Scottish Rite, I found a younger group of men who were willing to put forth additional effort to further the ideals of the Fraternity on a larger stage. Again, it wasn't long until I was involved as an officer on the Rose Croix line where I currently preside as Most Wise Master.

Where my Masonic journey takes me from here, I cannot say. I will say, though, that in the 10 years I have been a Mason, I have developed some of the greatest friendships, met the most uplifting and influential personalities, and experienced a structure and form of ritual that is

truly lacking in almost every aspect of our society today. In just a short time, Freemasonry has seeped into and affected almost every aspect of my life for the better. My time as a Mason has seen me bring my circle of friends (those who were not already Masons) into the Fraternity. It has gotten to a point where almost everyone who is close to me—whether it be a family member or friend—is now a Mason. I can truly say that this great endeavor we call Freemasonry has become my family, and everyone in it is someone that I can trust and turn to when in need. These are the things that I think have impacted me most by becoming a Mason.

We should all stop and think about what positive impacts Freemasonry has had in our lives. Again, the answers will be different for everyone. With all of the issues in today's world that cause strife, we often lose sight of all the many positives being a Mason brings to our lives. As the world's

oldest Fraternity, we must be doing something right. There must be some beacon that draws men with desire to become better to Freemasonry. For over 300 years, we have been a pillar of hope and enlightenment.

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I ask  
each of you  
to pause  
and reflect  
on exactly  
what impact  
Freemasonry  
has had  
in your  
life.

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I know that the friendships I have made here will last a lifetime. The teachings of the ritual, the warmth and friendliness of the lodge room, and the ability to rely on the many men I call Brother will stick with me until I draw my last breath. My love of this great Fraternity is very deep. I ask each of you to pause and reflect on exactly what impact Freemasonry has had in your life. Take time

to push aside the negatives of today's world, and think about how lucky we are to be connected with such a great organization and the Brothers who are a part of it. It is our individual appreciation and dedication that will keep the Craft going for another 300 years.

□



# The Office

A message from the Secretary of the Valley of Pittsburgh

VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH

## New Days and New Ways

By David W. Morgans, 33°

**Greetings** Brethren. It's hard to believe that another Scottish Rite year has come and gone. This certainly has been an interesting, and at times, confusing year due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the related gathering restrictions and safety protocols. The Valley of Pittsburgh is coming back with in-person gatherings again. Our 2021 Spring Class was held in-person, and we welcomed 30 new candidates and 24 initiates who were waiting to receive their 32nd Degree from last year's virtual classes. The 99 gathered members were honored to have the Right Worshipful Grand Master, Thomas Gamon IV, present and to hear him give a hope-filled speech.

We look forward to our in-person Stated Meeting on June 3, 2021. We will, however, still offer an option for our members to attend virtually through the Zoom format. One of the great benefits of all that we have gone through in the past year is that we were forced to adapt to new ways to stay in touch with each other. The virtual formats, whether you like them or not, offer us a way to continue to be in relationship with each other. This

will be important moving forward to allow our members who live out of the area, who have mobility or health issues, or who prefer not to be in large crowds at this time to still be able to login virtually and spend some time with their Brothers.

One of the great benefits of all that we have gone through in the past year is that we were forced to adapt to new ways to stay in touch with each other.

Every June, there is usually a reminder about the upcoming dues notice for the next Scottish Rite year. This year is no exception. The next Scottish Rite year runs from August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022. The dues notices will be arriving in the beginning of August which is about six weeks later than when they would normally come out. Lexington is instituting some changes that will help make dues notice mailing and dues collections more

uniform throughout the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. As always Brethren, if you are experiencing any financial issues that make paying your dues a hardship, please contact the office.

This year, you will notice something different when you receive your notices. Lexington has done away with the permanent membership cards. Beginning this year, there will



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be a new membership card sent with each dues notice. Please make sure that you keep this card when you pay your dues. The card includes your membership ID number which is needed to log into the Member Center on the NMJ website, to participate in the video degree presentations of *Thursday Night at the Rite*, or for any other virtual event held by Supreme Council. You will also need to have your card for admission to various Valley Stated Meetings, Classes/Reunions, Degree exemplifications, or Rite on the Road events.

If you have not yet registered in the Member Center at the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction website, please do so. You can find the Member Center portal at [scottishritenmj.org](http://scottishritenmj.org). By registering in the Member Center, you will be able to manage your own contact information, see your degree history, and see the Valley of Pittsburgh membership statistics. You may also pay your dues through the Member Center and see your payment history.

As times change, our Fraternity must change, and in turn, so must we. Let's embrace the new ways to stay connected, take advantage of the tools at our disposal, and continue to find new ways of learning about the Fraternity we all love.

□



# UniontownUpdate

A message from the Thrice Potent Master of the Valley of Uniontown

VALLEY OF UNIONTOWN

## Masonic Lifestyle

By Kiley B. Sexton, 32°

believes in putting others first and helping those who are in need. He always respects others; we do not always have to agree with someone, but when we listen and show respect, it lets that person know that their opinion matters. Most of the time, that same level of respect will be given in return. I guess you could say, "Treat others as you want to be treated."

I remember entering the lodge room for the first time after having completed my third degree. I was very apprehensive - unsure of what to do or what to say. (After all, it is not easy being the new guy in a new environment.) Upon entering the lodge room, I was greeted by the two gentlemen who inspired me to become a Mason. They took me around the lodge room and introduced me to the other members. Immediately, the tension went away, and a feeling of belonging came over me.

As time went on, I learned a lot. I found out that to a Mason, a handshake is more than a greeting; it is a binding promise. I discovered the value of being a member of a family beyond those related by blood. I especially learned the importance of making "the new guy" feel welcome. These lessons

have become an integral part of the lifestyle I practice both inside and outside of the lodge. I can honestly say that my closest friends are my Brothers within this great Fraternity. We hold the same values, have the same or similar goals, and share the willingness to help each other to learn to improve ourselves daily.

I don't think  
a person  
can ever have  
too many  
friends.

Beyond those lessons, what I value most about my Masonic journey is meeting a new Brother, because that also means making a new friend. I don't think a person can ever have too many friends.

I believe the choices that each of us make on a daily basis define our character as men and Masons. When we live in a way that puts God first, our fellow man second, and materialistic things last, we are showing the world that our priorities are in order. We are living a lifestyle that follows the blueprint that our Creator intended for us. For what does a man gain if he has achieved all the possessions and wealth in the world but has nothing to show on his final judgment day? Our Lord teaches us to love each other as he has loved us.

Living a Masonic lifestyle is a pretty good start. □

When a man becomes a Mason, he not only joins a fraternity, but he also becomes a member of a family which practices integrity, honesty, and selflessness daily. I believe with all my heart that we are the world's oldest fraternity because of the lifestyle we promote. A Mason

# ValleyNews

A collection of recent happenings in the Valley of Pittsburgh

## April Stated Meeting

The April Stated Meeting was once more a hybrid in-person and ZOOM meeting. This month we further honed our ability to broadcast recorded and live content directly to our members via the internet. Brother Peter A. Leary, 33°, and his staff have made tremendous strides over the last few months, as we all continue to learn to work within the requirements of the limitations created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This month, the Gourgas Lodge of Perfection was the host body for the meeting with Brother David L. Moore, 33°, Thrice Potent Master presiding.

The evening's program was an overview of the Scottish Rite with a recorded video presentation created by the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction featuring the numerous services and charitable works that are provided through your membership in Scottish Rite.



## Valley Hosts Leadership Seminar

On Saturday, April 10, the Valley of Pittsburgh hosted Scottish Rite leaders from Valleys throughout Western Pennsylvania at the Council of Deliberation Officer Seminar. Traditionally, this program had been held at the Patton Campus in Elizabethtown, but due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was held at locations throughout the state. Scottish Rite officers had the option to attend at Williamsport, Harrisburg, Allentown, and Pittsburgh and see the presentations via Zoom.

The presentations included *The Functions of the Deputy, Active, and Deputy's Representative* by Brother Pete Kraus; *Traditional and Other Types of Meetings*, by Rodney Boyce and Ted Sizemore; *Installation of Officers*, by Brother Dave Morgans; *Retention Committees, Brother to Brother, and Ambassador Program Highlights*, by Tom Labagh; and *The Valley of Excellence*, by Bob Kefalas. Following lunch, Brothers Bob Stanley and Paul Mummert made a presentation on the staging of degrees for the Directors of Work.



## Monthly CigaRite Events Scheduled



Upcoming events are June 11, July 9, August 13, and September 10. All evenings will be at the Greater Pittsburgh Masonic Center from 6pm-11pm.

On Friday, May 7th, we had the first CigaRite event of the 2021 season. Although it was a cold and rainy evening, we still had 17 in attendance on the patio at the GPMC. It was a fun evening that consisted of watching a couple of really great movies, lots of card playing, and general fellowship with cigars and a few adult beverages.

The CigaRite Club will have meetings at the GPMC for the remainder of the summer on the second Friday of each month June-September. We are working on a few surprises along the way for the summer and possibly a special event coming in October. This is a great low pressure way to introduce potential candidates to the fun side of the Scottish Rite or to just enjoy good fellowship. You don't have to be a cigar smoker to attend. We have several regulars that do not partake of the leaf but still have a great time.

Hope to see you soon!



# Breaking the Fourth Wall

by D. Todd Ballenger, 33°



D. Todd Ballenger, 33°

**“Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.”** —Ferris Bueller

**There is a convention in writing** that dates all the way back to Shakespeare where a character acknowledges the audience’s presence by speaking directly to them as if he knew they were there the whole time. It’s called “breaking the fourth wall.” According to author Judy L. Mohr, “the concept of the fourth wall comes from theater, where the boundary between the players and the audience can be thought of as an invisible wall. Traditionally, the audience can see through this wall, but those on stage cannot.” This convention extends beyond the stage, however, and is seen more and more in television and film (*Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*, perhaps? Anyone? Anyone?).

The idea of breaking the fourth wall in a literary sense is to add another dimension to the story by bringing the audience into the scene and making them feel a part of what is taking place on stage or screen. Oddly enough, this is not entirely unlike challenging yourself to take your own Masonic story and expand it to see how far you can reach with what you’ve learned.

