IMPRESSIVENESS — An Everyday Occurrence

Walter S. Downs, 33°, G.C.

That’s a simple, straightforward word whose meaning is well understood. By dictionary definition, it is “making, or tending to make, an impression; having power to impress; adapted to touch the sensibilities, or affect the conscience.” It does have particular application related to many facets of Freemasonry.

In our Lodges, and as the ritual unfolds, we frequently hear a question about what prompted us to become Masons. And though there is a fitting answer provided in the ritual, it may differ from a petitioner’s original thoughts.

Clearly, prior to petitioning Masonry, a man has little knowledge or understanding of Masonry, its purposes, activities, objectives, or accomplishments. The petition he submits to a Lodge includes the statement that he is prompted to submit the application because of “a favorable opinion conceived of the Institution.” In different words, he has a good impression of the Fraternity, and would like to be a part of it. Some men do have other experiences that lead to a desire to become a Mason. For example:

He, or a relative, could have benefitted from a specialized service provided by a Masonic organization, e.g., Child ID Program, Childhood Language Program, Crippled Children’s Treatment Program, and was duly impressed.

Perhaps he had a Masonic relative who had died and had a Masonic funeral service. He was so impressed with the philosophies contained in the ceremony and the excellent performance of the presiding officer that he was inspired to become a Mason. [This has been stated by a number of new Masons.]

Upholding a family tradition of Masonic membership. On the other hand, some new Masons have bemoaned the fact that their Masonic fathers “never said a word to them about Masonry!” Another example of losing potential new members is the son of an active Mason who says “My dad’s out all the time on Masonic activities; I don’t want to be like him!” [Reverse impression!]

Searching Masonic websites can add sufficient information to stimulate an interest in becoming a Mason.

After becoming a member, the new Mason develops more exacting impressions as he is subjected to the performance of degrees and their philosophies, and how Lodge officers and others carry out the workings of a Lodge.

As an individual Mason, he shares in the responsibility to preserve a positive image of Masonry – both internally to the Fraternity and externally to the public at large. A May 2012 publication of the Social Media Committee of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts provided extensive guidance on publishing Masonic-related information on Twitter, Facebook, etc. The goal is to “ensure our fraternity represents itself to the high standards we believe in.”

The common effort of all Masons today is to help preserve our fraternity’s positive image and thereby prompt interested non-Masons – as each of us did – to have “a favorable opinion conceived of the Institution,” and proceed to receive light in Masonry.

Walter S. Downs, 33°, G.C.
Personal Representative’s Message

Edmund Cohen, 33° Personal Representative of the SGIG in Alexandria

Dear Brethren:

Sometimes it seems that much of life is posturing, where we act to create an image of ourselves that will work to our advantage. We say what is expected and we do what is expedient. We put our best foot forward, and in the process we often fool others; sometimes we even fool ourselves. The motivation generally is nothing more than ego and self-interest.

Masons try not to be that way. We strive for authenticity and genuineness. Our actions are motivated by more than self interest. Our appreciation for what is good and what is right has a broader focus, and we try to act with eternity in mind. Still, we often shortchange ourselves by being comfortable doing the minimum, when, with only a little more effort, we really could have an impact.

Why is this? Probably because in Freemasonry, as in life, we often feel that we are too busy to do more. We confuse activity with progress, and find that the trivially urgent has crowded out what is really important. Looking back over the past months or years we may find that while we have worked really hard, we have accomplished relatively little. So perhaps we need to set our sights a little higher and establish some goals, so that next year when we look back we can point with pride to some activities where we really did make a difference.

Some of these goals might be very specific – losing weight, sticking to an exercise program, or learning a new skill. Some of these goals might involve family. It might be as simple and as meaningful as telling our loved ones that we love them, or getting more involved in an activity they enjoy.