**“The place is like a museum. It’s very beautiful and very cold, and you’re not allowed to touch anything.”**

—Ferris Bueller

Let’s face it: For most of us, joining Freemasonry was a big deal—a very big deal. We all have stories about being ushered into a lodge for the first time, and to the uninitiated, some of those stories might raise eyebrows. The lights and the pageantry—even the grandeur of the ritual itself—make an indelible mark that is at once impressive and a bit frightening. I took my oath seriously and could never imagine taking anything I ever learned

in the lodge outside of those four walls. But if you stop and think about it, was that the actual intent of those who came before us? For many Brothers, Freemasonry is something that is practiced in lodge and should stay in lodge. Rituals are rituals, oaths are oaths, and both have a place. We share them in lodge because we feel comfortable with the Brothers who are there with us. After all, we came in the same way, were initiated with the same words, and were given the same tools with which to work; we share those common bonds when we’re together in lodge. But if Freemasonry is supposed to change *me*, then what happens when I leave the lodge? What happens when I walk outside of those four walls?



**“If you had a car like this, would you take it back right away? Neither would I.”**

—Ferris Bueller

Freemasonry is full of secrets—wonderful secrets, and tools, and stories that are meant to teach us and help us transform ourselves from the rough ashlar of Apprentices to the beautiful works of the Master. Yes, many of these things are meant only to be practiced or displayed in a lodge setting with Brethren present. But as mysterious and inspiring as some of these things may be, not everything was intended to be kept hidden away. Swords, aprons, jewels, and collars are certainly things that we think of as being relegated to our meetings within the lodge room, but those aren’t really what make us Freemasons, are they? Of course not. It is the inward transformation of the man that is important in the Craft, and eventually, many Masons realize that their personal

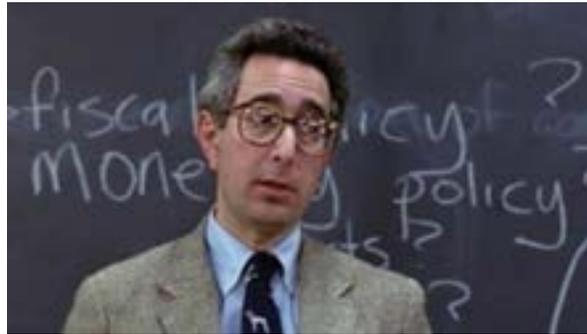
paths of discovery often lead them outside the walls of their lodge. This expansion of boundaries is important for several reasons. Much of what can be learned about the Fraternity isn't available all in one place. Traveling to other lodges, meeting new people, and exploring the more detailed stories and lessons taught in the York and Scottish Rites are all valuable means to increase your knowledge of the Fraternity. But the real test is seeing how acting like a Mason goes over with people outside of the Craft—your family, friends, and even co-workers. This is “breaking the fourth wall” of Freemasonry: applying what you've learned to what you do every day—not just in lodge.

It may seem a bit awkward if you think of it as “practicing Freemasonry” or “living the Masonic lifestyle,” but is it really such a strange way to behave? If you've put in the effort to mold yourself into a better person by practicing the open-mindedness, courteousness, and respectful manners that we try and uphold inside the lodge, why would those actions be unusual or unwelcome when you share them with the rest of your daily audience? Personally, given the state of affairs in the world today, I think we should do a lot more practicing out of the lodge what we've learned while in it. Remember, every human being is entitled to share in what we have learned, but they're not going to get it if we don't break down that fourth wall.

### “Never had one lesson!”

—Ferris Bueller

Indeed, even if you don't feel like you're an expert in ritual or want to be an officer, that doesn't mean you don't have anything to offer your fellow man when you leave the lodge. We're all fond of wearing our rings and shirts and even displaying our Masonic affiliations on our cars. Just remember that when you do that, people will notice. You make yourself an ambassador for the Craft and a representative for your Rite. Make sure that you live up to those standards that are so carefully entrusted to your keeping.



It is a wondrous thing to share knowledge and set a good example. That's why it is so important to give yourself every opportunity not only to learn new applications of Masonic principles (like are taught in the Scottish Rite) but to put them to practical use every day. Even the simplest idea that you take away from something you learn can be a positive influence on someone else. Soon you'll find your confidence growing and discover that striving to live a certain way isn't all that hard.

Life is too short to pass up the opportunity to display and share something good that has happened to you. Enjoy what you have learned, because you have made it a part of you. Share those good things with your family, your friends, and even those at work. Wear the mantle of a Freemason proudly, and be confident that you are doing something positive—not only for yourself but for the world. It will show in your attitude, your commitment, your temperament, and your generosity—all because you broke through the fourth wall and decided to make your audience part of the narrative. □

**“You're still here?  
It's over.  
Go home.  
Go.”**

—Ferris Bueller

# Our Youth

News and information about the Masonic Youth in our Valley

## Pizza Parties!

**Membership** is a main ingredient in fulfilling the DeMolay lifestyle. Although it's important to bring in new members, it's just as important to find ways to retain current members by providing them with a worthwhile experience. Activities that are built to the interest of members will give a chapter a better opportunity to keep members active. Pennsylvania DeMolay has recently committed to providing an event for all of the chapters that succeeded in bringing in new members during 2020. That event is a pizza party hosted by the state leadership.

Five chapters across Pennsylvania successfully inducted more than four new members in 2020. Those chapters are Elizabethtown, Riverside, Chester Pike, Lincoln, and Westmoreland. As a reward for their success, Executive Officer, Rodney E. Boyce, and Director of Membership, J. Mike Larkin, are treating each of those chapters with a pizza party for their members. The chapters are responsible for putting together dates that will work for all involved in the event as well as selecting a location to hold the party. "Dad" Boyce and "Dad" Larkin will be present at the pizza parties to celebrate the chapter's success. The parties will take place once chapters set their locations and dates with the state leadership. This is a great way to build momentum for chapters who recently achieved success in membership, because it will add excitement—giving them the inspiration to create more fun events in the near future. The more interest a member has, the more they will want to participate in the DeMolay experience. □



[pademolay.org](http://pademolay.org)

## Forever Family

**Whether** you became a member as an adult or joined the "family" growing up, we all have a *How I Joined* story. Chances are, your story is similar to mine.

Like many of you, I was born into a Masonic family. My mother was a member of Eastern Star, and my father was a Mason. I became a member of the Rainbow branch of the Masonic family at 12 when my best friend and neighbor invited me to join the small, local Assembly with her. My journey began.

Also, like many of you, I learned to love performing the ritual and doing community service. Shortly after, my father took a new job in Slippery Rock, and we moved to Butler. The first Rainbow stated meeting I attended there had 125 people present!

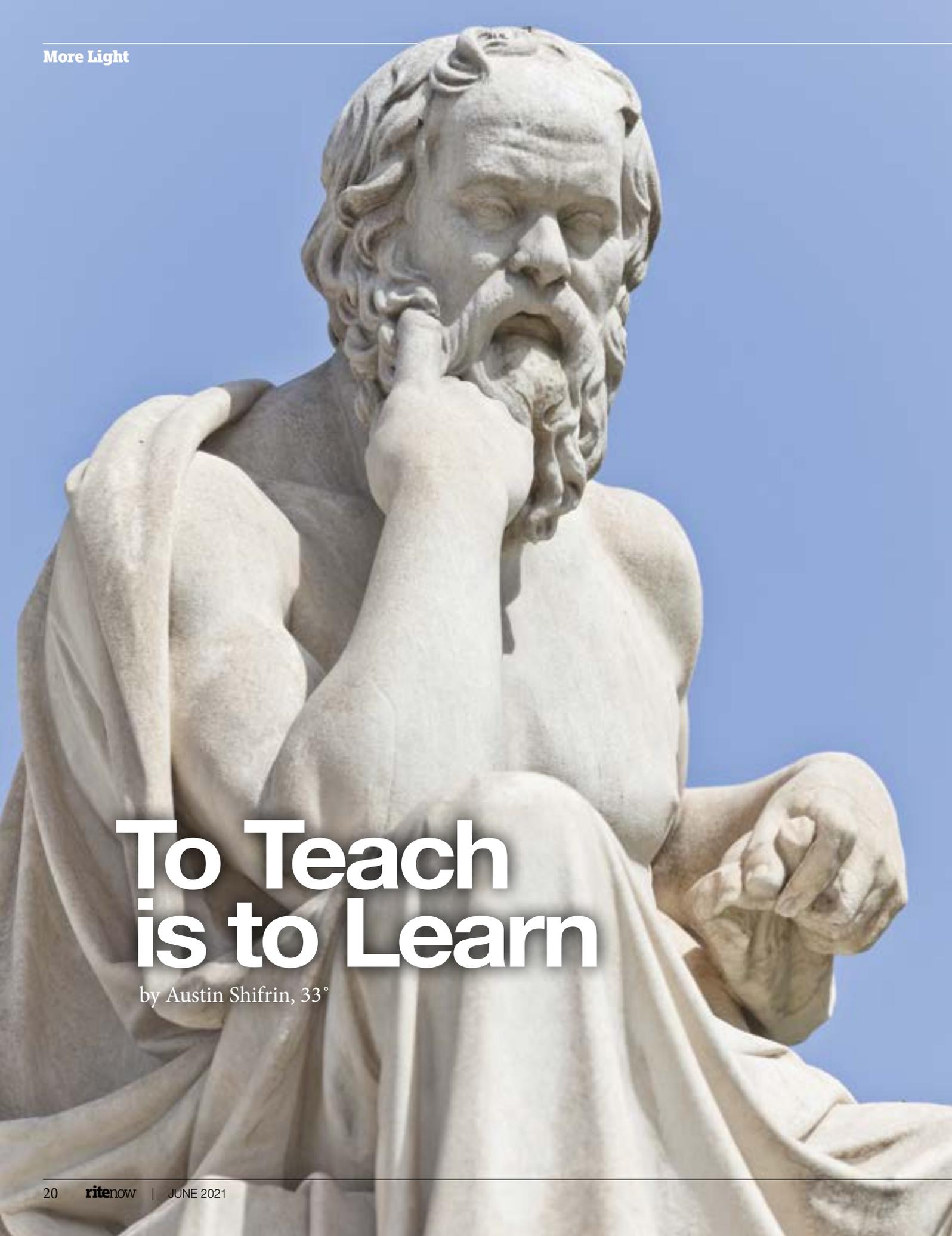
Upon turning 20, I received my majority and continued by serving on the Advisory Board. In 1975, I chaperoned the Competitive Choir of Butler Assembly #25 on a three-week singing tour of Poland.

I served as Mother Advisor for Butler Assembly (1978-1979), and after moving to Pittsburgh, as Mother Advisor for Ohio Valley Assembly #157 (1984 to 1998). I met my boyfriend (and eventually husband), Dennis Snedden, on a fifth Monday (the night of our meeting). I was active in Eastern Star, and he was going through the chairs in lodge. Since then, we have made serving the local Rainbow Girls our mission.

Even as I have moved on to other Rainbow jobs and titles, Dennis and I still enjoy working together. The challenges and opportunities of working with Masonic youth is only possible with the love and support of our Masonic family—our forever family. □



[parainbowgirls.org](http://parainbowgirls.org)

A close-up photograph of a marble statue of the philosopher Plato. He is depicted with a full, curly beard and hair, looking upwards and to the right. His right hand is raised to his chin in a classic 'The Thinker' pose. He is wearing a draped garment over his left shoulder. The background is a clear, bright blue sky.

# To Teach is to Learn

by Austin Shifrin, 33°



Austin R. Shifrin, 33°

**One aspect of the Masonic “lifestyle” that I enjoy a great deal is teaching and learning ritual. I know that most members wouldn’t regard memorizing ritual as a primary objective of Freemasonry. Our Fraternity presents itself as being an avenue for self-improvement—taking good men and making them better. In pursuit of this goal, admittedly a noble one, ritual is sometimes looked upon as something of a necessary evil.**

If we consider the monologues delivered by officers presiding over meetings, they frequently consist of directives regarding what kind of behavior to engage in and what kind of behavior to avoid. This can be traced as far back as the “Old Charges” such as the Regius Poem. It seems very reasonable for us to imagine the ancient trade guild from which we derive and its custodians wishing to avoid the conduct of any member that might reflect poorly on the institution. So it can certainly be said that our elected leaders are always engaged in the activity of instructing or teaching our membership. And this activity takes place during prescribed segments of every stated meeting and every initiation in each Blue Lodge and every appendant body. However, it can be said that there is another form of teaching that is also part of each Blue Lodge and every appendant body, which I would argue must be very important indeed, as we devote an enormous amount of time and mental energy to it: the task of memorizing ritual.

Some may look upon memorizing ritual as more superficial and less important than other commitments we could pledge ourselves to in order to strive to be good men and Masons. And I will consent that if one manages to memorize ritual verbatim but cannot be bothered

to show kindness to his fellow man or try to make the world a better place, then it is certainly a hollow accomplishment. But it should not be overlooked that engaging in the endeavors of teaching and learning ritual also contributes to our spiritual development.

Learning ritual is a humbling experience. Every time we take a new role or try to contribute these efforts to a new body, we are reminded what it means to be a beginner. We remember the importance of being able to ask for help. We must be resilient enough not to be discouraged by our failures. We must be disciplined enough to carve out the time to practice—whether with our teacher or on our own—because only by truly putting in the work will we see results.

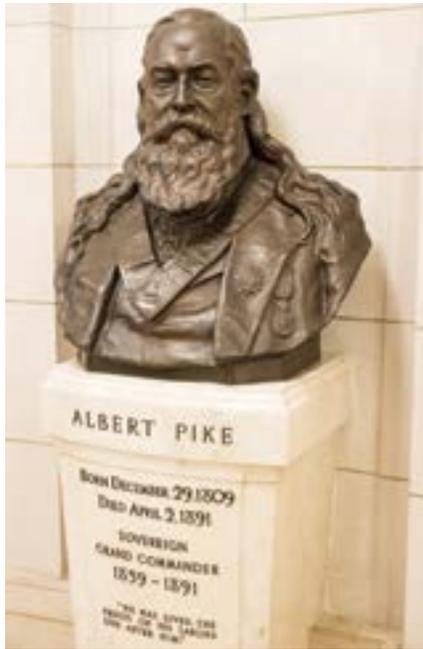
**Every time we take a new role or try to contribute these efforts to a new body, we are reminded what it means to be a beginner.**

Learning and teaching ritual is a tremendous bonding experience. Most of us who have participated in either side of that exchange have fond memories of a mentor who took us under his wing and generously gave of his time or the pride you experienced as a teacher when your pupil succeeded, and you vicariously shared in their triumph.

Learning ritual can be an enjoyable communal experience. When I joined my Blue Lodge, there were several of us trying to learn our first degree oath at the same time. I fondly remember the resulting friendly competitiveness of our efforts and the great camaraderie that formed because of it.

And teaching is an ideal channel for fulfilling the Masonic mission—to try to make the world a better place—as well as pursuing an individual’s hope of having that impact outlast our mortal lifetime. A favorite quote

of mine from the Masonic author Albert Pike states, “What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for others and the world remains and is immortal.” I have heard a similar or related sentiment expressed in other ways. The Canadian author Wesley Henderson tells us in a family history published in 1986 that his father, Nelson, told him on his graduation day, “The true meaning of life, Wesley, is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit.” He may have gotten this from David Elton Trueblood, a Quaker author, who wrote something similar in 1955 or the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, who passed away in 1941; but a similar notion dates all the way back to Caecilius Statius as quoted by Cicero in his work “On Old Age” in 44 BCE.



**You enhance your own understanding of the subject matter through the effort to teach others.**

We are also aware that our predecessors, the operative masons who worked in stone, would sometimes begin work on a cathedral whose completion they themselves would never see. What more enduring legacy can you have than to step into the chain of heritage that results when you touch someone’s life with valuable instruction who may then go on to influence others? Who can foresee how far your impact may go?

Learning to be an effective teacher is a fascinating exercise as well; you can explore and learn quite a bit about yourself. What method or approach worked well for me as a student? Can I deploy that to help others? And for pupils who need something different, am I flexible enough to understand and adapt to their needs? What style of communication is going to be most effective to convey instruction? And, beyond being focused on my ability to express, am I a good enough listener to recognize what my pupil needs?

It can also certainly be said that you enhance your own understanding of the subject matter through the effort to teach others. In the course of learning ritual, I had it pointed out to me that certain order or word choice had subtle but valuable significance. I have enjoyed passing that observation on to others as I teach. What’s more is that I have also been given the opportunity to see the ritual through “new eyes” and had things brought to my attention that I hadn’t observed in the 15 years of my own experience.

If you haven’t yet made it part of your Masonic journey, I encourage you to become a teacher as well as a lifelong student. Not only because the Fraternity itself benefits and is sustained by your efforts to preserve and perpetuate our ritual, but because of what you get back in exchange. Taking on these roles in tandem will enhance your own experience and that of others; it will deepen and strengthen your bond with your Brethren.

□

# Membership

A message from the Chairman of the Membership Committee of the Valley of Pittsburgh

VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH

## Looking for a Few Good Men

By Kristin M. Douglas, 32°

As I write this, we are currently preparing for our Spring Reunion on April 17 honoring the RWGM, Thomas Gamon IV. We expect this class to bring us 40 new Scottish Rite Masons. After what has seemed like an eternity, being able to gather together in person again even with some restrictions, is such a breath of fresh air. I, for one, missed seeing my fellow Brethren over the past year or so. I look forward to the day when we are able to once again get onto the stage and do our degree work in person. Details for our Fall Reunion should be available shortly.

As mentioned before, we will also be rolling out the Rite on the Road traveling degree show this fall. It will be an excellent way for those Brethren who cannot easily make it down to the Valley to become Scottish Rite Masons at a Blue Lodge near them. After participating in a Rite on the Road event, they will be invited to receive the 32nd degree at the Valley at a later date

The Membership Committee needs you. We are always looking for feedback and new ideas to increase our membership. If you think you

have talents in that area, I urge you to get involved. If you have questions or would like to join the membership team or the Rite on the Road degree team, you may contact me at 412-414-4373.

The  
Membership  
Committee  
needs  
you.

In closing, I would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest Scottish Rite Masons from the Thomas Gamon IV class and a heartfelt thank you to all who have submitted petitions.

Do you know someone in your home lodge who might make a great Scottish Rite Mason? Let him know about the joining opportunities and benefits of membership. We're always looking for a few good men!

□



Kristin M. Douglas, 32°  
mwm@valleyofpittsburgh.org





## SPRING CLASS

## Pittsburgh Welcomes Newest Members

The Spring Class honoring Right Worshipful Grand Master, Thomas Gamon IV was the first in-person reunion in more than a year. We welcomed 54 new 32nd Degree Masons—some of whom received their 4th degree in the earlier virtual classes. The members of this class are Nicholas Andes, Walter J. Antonishen, Craig E. Bell, Justin M. Butera, Thomas A. Butts, James E. Cain, Wayne J. Carothers, Gregory T. Clark, Eric J. Croyle, Johnathan A. Daley, Glenn Davis, Audley Y. Denning, Daniel A. Dougherty, Anwar P. El, Paul A. Fazio, Martin E. Fix, Michael Foreman, Kyle Robert Golik, Anthony Gumbarevic, Kenneth Harper, Darrell W. Headley, Stephen G. Hudak, Joseph B. Hurd, Lou Ingram, James Edward Jones, Ian N. Jordan, Donald N. King, Jeffrey Kundra, Charles Lemley Jr., Robert Mancine Jr., John G. Mann, Claude Odom, D. Casey O'Donovan, Chase A. Owens, Jesse R. Pierce, George Powell, David S. Richards, Troy R. Rosenlof, Regis P. Sabol, Nicholas F. Salera, Nicholas F. Salera II, Mitchell J. Samick, Jeffrey F. Shively, John F. Stoll, Dean W. Swaney, C. Daniel Trinidad, William J. Umbel, Anthony Valkanas, Michael D. Vinsick, Jeffrey Waggett, Kyle Whitaker, Christopher D. Wiley, Matthew Ryan Williams, and Timothy Wooddell. □



# Builders Council

Benefactors of the Children's Dyslexia Center-Pittsburgh

## VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH

### One of Our Builders

Recently, I had a chance to interview one of the members of our Builder's Council, Brother Ron Plesh.

**PJ Roup:** *Let's start with the basics. What is your Masonic background?*

**Ron Plesh:** I joined Lodge No. 45 in 1984 and served as Worshipful Master in 1988. I was District 55 Education Chairman from 1989 to 1994 and served as District Deputy in 2003 and 2004. I joined the Valley of Pittsburgh in 1985 and have been acting in the Reunions since then. I was awarded the MSA in 2016. I am also very active in the Shrine.

**PJ:** *What made you decide to join the Builders Council?*

**Ron:** My wife, Karen, and I feel strongly about supporting our charities, and when we became aware of what the Valley was doing to help children with dyslexia, we wanted to be a part of the mission.

**PJ:** *Has dyslexia ever affected your family or close friends?*

**Ron:** Our family has not been affected. However, after we became a part of the Builders Council, we learned of friends with children who needed help. We put them in touch with the Valley and got them the help they needed. Another great story is that one of my lodge Brothers' grandchildren needed tutoring at the Center. Now, that Brother is a member of the Builders Council.