One activity that might make a significant difference in your life would be to invest just a bit more time in Freemasonry. We all have gone through the Blue Lodge degrees, and the 29 Scottish Rite degrees, but there probably is a lot about Freemasonry that remains unexplored and even misunderstood. One way to acquire more light in Masonry is to partake of the Master Craftsman program, either through self or group study.

In the Master Craftsman program, you will have the opportunity to examine the degrees more thoroughly and to better understand their lessons and underlying philosophy. In addition to a number of questions, in each of the six lessons in the Master Craftsman Program Part I, and in each of the nine lessons in the Master Craftsman Program Part II, you will be asked to write brief essays. This is not intended as a writing exercise, but rather as an opportunity for you to reflect upon how the degree might relate to your own life and situation.

Indeed, when we contemplate our Masonic experience, I think we would agree that the value of Freemasonry and what makes it worth the dues we pay and the time we spend, is measured by the benefits we receive. There is, of course, the fellowship and friendships, the leadership opportunities, and the chance to become involved in worthwhile projects. And in the Scottish Rite, often called the University of Freemasonry, we focus more on education and philosophy. Thus, a particular benefit of your Scottish Rite membership, in general, and the Master Craftsman program, in particular, is the opportunity to sit back and think about your life, set your goals, and measure your progress.

An important resource we have in this life is time. We live during a short period in the larger stream of time and share that time with those of our generation. And like previous generations, we try to make sense of our lives, to understand what we uniquely bring to the table, what we can contribute, and what we might leave behind as our legacy. Thinking about and internalizing the values of Freemasonry and its degrees can play an important part in the self-assessment we periodically should conduct. But Freemasonry is about action not just contemplation. We should not be passive observers watching events unfold, like spectators at a parade. Instead, we should be in the parade, adding meaning to our lives, and making a difference in the lives of others.

I would conclude by drawing your attention to three special events in the July-August time frame. First, on Monday, July 9, is our annual visit to the Dave Kruger RiteCare Summer Language Clinic at James Madison University, where we get to see how our contributions and our Scottish Rite is making a difference in the lives of children. Second, on Saturday, July 28, is our annual Valley Family Picnic where we get to share time with our Brethren and their families, have fun, and enjoy life. And third, on Saturday, August 18, is our Blue Lodge Event, where this year the Master Masons Degree will be performed using the Scottish Rite ritual. This is something few in our area have seen and something you won’t want to miss. Be sure to invite your Lodge Brethren to visit our Valley and be a part of this unique experience.

Fraternally,
Ed Cohen
PersonalRepresentative@AlexandriaScottishRite.org
Commander’s Message
James D. Baker, KCCH Commander, Council of Kadosh

We are again having our annual Blue Lodge event on Saturday, August 18, 2012, beginning at 4 p.m., and this year we offer something quite special for the Brethren.

As you know, we generally have a host Lodge do the opening and the first section of the Master Mason’s Degree for one of its candidates, and then a costumed Scottish Rite Degree team performs the second section. But, while at a Scottish Rite leadership conference in New Orleans a few of years ago, a couple of us were able to see the Scottish Rite-styled Master Masons Degree. It was quite different and very interesting. With the permission of the Grand Masters of Virginia and the District of Columbia, we have asked La France Lodge No. 93, holden under the Grand Lodge of D.C., to exemplify the Master Masons Degree using the Scottish Rite ritual. Even more special, you will get to see the opening and closing of the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason Degrees using the Scottish Rite ritual.

I am sure you will enjoy this special program and a rare opportunity to see this Degree performed. This is also an opportunity for the Valley to show Scottish Rite to our Lodge Brethren who are not yet members, and I hope you will invite and encourage these Brethren to attend.

The Degree will start promptly at 4 p.m. and we will have dinner at 6:30 p.m. There is no charge for this event, but please RSVP by emailing our Secretary, Ill. Dave Morris, at Secretary@AlexandriaScottishRite.org or call him at 703-998-9044, so that we can plan how many meals we will need.