**PJ:** *What are your feelings about the impact that your donation will have on*

*the lives of the children at the Pittsburgh Dyslexia Center?*

**Ron:** We have seen first-hand the impact of our donation by attending the graduating class social and talking to the teachers, parents, and students. I am glad this interview is not in-person, because I get teared up when talking about it. With the help they received, these children will go on to live the rest of their lives with a much greater chance of success. It is truly heartwarming.

**PJ:** *What advice would you give to someone who was thinking about becoming a member of the Builders Council?*

**Ron:** Since joining, I have been fortunate to have persuaded (in the most tender manner) four more Brothers to join the Council. All of them—and everyone that I know on the Council—feel blessed to be a part of something so great. If you are considering joining us (and I hope you are), I dare say that you too will feel blessed to be a part of such a wonderful mission. □

We have seen first-hand the impact of our donation.



Ron and Karen Plesh



# A Firm Foundation

The ability to read is the foundation of each child's future. It provides the base upon which all learning depends. Membership in the Builders Council means that you have made a commitment to assure that our Children's Dyslexia Center will be able to help children with dyslexia today and for years to come.

Joining the Builders Council is achieved through a commitment of \$10,000 by one of the following methods:

- **Pledging monthly/annual gifts for a period lasting no longer than 10 years**
- **Naming the Children's Dyslexia Center in your will**
- **Making a bequest to the Children's Dyslexia Center**
- **Establishing an annuity or trust**

□

## BUILDERS COUNCIL MEMBERS

30th Masonic District F.&A.M.

Demo Agoris

Edward & Joan Aiello

Robert and Janice Amend

Emery & Carol Anden

Avalon Lodge No. 657 F.&A.M.

David & Carol Bagaley

Robert & Jacqueline Beatty

Dr. Jeff A. Biddle

Mark & Patty Bliler

Chartiers Lodge No. 297 F.&A.M.

George H. Cox

Rick & Renee Cross

James S. Dean

Mario & Linda Deblasio

Bill & Heather Dickey

Raymond T. Dietz

Fred & Kathy Donatelli

Robert L. Eckbreth

James Ecker

James R. Flanigan

Howard and Sharon Flynn

Franklin / St. John's / Trinity Lodge No. 221

Gourgas Lodge of Perfection

Donald & Debra Green

Wally and Leah Grossett

Erich & Raylene Gumto

Harvey & Carol Gumto

John A. Habel

Leland A. Hale Jr.

Jacque Hauser

Jeff & Lauren Heiger

Helen Ruth Henderson

Raymond Frank Hess

Hiram's Riders of Valley of Pittsburgh

Gene Hlavac

Homestead Amity McCandless  
Lodge No. 582

Infinity Lodge No. 546

Raymond R. & Dorothy K. James

Jim & Lisa Jenkins

Robert B. Jones

Paul Kappel

Paul and Jackie Kauffman

David & Sandy Kearns

David S. & Judith Kielman

John G. Kovac

George & Judith Lewis

Lodge 45, Pittsburgh, PA

William & Barabara Magnotti Jr.

Frank R. Mangery

Jack W. & Edna Marsh

John McCain

John F. McCombs

Roy A. & Sara Jane McCullough

Julia and Calvin McCutcheon

Joann McElravy

Jay E. McElravy

Craig & Amy McVicker

Mike Melde

Jack & Carol Miller

Glenn D. & Mary B. Miller

Dr. Glenn & Roberta Miller

Donald M. Murphy

John & Valerie Nicklas

Jack & Joy Nicklas

Oakdale Lodge No. 669

Pittsburgh Commandery

No. 1 Knights Templar

Ronald and Karen Plesh

D. William Roberts

Bruce A. Robinson

Richard & Bette Rodibaugh

Don & Ginny Sauer

Joseph A. Schrock Jr.

James W. Seel

William P. Shaw

William Slater

Samuel & Judith Spanos

Christian L. Stein

Thomas K. Sturgeon

Kurt R. Tesche

The Supreme Council Group

Valley of Pittsburgh

Gregory Triko

Unified Lodge #2, I.O.O.F.

Valley of Pittsburgh Legion of Honor

Valley of Uniontown

George T. Vance

Vintage-Classic Car Club

S. Timothy Warco

Washington Lodge No. 164

Bob & Charlene Wells

Chester Arthur West Jr.

Louri Ann West

John & Jerry Williams

Jeffrey & Sharon Wonderling

Every member of the Children's Dyslexia Center Builders Council receives a commemorative green tie and scarf. Wearing them serves as a reminder that there are children needlessly suffering because of dyslexia and that the Scottish Rite is here to help. When you complete your \$10,000 gift to the Children's Dyslexia Centers, you receive a gold tie and scarf, signifying you have fulfilled your commitment. Wear your gold with pride knowing you have changed someone's life.

# The Center

A message from the Director of the Children's Dyslexia Center—Pittsburgh

VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH

## Dyslexia Center Moves Forward with Its Mission

By Patricia Broskey

For more information:

412-931-3181

Patricia Broskey, Director  
pittsburgh@cdcinc.org

While it's hard to believe, we are reaching the end of our 2020-2021 academic year at the Center. It is safe to say it has been a year like no other. While the COVID-19 pandemic had us in a constant state of change—working long hours and discovering how to apply new technologies—we are excited to report that we have not only maintained our high standards for multisensory tutoring through the Zoom format but have seen growth in both our students and in our Center!

We will be successfully graduating 11 students at the end of this term which opens slots for new students to receive the services they so desperately need. We also have a cohort of six new tutor trainees who are excited to begin their practicum and will eventually take on 12 additional new students. Both tutors and students report that they have bonded over the switch to Zoom tutoring. The “we're all in this together” approach initiated by the staff and tutors has served to enrich the students' experience and increase their dedication to their work.

The Center Directors nationwide have also had the opportunity to share ideas, information, and encouragement through this time of constant change because of the online format. We have all come out of this more agile and even more steadfast in our dedication to our mission: To make a positive life-changing difference in the lives of students who struggle with dyslexia.

We would like to share a few notes of thanks from our students to you, the dedicated Masons, without whom we would not be able to keep our center moving forward, growing, and making a difference in the lives of so many children. Thank you and we look forward, expectantly, to another year of continued success with our joint mission! □

Thank you for helping me get better at reading and writing and helping improve my grades. I had a fun time and I wish all the best in the future. Miss Amy is it very nice and I do recommend her for anybody who's trying to get help with reading and writing. Thanks for letting me have this opportunity. Really liked it.

Thanks for  
the  
Opportunity

Dear Board of Governors,  
Thank you for helping me to read and providing tutors. I've been at the center for two years now and I graduate in a few weeks! I'm thankful for letting me have this opportunity. Really liked it.  
From \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Board of Governors,

My name is Noah, and I am going to be graduating from the tutoring program soon. I am happy with everything that I have learned. I have gained more confidence in my reading and all of my subjects in school. I feel that this tutoring program and the tutors are very important. It allows children to get the help that they need to become better readers. Even though the past year was on Zoom with my tutor, I still received the best learning experience. I am excited to use the skills that I have learned throughout my education. Thank you so much for this program and all the people who are involved in it. I am glad that another student will be able to take my place when I graduate from the center. They will be able to gain the confidence that they need to help them become a better reader.

Thank you,



# TheWord

Observations from Brother and Reverend David A. Eichelberger, 32°

## ASPECTS OF THE MASONIC LIFESTYLE

When I first considered the theme of this issue, it seemed to be a bit daunting in as much as much of my Masonic lifestyle had been gravely interrupted by the Covid-19 crisis. The lodges and the rest of Freemasonry were in limbo as we all tried to learn to use new platforms—like Go to Meeting, Skype, or Zoom—to stay in touch with our Masonic Brethren.

My original thoughts went to going to meetings, helping with conferrals of orders, and moving up through the ranks to become the Worshipful Master or presiding officer in one of the many appendant bodies in Freemasonry.

Upon further review, my mind came up with a different take on the theme in the form of the question, *If I could restart Freemasonry after the Covid-19 was under control, what would I emphasize?* As I was meditating along these lines, I was at the same time earning my proficiencies in order to become the Worshipful Master of Infinity Lodge, No. 546 in Penn Hills, PA.

As we so often say, the basic message of Freemasonry is offered in the Blue Lodge and then amplified by both the York Rite and the Scottish Rite degrees. We are called to set priorities: God, our families, our vocations, our Fraternity. To be Masons, we are required to believe in a Supreme Being. The name and method of practice by which we worship the Great Architect of the Universe is not important, but our lifestyle must begin with establishing a way to relate ourselves to the Almighty through prayer, meditation, worship, and service.

The second focus of our lives as Freemasons is on our families. None of us will be a true Mason if we ignore the responsibilities we have to provide for, interact with, and support our families through a deep and loving commitment. We have made promises to our spouses which are to be as faithfully honored as those we make in Freemasonry. We joke sometimes about our involvement creating Masonic widows and orphans of our loved ones, but we cannot sacrifice our families for Freemasonry and expect to have a deep and fulfilling experience in it; our witness to the value of Masonry in “making good men better” will ring false to those who know our true family situation. Good men love their families and care for them. Spouses must feel that the sacrifice they make by spending time apart is an investment in their husbands and that they are cherished all the more for making that sacrifice. Masonry enhances family life in many ways—through the youth groups we support, the scholarships we endow, the school for dyslexia, and even a Masonic family picnic at Kennywood each summer. Fathers also need to attend their children’s extracurricular activities and to encourage their children to get a good education in

preparation for adulthood. Sometimes this means Masonic participation must be put on temporary hold while family demands are cared for.

The third focus of our lives is our careers. Here, Freemasonry offers us opportunities to mentor one another, to encourage us to support one another in our occupations, and in times of difficulty, to offer brotherly compassion and assistance. We know that we must work to adequately support our families and to build resources toward our retirements. Money is one of the biggest matters to cause discord in marriages and others sorts of relationships. Those Masons who have a good understanding of budgeting, long-range planning, investment, insurance, and networking can be of great assistance to Brethren who need help in planning out their careers (or restarting, if their previous one ended due to a layoff or the closing of a plant or office). If we do have a career, we also need to keep in mind our promise to aid those Brethren in distress through our Almoner or Hospitaler funds. Setting aside a bit of money on a regular basis for that purpose will mean we are able to respond when help is needed.

I pray that each of us will consider the place of Freemasonry in our own personal lifestyles.

The fourth focus of our lives is our life in the Craft. I have learned that for me to grow in Freemasonry, I need to devote a portion of my time, energy, and resources to my Masonic journey. It takes time to attend the lodge or the Scottish Rite. It takes resources to pay my dues and to assist the benevolences which we support. It takes time and energy for me to delve deeper into Masonic ritual and lore in order to polish my rough stone into a perfect ashlar as an experienced and wise Mason. This I do by study and by offering myself to serve as an officer and learning the work of that position. It happens when I forgo my favorite television show or game to spend time memorizing ritual. It is also enhanced when I spend time mentoring a new Mason and helping him to appreciate what we offer one another in Freemasonry.

I pray that each of us will consider the place of Freemasonry in our own personal lifestyles. We have been given an opportunity with this year’s hiatus to reconsider our relationship with Masonry. I hope you have discovered how much you missed our connections one with the other and will rededicate yourself to our ancient and honorable Craft in this new year. Our fraternity has a rich history, and I believe an even brighter future lies ahead of it. □

# That Unhallowed Grave

By Branden T. Plesh, 32°

COVID-19 has brought innumerable challenges felt across the world. There are repercussions of this pandemic that have affected many of us:

- *Annoyances—Man! This mask is annoying*
- *Aggravations—Man, these people are annoying*
- *Deep psychological strain—Man, I miss interacting with other human beings*

However, there are losses some of us have been fortunate enough to avoid:

- *Missing graduations, weddings, and other special events*
- *Losing employment and/or the ability to pursue passion in life*
- *The loss of a loved one.*

**This article will focus on the last example above, the loss of a loved one, but not just about those who succumbed to COVID-19 complications. As you well know, there are many things that cause our loved ones to be taken from us. Whether caused by the pandemic or not, our experience with death has been greatly affected by COVID-19. Due to attempts to limit the spread, people weren't permitted to visit patients in medical facilities, travel became dangerous and difficult, and traditional funerals were canceled.**

**As** a result of quarantine measures enacted over the past year, funerals were limited to only immediate family. This undermined the traditional funeral's ability to serve as a celebration of one's life and help provide closure for family and friends. I want to take this opportunity, my Brothers, to focus on one privilege that our Fraternity has lost during this time—a duty that we should endeavor to fulfill: the Masonic Funeral Service.

As with the loss of public funerals, so fell the Masonic Funeral Service into obscurity. In my opinion, this

service is the most public and sincere display of our Brotherly love and obligation to one another. For non-Masons, it has stood as their first and sometimes only direct experience with our Fraternity. We cannot bring back those we have lost. For someone who has already perished, it is impossible to re-create all the facets of a funeral after the pandemic is over. These dire truths do not mean we treat these obligations as unfortunate missed opportunities and move on. With all calamities that strike our civilization, we look forward to the future and the long road of rebuilding, as best we can, what we have lost.

To share my attachment to the Masonic Funeral Service, I will tell you a story of the first Masonic funeral I ever witnessed—the funeral of my father, Thomas J. Plesh, PM. The year was 2008, and I was a scared 19-year-old who was on the cusp of being hurled into adulthood. I had only been a Master Mason for 4 months when my father died, and I was still in that *I have no idea what is going on* phase of my Masonic journey. I remember standing in the funeral home with my mother as the room filled with aproned gentlemen. Some I knew and many I didn't. They flanked each side of the casket in a way that seemed to envelope the room and everyone in it. I was struck not only by the power of the words but by the commitment of each Brother to take time out of their schedule, memorize the lines, and attend a service that lasted no longer than 5 minutes.

**Most everyone who knew my father knew how much this Fraternity meant to him, but on this one beautiful occasion, this Fraternity got to show everyone in my father's life how much he meant to it.**

Throughout my tenure in this Fraternity, the Masonic Funeral service has had a special place in my heart. I learned the lines for the Chaplain and Worshipful Master and became a member of the Lodge's "Funeral Team." Like most Masons who participate in this service

regularly, I've done it more often for people I've never met as opposed to people I knew. Being able to lay the sprig and say "Farewell my Brother" to a close friend is an irreplaceable experience. That being said, for a Brother you never met, I believe there is a unique sanctity to changing your schedule on a day's notice, getting dressed up, and driving across town for an opportunity to demonstrate the brotherly love and affection that is the cornerstone of this Fraternity.

The circumstances that prevented us from providing the Masonic Funeral Services this past year were outside of our control, but that does not mean all is lost. As restrictions ease, we have an opportunity to recapture the spirit of demonstration of fraternal love to the families of those we have lost. Will we make it perfect and give back everything that was missed? No. It would be an act of vain hubris to think we could. Despite the less-than-ideal circumstances, I encourage you, like our ancient Brethren, to go hand in hand in unanimity to find our lost Master.

Alright, at this point, you are probably thinking, "Ok, so what's your bright idea Brother Smart Guy MSA?" The truth is, I don't know. I'm sorry to say it, but there is no single answer that would fit every lodge, organization, and circumstance. It would be naïve to think that we would be able to in any way re-create the full Masonic funeral experience. However, I do believe the spirit of the institution can be captured. It can be as simple as a phone call or elaborate as inviting the family of a deceased brother out on the evening of a meeting and putting on the service in the lodge room before you open. I encourage you to be creative; think about what you would find the most touching if you were in their situation.

Here are some other suggestions somewhere in the middle. If you reach out to the family of a deceased Brother, ask if the lodge members could deliver some token of their appreciation. While it's not the Masonic Funeral Service, I think three tuxedo-clad gentleman at one's front door to deliver a memento can certainly get a similar point across. Does a deceased brother have

teenage children? Maybe send them a pizza. It's not what would first come to mind when you think about Freemasonry, but I'm certain they won't forget it.

While we are on the topic of reaching out to family, we traditionally extend the offer to be of service if any help is needed. I can say from my own experience that I've never had someone take me up on it. Furthermore, I've been in situations where I could have used help, but I still wouldn't have asked for it. My point is that specific offerings have a better chance of being accepted. I can offer an example from the first stated meeting after my father passed away. The Worshipful Master passed around a hat to take up an unsolicited collection for me. At the end of the meeting, the Master gave me a big wad of cash saying, "It won't bring him back, but I hope this will help." Would I have asked the lodge for money in that situation? Absolutely not. Did I happily accept that money, put it to good use, and still talk about it 13 years later? Absolutely yes.

To reiterate, there is no blueprint for what an organization should do in this situation nor do I have all the answers. I am putting these ideas out there because I've found that in this Fraternity, a flawed idea is better than no idea. If you have ideas or have tried things that worked, please reach out and share them with each other. In the absence of ideas, the lodge room remains silent and nothing happens. If instead an imperfect suggestion is put forward, you'll find people willing to speak up if for no other reason than to say what's wrong with it (and there is no shortage of that in this Fraternity). That involvement can bring forth conversation. Conversation can lead to cooperation, and from there great things can be accomplished. □





## Springtime in the Valley—A New Beginning

By Charles F. Zurcher, 32°

After attending the virtual COD Officer Seminar in early April hosted at our Valley, I decided to go outside and take a walk around the grounds of our Greater Pittsburgh Masonic Center to enjoy the blue skies, the smell of the freshly blooming trees, and the warm breeze. It was a picture-perfect spring afternoon. This was such a refreshing and welcome change after spending much of the day sitting in a dark auditorium and staring at large computer screens.

Spring can be magical—the excitement and the newness of favorable temperatures, fresh air, and a fresh start. The days get longer and warmer, and the cold dark winter has diminished to no more than a fading memory; it's a new beginning in many ways. We welcome a new beginning in nature, and we also welcome a new beginning in our lives.

As I walked along the grass near the entrance to our building, I noticed the pleasant floral aroma of one of the blooming trees. I stopped to take in the surroundings and

turned around to see a breathtaking view of our building as it stood in the backdrop of this newly found life. Camera phone in hand, I definitely wanted this shot!

I immediately felt a symbolic connection and relevance to coming out of the darkness, caused by over a year of COVID, to the light of a new beginning. Everything was so alive—something that I hadn't seen for quite some time. This building that has meant so much to all of us over the years will once again play host to some of our best times and memories.

COVID has been unkind. It has made it very difficult for us to see the light in times of such darkness. But we prevailed. We prevailed as men. We prevailed as Masons. Now it is our time to again move forward. New beginnings are on the way, and we can welcome them. We can take advantage of a new start with plenty of opportunities to share great times together once again.

The way our building looked to me on that spring afternoon was a symbolic prelude to the many good

things about to come. A week later, we hosted a very successful Spring Reunion and brought many new members on board while welcoming the Right Worshipful Grand Master, Thomas Gamon IV, to our Valley as our guest of honor. When it came time for the class picture, our new Scottish Rite candidates filled the entire stage in our auditorium—signifying a solid new beginning and new life for our Valley. It was such a perfect day, and we would need to go all the way back to November of 2019 for a comparison.

Though we look forward to the day when we can resume normal stated meetings and confer live degrees on stage during reunions, this was a much-needed positive step. I can see many good things happening in the months ahead, and it is definitely a good time to be a member of the Valley of Pittsburgh.

Welcome is the new beginning that breathes life back to our Valley of Pittsburgh. The Masonic light is truly magical and shines so very brightly on us all. □

# Thicker Than Water

By PJ Roup, 33°



PJ Roup, 33\*

“People fish because they are searching for something. Often it is not for a fish.” —FENNEL HUDSON, *Fly Fishing - Fennel's Journal - No. 5*

**The mingled** aromas of coffee and bacon told Dylan it was time to get up. His body told him otherwise, but he quickly realized it wasn't a fight worth having. He shrugged the covers off just as Henry called up to him.

“Wakey, wakey. Eggs and bakey,” Henry roared in his best drill sergeant impersonation.

Dylan always enjoyed his time at the family cabin. As he plodded down the stairs, he recalled the last time he was here. His entire family had come for a Thanksgiving retreat, but Dylan had had to leave abruptly when Henry's wife, Eva, had suddenly taken ill. Had it really been seven years?

They shoveled the eggs and bacon into their mouths quickly as the rising sun burned the fog off the land and restored color to the surroundings. They wouldn't admit it to each other, but both had been looking forward to this trip since they had to reschedule more than a year ago.

“Twenty bucks each? First, biggest, and most,” Henry asked, though it was more of a statement.

“You're on,” Dylan replied. “Go get your waders on.”

“No waders for me. My stream fording days are behind me. I'll be fishing from the bank today.”

“And you still want to make that bet?” asked Dylan.

“No need to go chest-deep to outfish you, young man,” Henry quipped.