S&F,
James Baker
Commander of the Council of Kadosh 2012
CommanderCouncilOfKadosh@AlexandriaScottishRite.org

Biography of James D. Baker

James Baker was born and raised in the small rural town of Ashton, Idaho, which is near the Tetons and Yellowstone National Park. He grew up working on the family cattle ranch and potato farm that his great-great grandfather homesteaded in 1889. He spent almost every weekend in the winter skiing on the small local ski hill.

Brother Baker attended elementary and high school in Ashton and attained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Healthcare Administration with a Business Administration minor from Idaho State University in 1993. He was hired by the Department of the Navy in 1994 as a Budget Analyst for the Naval Air Systems Command and moved to Alexandria, Virginia. In 1997 he transferred to the Federal Trade Commission as a Budget Analyst, was promoted to the position of Budget Officer in 1999, and now holds the position of Deputy Chief Financial Officer.

Brother Baker began his Masonic journey in Idaho and was raised to the Degree of Master Mason in 1993. When he moved to Virginia, he joined Concord Lodge No. 307 in Vienna and served as Worshipful Master in 2007. He also is a member of Harmony Chapter No. 60, Order of the Eastern Star, and has served as its Worthy Patron, and as Grand Organist and Grand Trustee for the Grand Chapter of Virginia, Order of the Eastern Star.

He joined the Alexandria Valley of Scottish Rite in 2003, and has served on the Budget and Finance, Registration, and Blue Lodge Visitation Committees. He is a member of the 7th, 18th, and 32nd Degree Teams, and plays the organ at the Reunions for a number of the Degrees. In 2007 he was invested with the rank and decoration of Knight Commander Court of Honour.

Brother Baker enjoys learning about English Tudor history and spending time with his family, friends, and Masonic brethren. He travels back to Idaho at least once or twice a year where his parents and sister’s family still live on the family homestead. He currently resides in Centreville, Virginia.
THE CLUBS ARE “OFF TO A NEW START”

The annual election and installation of officers for the two clubs for the ensuing year take place at the June meetings after this issue of the Bulletin is printed so the names of the new officers will appear in our next issue.

The July meeting of the Blue Ridge Club is on Monday, July 16, at the Lodge at Culpeper, with dinner at 6:30 p.m., and a brief meeting thereafter. The August meeting is on the 20th at Culpeper, also at 6:30 p.m. Reservations need to be made by the Friday before each meeting date. The Blue Ridge Club voted to have all their meetings at Culpepper for the immediate future.

The Shenandoah Valley Club will hold its July meeting at the Butcher Block Restaurant at Stephens City on Wednesday the 25th at 6:30 p.m. Reservations are not required. The August meeting on the 22nd will be at the Lodge in Woodstock where reservations will be required by Friday, August 17, for the pre-meeting dinner.

Alexandria area brethren and their ladies are welcome and encouraged to attend either or both of these events. Contact Ill. Walter S. Downs (703-768-7903) or Ill. David Smith, Sr. (703-239-8659) for reservations and information.

2012 – SCOTTISH RITE CONFERENCE

Plan to attend the annual Scottish Rite Conference of Virginia, which this year will be held in Lynchburg, Virginia, on September 21 and 22 at the Holiday Inn – Mid Town. Let our Secretary know if you will be sharing a room with another Brother, or want your own room, and whether you will be accompanied by your lady. We need this information to know how many rooms to reserve, whether to request two queen-size or a king-size bed in the room, and how many meals we need for Friday and Saturday night, and for the Ladies luncheon on Saturday.

We will advise you as soon as we have the agenda and other additional information about the Conference.

Ill. Larry Alexander
Alexandria Valley Conference Vice President
The Alexandria Scottish Rite Family Picnic is coming!