They reached the stream and Dylan worked his way

through the quick water to the center of the flow. He began methodically working the stream clockwise, casting his fly in ever-wider circles so as not to spook the fish. He would occasionally glance at Henry who had been walking the bank the whole time. He studied the water carefully, turned over a few rocks on the bank. *He's doing everything but fishing*, Dylan thought.

“You know you won't catch any if you don't get the line wet,” he yelled to Henry.

“Your line's wet. Where are all the fish?”

Dylan just shook his head and continued casting. He loved the dynamic the two of them shared—more like siblings than Masonic Brothers with nearly 60 years between them.

**More like siblings than Masonic Brothers with nearly 60 years between them.**

Henry contorted himself under the limb of an oak that was overhanging the water. There was no way he was going to be able to make a cast from there, Dylan thought, much less catch a fish. Henry stripped some fly line out onto the water, lifted the tip of the rod, and deftly rolled a cast to just upstream of a pocket of still water. Almost instantly the line went tight. He quickly set the hook and yelled in celebration. He worked the fish to the shore, wet his hands, and held a beautiful brown trout out to show Dylan.

“Nice,” Dylan said. “Looks like 13 inches.”

“More like twenty,” Henry responded. “Dollars, I mean,” he added with a wink.

Dylan watched Henry pull fish after fish out of what seemed like an impossibly small hole. It reminded him of one of those clown cars he saw at the circus as a kid. He started moving out of the water thinking he’d have better luck farther upstream.

“Where are you going?” Henry asked.

“Somewhere with fish, maybe.”

“I just pulled half a dozen out of here. You’re in the best spot on the stream. Don’t go anywhere. Cast your line over to me for a minute.”

Dylan did as he asked. Henry lifted the line off the water and cut off the fly. He tied on a new one, adjusted the weight by adding a few split shot, and let it drop back into the water.

“There. You see that rock just below the surface to your left? Cast just upstream of that and let it sink, you’ll catch a fish.

Dylan lifted the line off the water, made a few false casts in the air to get just the right amount of line out and let the fly come to rest. The cast was perfect. The line paused, almost imperceptibly.

“Now,” Henry yelled.

Dylan set the hook. There was so much resistance he thought it was a snag, but then the line began to run. And run. And run. Dylan’s pulse quickened. This was easily the biggest trout he had ever caught. *I still have to land it*, he thought.

“Work it downstream to me,” Henry said. “And don’t let him run under that bank.”

Dylan fought the fish for almost 10 minutes. It was a delicate operation with what was easily a five pound fish held by two pound test line barely bigger than a human hair. He finally coaxed it to Henry on the bank who netted it deftly. Dylan was still breathing heavily from the excitement as he worked himself over to meet his new personal record.

“Beautiful. About 28 inches,” Henry said.

“I was gonna say 20...bucks,” Dylan laughed.

“Enjoy her for a second, then let her go. There’s still work to do. Now it’s down to who catches the most.”

Dylan took a quick picture of the rainbow trout before turning it out of the net. He watched the pink and silver fish slip effortlessly back into the fast-moving water.



Dylan and Henry fished side by side the rest of the day—Dylan from the stream and Henry from the bank. They didn’t cover nearly as much water as Dylan was used to, but it didn’t matter. They talked—about life, about love, about lodge. They hadn’t seen each other in person in almost a year, so the conversation never lagged. They stayed there talking, making memories, and catching and releasing fish until the sun was low in the sky.

“What do you say we call it a day, kid,” Henry finally said.

“I’m good with that. How many did you catch?”

“The perfect amount. You?”

“Same,” Dylan answered. “Looks like a draw.”

“That’s too bad. I really wanted to take some of your money today,” Henry laughed.

As they walked back to the cabin, both men realized how lucky they were. Freemasonry brought them together. They say that blood is thicker than water, but this friendship that they share was born in the shared experience of the lodge. Each considered the other to be family. Not grandfather-grandson, but brothers. Not related by blood but rather the ineffable, mystic tie of Freemasonry. □

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Attorney Matt Logue info@quinnlogue.com

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# Controlling the Trajectory of the Golf Ball

By Eric S. Teasdale, 33°

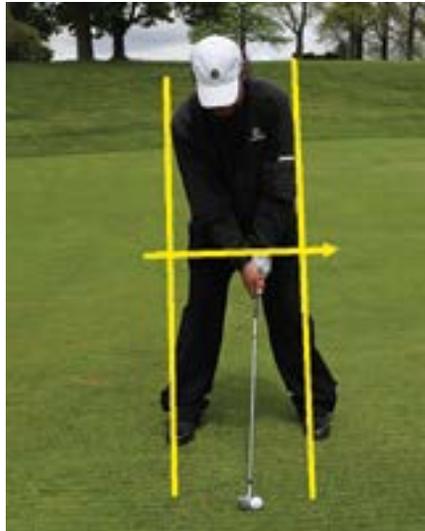
For this installment, I will cover a topic that is key to shooting good scores in Western Pennsylvania in the springtime: controlling the trajectory of the golf ball. When hitting into the wind, the key to controlling the shot is to hit it lower or under the wind to help with accurate distance control. The goal when hitting downwind, especially on tee shots, is to maximize your distance by hitting it higher.

Experienced Western Pennsylvania golfers will tell you that the wind plays a big factor in the spring. Nothing can be more challenging and frustrating for the average golfer than playing golf in the wind. This is because it is much more difficult to hit the golf ball the correct distance and direction. Getting the ball close to the hole when playing in windy conditions can prove challenging.

Success in the wind means acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to control the trajectory of the golf ball. In this article, I am going to focus on the key points of controlling trajectory for into the wind shots and downwind shots. This will include the adjustments you need to make to posture, club selection, impact position, and finish position.

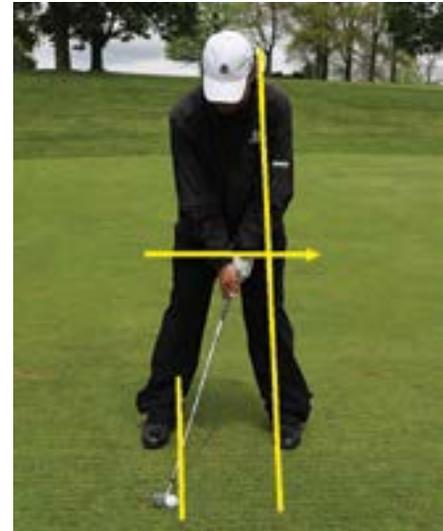
**Please refer to the following illustrations on how to successfully control the trajectory of the golf ball.**

## Controlling Trajectory—Into the Wind



### Face On (Posture Adjustment)

The two significant adjustments to posture at address are building a wider base for stability (increase stance width) and placing more weight on your lead foot. I prefer a 60% to 40% ratio favoring the lead foot. Lastly, I prefer the variable ball position concept for ball position (see *RiteNow*, March 2021). Do not position the golf ball back in your stance.



### Face On (Incorrect Posture)

Most golfers make the mistake of placing too much weight on their lead foot and placing the golf ball too far back in their stance at address. These incorrect adjustments will increase the angle of attack on the downswing which will increase backspin and result in a higher trajectory. This will leave the shot short of the intended distance every time.

“A golfer has to train his swing on the practice tee, then trust it on the course.” —Dr. Bob Rotella



Eric S. Teasdale, 33°

**Club Selection—Into the Wind:** While distance measuring devices and yardage books are helpful in determining the distance to the hole for your approach shots to the green, they are not useful in determining club selection on shots into the wind. The one certainty when hitting into the wind and controlling trajectory is that you will need to use “more club” or a less lofted club. The strength of the wind will determine if you need to use one, two, or in rare instances, three more clubs. Experience and good technique will help you in choosing the correct club.



### Face On (Impact Position)

The following key points are necessary at the impact position for success: more weight on the lead foot (60%), the hands must lead or be ahead of the clubhead, maintain spine angle and stay level to “sweep the golf ball” at impact. To sweep the golf ball, the club must travel on a shallower plane through impact which will result in a very shallow divot. Lastly, the goal is to not hit it harder but to swing with a “smoother” tempo.



### Face On (Finish Position)

To perfect the low shot into the wind, you must have a low finish or low hand position. The height of your finish position dictates the height of the golf ball – the lower the ball flight needed, the lower the hand finish position. Also, try to achieve perfect balance for a solid golf shot.

“Golf is a game you can never get too good at. You can improve, but you can never get to where you master the game.” —Gay Brewer

## Controlling Trajectory—Downwind

### Downwind Shots (General):

On downwind tee shots with a driver, the goal is to maximize your distance by hitting the golf ball higher. The higher the golf ball flies and the longer it stays in the air, the farther it will go. This is what the old golf phrase, “Tee it high and let it fly” refers to.

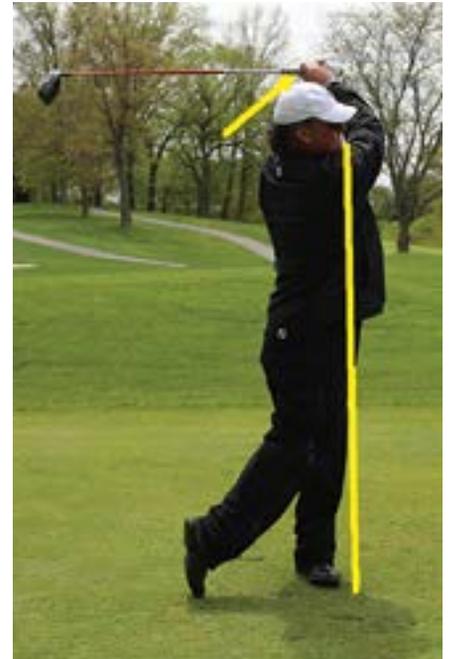
### Club Selection—Downwind:

As with into the wind shots, a club selection change is needed for downwind shots. Again, the one certainty in hitting downwind and controlling trajectory is that you will need to use “less club” or a more lofted club. The strength of the wind will determine if you need to use one less club, two less clubs, etc. On downwind approach shots into the green, you do not necessarily need to adjust the trajectory of the golf ball; you need to adjust where the golf ball lands. Downwind approach shots generally have less backspin, so the ball will roll farther once it hits the ground. I always tell my students to try and have the golf ball land just short or on the fringe of the green to allow for the extra roll due to less backspin.



### Face-on (Posture Adjustment)

At the address position, move the ball forward of normal by at least one inch. Also, to increase the launch angle, make sure the head is behind the ball at address and at the impact position. Lastly, tee the golf ball slightly higher. This will help to launch the golf ball higher by swinging up on it.