Summer has arrived! Memorial Day is now behind us and it is time to update your calendars. Last year we held a family picnic, as part of our 100-year celebration, and it was such a great success we are doing it again. On Saturday, July 28, your Valley will again host a picnic; we will start at 11:30 a.m. and run until 3 p.m.

We heard your comments from last year and have added more activities. To keep the young ones happy, we will again have the Bounce House. But they also will be able to enjoy a second event – a petting zoo.

The food will be barbecue and hot dogs, with assorted side dishes to tease your taste buds, and there will be plenty of soft drinks and water to slake your thirst. And to keep you cool – or dry, we will again have a nice large big-top tent with plenty of tables and chairs spaced around the area for your relaxing enjoyment.

In addition to the musical extravaganza, we are adding the Mistress of Trivia, who will intersperse trivia questions between songs as part of a contest to stretch your brains a bit; and there will be prizes for the most successful teams.

So reserve July 28 on your calendar and join in the fun and games at your Alexandria Scottish Rite family picnic. The Valley is absorbing most of the cost for the picnic; but in order not to bust our budget, contributions would be welcomed – for example, $5.00 per person, $10 per family. The picnic will again be held on the lawn behind our Scottish Rite Temple located at 1430 West Braddock Road in Alexandria Virginia.

See you there!

Neil Marple, KCCH
Venerable Master

James Madison University Rite Care Visit

Edmund Cohen, 33o Personal Representative of the SGIG in Alexandria

Yes, I know it is on Monday, and that is a work day; but if you, or you and your lady, have the opportunity, please join us in the morning, at James Madison University (JMU) on July 9 for our annual visit to the Dave Kruger RiteCare Summer Language Clinic.

One of our important Scottish Rite charities is RiteCare which provides help to children with language disorders. If you have a child with these kinds of problems, you know what I mean. But, fortunately, for most of us the term language disorders may only mean the stories we see on TV about politicians caught with their foot in their mouth.

The reality, however, is that too many children have serious speech problems that will prevent them from having a normal life. And that is where we come in. We support, among other activities, the summer language program at JMU where clinicians, who we also support with fellowships, care for these kids.

Having visited the clinic on a number of occasions, I can tell you that Gwen and I have come away each time feeling very proud of the Scottish Rite and very proud to be a part of helping to fund these activities. The briefings we receive, the question-and-answer sessions, and the opportunity to actually observe the work with the children, has made both the problem and our efforts to help very real and very meaningful.

The program starts between 9:00 and 9:30 AM, and we leave right after lunch. The dress is informal. If you can, wear your Alexandria Scottish Rite shirt and khaki slacks. But what you wear is less important than having an opportunity to see what we are accomplishing.

Tell our Valley Secretary if you are attending so we know how many lunches to order, and get in touch with him for directions, and perhaps help in forming a car pool to get to JMU. Ill. Dave can be reached at 703-998-9044, or email him at Secretary@AlexandriaScottishRite.org.

Gwen and I hope to see you on Monday, July 9, for a rewarding and inspiring visit to JMU.
Looking Back

Ladies Night

Our May 11 Ladies Appreciation and Widows Recognition Dinner was quite a success. The meal, which was prepared and served by the Ladies Oriental Shrine, was very good indeed, and the Alexandria Scottish Rite ladies pins and a wallet card were well received. There was a great talk by Ill. S. Brent Morris about the first American magician – who incidentally was a Mason. And then we had an expedited business meeting and rushed back downstairs, feeling guilty for leaving the ladies alone. Well, to our surprise, the only emotion shown by the ladies was that we had returned too soon, as they all were still exchanging stories and getting to know each other. In sum, it was a great evening – and with your help and support we expect our 2013 ladies night will be even better.

One-Day Spring Reunion

There was a sizeable Alexandria Scottish Rite presence in Richmond on Saturday, April 14th, for the one-day Spring Reunion in honor of Ill. and MW Judge James B. Wilkinson. And with a state-wide class of over 70, the Alexandria Valley had 21 candidates, and now welcomes 21 new Alexandria Scottish Rite Masons. In all, we had well over 60 Alexandria Brethren in attendance.