### Face-on Finish Position

To have the golf ball flight higher, you must have a high finish - a high hand position at your finish position. Also, as in hitting the golf ball lower, try to achieve perfect balance for a solid golf shot.

“They call it golf because all the other four-letter words were taken.” —Raymond Floyd

### Summary

The goal in hitting successful golf shots—either into the wind or downwind—is to control the trajectory or how high or low the golf ball flies. By controlling the trajectory, you will be better able to control the distance of your shots and hit the golf ball more solidly and consistently. This will result in approach shots being on the putting surface and closer to the hole—the key to scoring.

“The mind messes up more shots than the body.” —Tommy Bolt

### When playing golf shots into the wind, focus on the following:

- ✓ Make slight adjustments in your posture: widen your base and stance for more stability, place more weight on your lead foot, and play your normal ball position with the club selected. Do not adjust your ball position by moving it back in the stance as this will result in a steeper angle of attack which will impart more spin on the golf ball and make the golf ball fly higher.
- ✓ Make a “normal” backswing turn behind the golf ball.
- ✓ Through impact, you want the angle of attack of the clubhead to be shallower to “sweep” the golf ball. Make sure your hands are leading the clubhead and maintain more weight on the lead foot. You want to have the feeling that you are more on top of or covering the golf ball through impact. Remember not to swing harder but instead implement a smoother tempo.
- ✓ Lastly, you must fully release the club and finish with your hands and clubhead in a lower position with perfect balance. This low finish is when the position of your hands is slightly lower than shoulder height at the finish position.

### When playing golf shots downwind, focus on the following:

- ✓ Make the following adjustments in your posture: move the ball position at least one inch more forward than normal. Tee the golf ball slightly higher, and make sure the position of your head is behind the golf ball at address and at impact.
- ✓ Finish high and perfectly balanced for consistent, solid contact and a higher trajectory.

If you have any further questions regarding controlling the trajectory of the golf ball in the wind, please contact your local PGA Professional. Enjoy golfing—the game of a lifetime! □

Eric Teasdale is the resident P.G.A. Professional at Shannopin Country Club in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

# Myocarditis

By Dr. Glenn D. Miller, II, MD

In this issue of *RiteNow*, we will look at myocarditis—an inflammation of the heart muscle (myocardium) sometimes referred to as an inflammatory cardiomyopathy. This condition should sound familiar to many of you, especially those of you who are football fans, because it has been in the news this past year as a potential complication of COVID-19 infection and has caused some players in both the NCAA and NFL to sit out this past season.

Historically, the first cases of myocarditis were documented in the 1600s, although the term was not used until 1837. Myocarditis is considered to be a rare disease with less than 200,000 cases per year in the United States. Worldwide, there were approximately 3.1 million cases diagnosed in 2017; however, these numbers may represent a significant underestimation given the fact that many people who develop myocarditis are totally asymptomatic and never even know that they have it. Additionally, it is uncertain at this point how much COVID-19 will affect these numbers.

As previously stated, myocarditis is a disease that causes inflammation of the heart muscle (myocardium) and sometimes the sac that covers the heart (pericardium) resulting in pericarditis. This inflammation can cause the heart to enlarge/dilate, develop scar tissue, and weaken the heart's pumping ability resulting in a dilated cardiomyopathy. These changes force the heart to work harder to effectively circulate blood and oxygen throughout the body resulting in chest pain and shortness of breath. They can also result in an increased risk for congestive heart failure (CHF), heart attacks (MIs), strokes (CVAs), and life-threatening ventricular arrhythmias.

Myocarditis can affect all age groups. It is more common in pregnant females and those who are



Dr. Glenn D. Miller, 33°

immunocompromised than in the general population. In fact, in people with HIV/AIDS, it is the most common pathological finding at autopsy with an incidence of greater than 50%. Myocarditis is more common in males than females with a 1.3-1.7:1 prevalence. Specifically, myocarditis most often affects young athletic males in the puberty to early 30s age group. It is believed that this higher incidence is due to higher testosterone levels which contribute to an enhanced inflammatory response and subsequent increased risk of cardiac pathology. Also of note is the fact that females, despite having a lower incidence of myocarditis, tend to have more severe signs and symptoms such as life-threatening ventricular arrhythmias. Myocarditis is the third leading cause of sudden death in children and young adults with an incidence of approximately 20%. One caveat to these statistics is a rare form of myocarditis called viral fulminant myocarditis. This form of myocarditis, which has been associated with COVID-19, involves the rapid onset of cardiac inflammation and has a mortality rate of 40-70%.

### There are no definitive preventative measures to avoid myocarditis.

Myocarditis can have a multitude of potential causes or iatrogenic (no known cause). Known infectious etiologies for myocarditis include viral, bacterial, fungal, parasitic, and protozoan. Worldwide, the most common infectious cause is the parasitic protozoan *Trypanosoma cruzi* which causes Chagas disease. Chagas disease is most common in Central and South America and Mexico but can occur in travelers to and immigrants from those countries.

Viruses are the most common infectious cause of myocarditis in North America and Europe. Approximately 1-5% of people with viral infections

may develop myocarditis. The family of Coxsackie B viruses (fever, headache, sore throat, GI distress, chest pain, muscle pain, and extreme fatigue) are the most common cause of myocarditis, accounting for approximately 50% of all cases. Adenovirus (common cold), COVID-19 virus, HIV virus (AIDS), Herpes Simplex virus, Hepatitis B and C viruses, Echoviruses (GI infections), Epstein-Barr virus (mononucleosis), Rubella virus (German measles), and Poliovirus (Polio) are also potential causes of myocarditis.

Numerous bacteria can cause myocarditis including *Staphylococcus*, *Streptococcus*, *Corynebacterium diphtheriae* (diphtheria), *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* (gonorrhea), *Borrelia burgdorferi* (Lyme disease), *Haemophilus influenzae* (meningitis), *Treponema pallidum* (syphilis), and *Vibrio cholerae* (cholera). Myocarditis can also be caused by fungi such as *Candida* (yeast infections), and *Aspergillus* and *Histoplasma* (mold infections). Another cause of myocarditis can be autoimmune diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, sarcoidosis, scleroderma, and others.

Exposure to heavy metals (iron, copper, lead) and toxins (spider bites, snake bites, wasp stings, arsenic, carbon monoxide, toxic shock syndrome toxin) are additional potential etiologies. Lastly, exposure to certain chemotherapeutic agents, radiation therapy, electric shocks, and certain drugs (alcohol, acetazolamide, certain antipsychotic medications, amitriptyline, mephedrone, and others) can cause myocarditis.

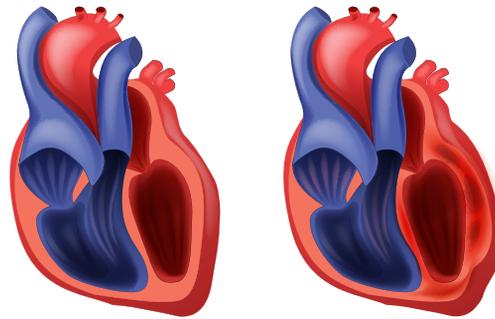
People with myocarditis are often asymptomatic. Most who have been affected make a complete recovery without ever having known that they had it. However, patients who develop more severe cases of myocarditis may experience a gamut of signs and symptoms

including fever, headache, sore throat, muscle aches, diarrhea, fatigue, light-headedness, joint pain and swelling, lower extremity edema, fatigue, arrhythmias/palpitations, sharp or stabbing chest pain, or congestive heart failure with shortness of breath.

Myocarditis can be difficult to diagnose, but physicians can utilize a multitude of tests in an effort to confirm this diagnosis. Blood tests can be used to assess for possible infection or inflammation. Chest X-rays can be used to assess for possible signs of heart failure. Electrocardiograms can be used to assess for abnormal heart rates and rhythms. Echocardiograms and Cardiac MRIs can help to detect structural and functional heart abnormalities. In some cases, a cardiac muscle biopsy can be performed to confirm the diagnosis.

Treatment for myocarditis depends upon the cause and severity of the myocardial inflammation. Symptomatic and supportive therapies are often the only available treatments for viral myocarditis. These supportive therapies are aimed at easing the workload of a weakened heart and include diuretics, digoxin, intravenous positive inotropes such as dobutamine and milrinone, beta blockers, and ACE inhibitors. Systemic corticosteroids may also be beneficial to add to the medical regimen. Antibiotics may be beneficial in bacterial myocarditis. In cases where the heart has been damaged enough to result in a risk for sudden death due to ventricular arrhythmias, implantation of a defibrillator (ICD) may be required. In rare cases that do not resolve on their own or with conventional therapies and where the heart has been severely damaged on a permanent basis (dilated cardiomyopathy), implantation of a left ventricular assist device (LVAD) with or without subsequent heart transplant may be required. In fact, myocarditis may account for up to 45% of heart transplants in the United States.

There are no definitive preventative measures to avoid myocarditis. General preventative measures are aimed at avoiding the causative agents as previously outlined. Additional general recommendations are aimed at preventing infections such as avoiding people who have viral or flu-like illnesses, practicing good hygiene, minimizing exposure to ticks, avoiding risky behaviors



healthy heart

myocarditis

such as unsafe sex and illicit IV drug usage, and staying up to date on recommended vaccinations such as Rubella and Influenza.

As previously outlined, myocarditis is a potential complication of the COVID-19 virus. However, since COVID-19 has only been present for approximately 18 months, researchers are still investigating whether myocarditis due to COVID-19 is more prevalent and/or more severe as compared to other viruses. Because of this uncertainty and myocarditis' predilection for athletic males, many NCAA and NFL teams have been screening their players with echocardiograms.

In a rare twist of fate, this COVID-19 pandemic may have saved the life of a Penn State football player. Journey Brown was a running back from Meadville, Pennsylvania, who rushed for 202 yards against Memphis in the 2019 Cotton Bowl. He was expected to be the featured running back for Penn State during the 2020 season. However, a screening echocardiogram for myocarditis revealed that he had hypertrophic cardiomyopathy which is a congenital condition that results in the thickening of the muscle (interventricular septum) that separates the two lower chambers (ventricles) of the heart. This condition makes a person susceptible to sudden cardiac death secondary to ventricular arrhythmias, especially during vigorous physical activities. If it weren't for COVID-19, he may have collapsed and died during a future practice or game. I hope that this case would encourage all college and professional sports organizations to implement policies to have all of their current and future athletes undergo screening echocardiograms in an effort to detect potentially fatal cardiac conditions.

□



## Need Assistance?

**No one likes to find themselves in financial hardship.** No one likes to ask for help. However, many brothers would rather be suspended than ask for the help that we all promised to render to a brother when we joined the Fraternity. If you need to have your dues remitted this year, please, please, please contact the Office by phone (412-939-3579), by letter (Valley of Pittsburgh, 3579 Masonic Way, Pittsburgh, PA 15237), or by email (secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org). Your request will be kept confidential, and you will continue to be a vital part of our Valley.



## Senior Member Status

**If you are 80-years old or older or are a 50-year plus member,** I would like to remind you that the Scottish Rite does not automatically remit your dues. The Scottish Rite has a program for senior members. The Senior Member Program was implemented to ensure that NO member over the age of 80 (or over 75 with 50 years of membership in the Scottish Rite, NMJ) having financial hardship would be suspended for non-payment. If you qualify for Senior Membership, you will no longer have to pay dues.

If you think you qualify for Senior Member status, please contact the Office by phone (412-939-3579), by letter (Valley of Pittsburgh, 3579 Masonic Way, Pittsburgh, PA 15237), or by email (secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org).

**If you are a caregiver for someone who may qualify, please contact us and let us know of the need.** We are ready, willing, and able to help but can only do so if we are aware of the need.

## VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH OFFICERS

August 1, 2020 - July 31, 2021

### Gourgas Lodge of Perfection 14°

David L. Moore, 33° . . . . . Thrice Potent Master  
Eric S. Teasdale, 33° . . . . . Deputy Master  
Peter A. Leary, 33°, MSA . . . . . Senior Warden  
Christopher A. McNeal, 32° . . . . . Junior Warden  
David C. Allison, 32° . . . . . Orator  
David C. Runco, 32° . . . . . Master of Ceremonies  
Erich W. Gumto, 33° . . . . . Guard

### Pennsylvania Council, Princes of Jerusalem

Mitchell D. Goldstein, 32° . . . . . Sovereign Prince  
Richard F. Kucera, 32° . . . . . High Priest  
Robert H. Nelson, 32° . . . . . Senior Warden  
B. Scott Allen, 32° . . . . . Junior Warden  
Aaron J. Antimary, 32° . . . . . Master of Ceremonies  
Robert B. McGinnis, 32° . . . . . Master of Entrances

### Pittsburgh Chapter of Rose Croix 18°

Kristin M. Douglas, 32° . . . . . Most Wise Master  
Jordan L. Frei, 32° . . . . . Senior Warden  
Charles F. Zurcher, 32° . . . . . Junior Warden  
William B. Bittinger, 32° . . . . . Orator  
Benjamin J. Douglas, 32° . . . . . Master of Ceremonies  
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### Pennsylvania Consistory 32°

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William G. Johnston, 33° . . . . . 1st Lieutenant Commander  
Joshua S. Freeman, 32° . . . . . 2nd Lieutenant Commander  
David E. Thumm Jr., 32° . . . . . Orator  
Thomas B. Baker, 32° . . . . . Chancellor  
Greer C. R. Lukens, 32° . . . . . Master of Ceremonies  
Thomas J. Anke, 32° . . . . . Engineer & Seneschal  
Robert W. Lovic, 32° . . . . . Standard Bearer  
Robert D. Nichol, 32° . . . . . Guard  
George W. Polnar, 33° . . . . . Treasurer  
David W. Morgans, 33° . . . . . Secretary  
Vito A. Urso, 33° . . . . . Hospitaler  
Dennis R. Johnston, 33° . . . . . Tiler  
Robert F. Dunkle, 33°, Peter A. Leary, 33°, MSA,  
Ronald A. Plesh, 32°, MSA . . . . . MFS Representatives

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William G. Johnston, 33° . . . . . Joshua S. Freeman, 32°  
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Mitchell D. Goldstein, 32° . . . . . Richard F. Kucera, 32°  
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Brian A. Maxwell, 32°, Trustee . . . . . Paul J. Roup, 33°, Active

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Brian A. Maxwell, 32°, Chairman  
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Patrick G. Blackwell, 33° . . . . . Thomas M. Gasmire, 33°  
Glenn D. Miller, II, 33° . . . . . James C. Mayes, 32°  
Rodney E. Boyce, 33° . . . . . David L. Moore, 33°  
Mitchell D. Goldstein, 32° . . . . . Kristin M. Douglas, 32°

### Allegiance

The bodies of the Scottish Rite, sitting in the Valley of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, acknowledge and yield allegiance to the Supreme Council, 33°, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the United States of America whose Grand East is in Lexington, Massachusetts, and whose Officers are: Ill.: David A. Glatty, 33°, Sovereign Grand Commander, Ill.: Robert J. Bateman, 33°, Deputy for Pennsylvania. Other Active members for Pennsylvania are: Ill.: Stephen Gardner, 33°, Ill.: Thomas R. Labagh, 33°, Ill.: George Nakonetschny, 33°, Ill.: Keith E. Parkinson, 33°, and Ill.: Paul J. Roup, 33°.

# The Latest

Important happenings coming soon to the Valley of Pittsburgh

**JUN**  
**3**

**Reservations are required!**

Please contact the Valley Office:  
secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org  
412-939-3579

## June Stated Meeting

The June stated meeting will be the first time that we will be able to gather in-person since February 2020. We are still limiting the number of people at the June meeting, so this will be a member only event. To celebrate our ability to gather in-person, the dinner before the meeting will be provided at no cost to members. Reservations are required for the meeting and dinner.

TIME: 6:00PM/Dinner, 7:00PM/Meeting

LOCATION: GPMC

COST: No charge for dinner, must have reservation

RSVP: **June 1**

**JUN**  
**6**

**No Reservation is required.**

Please contact the Valley Office:  
secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org  
412-939-3579

## Spring Car Cruise

The Car Cruise is back! Join us for a spectacular display of classic cars, antique cars, vintage cars, hot rods, and muscle cars! All proceeds benefit the Children's Dyslexia Center. Food, prizes, D.J. music, 50/50 raffle, and more. Plenty of parking for non-cruise cars and spectators. *(No alcohol or pets are permitted.)*

TIME: 11:00AM-3:00PM

LOCATION: GPMC

COST: Free

RSVP: None

**JUN**  
**19**

**Reservations are required!**

Please contact the Valley Office:  
secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org  
412-939-3579

## Valley Golf Outing

The golf outing returns this year! Come out for the Valley of Pittsburgh Golf Outing at Butler's Golf Course in Elizabeth, PA. Enjoy a morning of golf and stay for a great lunch where skill prizes will be awarded. This event is open to both men and women. Register as a foursome, or if you don't have four, we will fill in the rest. It's a great way to get back into the "swing" of an in-person event!

TIME: 7:00AM/Registration, 8:00AM/Shotgun Start

LOCATION: Butler's Golf Course

COST: \$100.00

RSVP: **June 15**

**JUL**  
**9**

**Reservations are required!**

Please contact the Valley Office:  
secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org  
412-939-3579

## CigaRite

Bring your own cigars and adult beverages and join your fellow cigar lovers for an evening of good conversations, snacks, and smokes on the patio at the Greater Pittsburgh Masonic Center. This laid-back evening is the perfect way to relax and refresh yourself. Non-Scottish Rite Masons and nonsmokers are welcome too.

TIME: 6:00-11:00PM

LOCATION: GPMC

COST: Small donation for pizza, BYOB & cigars

RSVP: **July 8**

## Fellowship Breakfast

Has been temporarily suspended during the COVID-19 Pandemic. We hope to begin offering monthly breakfasts one day soon.

### ! Please note:

All events are subject to change. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we encourage you to visit our website or call the Valley office to confirm the status of ALL events.

To have an event listed in future issues, please contact the Valley Office at 412-939-3579, or by email at [secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org](mailto:secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org)

**JUN**  
**11**

**Reservations are required!**  
Please contact the Valley Office:  
[secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org](mailto:secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org)  
412-939-3579

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TIME: 6:00-11:00PM

LOCATION: GPMC

COST: Small donation for pizza, BYOB & cigars

RSVP: **June 10**

**AUG**  
**6**

**Tickets are required!**  
Please contact the Valley Office:  
[secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org](mailto:secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org)  
412-939-3579

## Masonic Day at Kennywood Park

Join us again for this annual celebration for the entire Western Pennsylvania Masonic Family. Come early, ride all-day with special pricing below normal admission, and stay late!

TIME: 11:00AM

LOCATION: Kennywood Park

COST: TBA

RSVP: **Tickets required**

The Valley of Pittsburgh is committed to keeping all members and guests safe, and will observe all guidelines set forth by local, regional, and state government agencies, and healthcare professionals.

# Looking Ahead

**JUL**  
**17**

## Pennsylvania Council of Deliberation

SATURDAY, JULY 17  
Valley of Harrisburg  
Harrisburg, PA

**JUL**  
**31**

## Valley Officers Retreat

SATURDAY, JULY 31  
Sandscrest Resort  
Wheeling, WV

**AUG**  
**15**

## Fall Car Cruise

SUNDAY, AUGUST 15  
11AM-3PM, Free  
GPMC

**AUG** **AUG** **AUG**  
**28** **29** **30**

## Supreme Council Sessions AASR, NMJ

AUGUST 28-30  
Cleveland, OH

**SEP**  
**2**

## September Stated Meeting

THURSDAY, SEPT. 2  
6PM Dinner, 7PM Meeting  
GPMC

**SEP**  
**10**

## CigaRite

FRIDAY, SEPT 10  
6-11PM  
GPMC

**Valley of Pittsburgh**  
**Gourgas Lodge of Perfection**  
Greater Pittsburgh Masonic Center  
3579 Masonic Way  
Pittsburgh, PA 15237-2700



*Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite*  
**Charity Golf Tournament**

SPONSORED BY THE GOURGAS LODGE OF PERFECTION

*Please  
Join Us!*

**Saturday, June 19**  
**Shotgun Start at 8AM**

Butler's Golf Course  
800 Rock Run Road  
Elizabeth, Pennsylvania

**\$100** /per Golfer

*Includes:*

- 18 Holes of Golf
- Greens Fees
- Golf Cart
- Gift
- Bag Drop
- Lunch at the Turn
- Dinner

Open to Men, Women, and Non-Members. Foursomes are recommended, however individual golfers are also welcome. Deadline for registration is June 11, 2021. If you have any questions or if you would like to register for the tournament, please call the Valley of Pittsburgh Scottish Rite Office at 412-939-3579.