The five mandatory degrees were handled by different Valleys, with Alexandria taking responsibility for the 32nd Degree. Under the leadership of Ill. Dave Smith, the Degree Master, we won the praise of both class and audience. Everyone did a good job, but I think the consensus was that we had the best degree team that day.

Beyond the enjoyment of seeing the degrees and supporting the Spring 2012 class, we had a great lunch and fellowship with Scottish Rite Masons from all over Virginia. We took away some ideas about degree staging from Richmond – they have the most wonderful stage settings – and also gave them some ideas from our own experience. In all, it was a wonderful Masonic event.

Outstanding Teacher Awards

On June 8, 2012, the Alexandria Valley, as part of its community outreach and its support for public education, was pleased to recognize three outstanding teachers.

- Ms. Sarah Kiyak, who teaches English at T. C. Williams High School in Alexandria;
- Mr. Nicolas Martino, who teaches in the “Learn and Serve” program that focuses on community service as well as Social and Cultural Anthropology at Mountain View High School in Stafford County; and,
- Mr. George Murphy, who teaches biology at Fauquier High School.

Each received a certificate of appreciation and a $500 check in recognition for their service, dedication, and accomplishments in the educational profession.

The Brethren and ladies in attendance, as well as the teachers and their guests, enjoyed a fine meal and a most interesting and enlightening presentation by Dr. J. Thomas Hennessy, Chief of Staff, at George Mason University – which we hope to post on our website and feature in an upcoming Bulletin.

Following the recognition of our guests, a short meeting was conducted in the Lodge room, and we parted in harmony and on the square. The Education Committee extends its thanks to all members of the Four Bodies for helping to make our Outstanding Teacher Awards Ceremony a success.

Ralph W. Smith Jr., 33°
Brethren We Need Your Help

Our Fall Reunion is set for the 20th and 27th of October, and to reach our membership goal this year we need a bit over 100 candidates for our Fall Class. So now is the time to be talking about Scottish Rite with the Masons in your Lodge who are not yet members. With so many new Masons, and so many newly retired Masons looking for more light in Masonry, there are so many men available to join; we just have to talk with them.

There are over 40 Lodges in our area, and if you could help us get petitions from only three Masons in each Lodge, we would more than meet our goal. Remember to have a petition in your pocket at all times and especially when you go to Lodge or other Masonic events. You can pick up petition forms from our Secretary’s office, but you can also get them 24 hours a day, 7 days a week right on our website (http://alexandriascottishrite.org). On the home page click on the “How to Join” tab and then click on the “Click here to download the membership petition” and print out as many copies as you need. It is as simple as that. Actually, it is even simpler – because you can get directly to the form by putting in http://alexandriascottishrite.org/howtojoin.php - but what is really important is that you give that petition to one of your Masonic friends.

Paul Evancoe, KCCH
Membership Committee Chair

Friends and Family Dinner and Auction

Scottish Rite Masons in the Alexandria Valley, joined by their families and friends, celebrated on June 23 our Valley’s annual charity auction.

Refreshments and dinner preceded the silent and regular auction. The sumptuous meal was served under the direction of Bro. David B. Browning. The guests were entertained by the music of a local singing group.

Once our hunger pangs were satisfied, the Brethren and their guests completed their bids on dozens of items ranging from jewelry to timepieces to art. After the close of the silent auction, everyone exercised their competitive spirits and engaged in fraternal and friendly “contention” through vocal bidding on a wide range of items. They were encouraged by the auctioneer, our own very skillful and entertaining Ill. Matthew T. Szramoski, 33°.

All items in the silent auction and regular auction were donated by Brethren in our Valley and by the Supreme Council. They were collected, cataloged, and displayed by Bro. David B. Browning, who also oversaw the collection of winning bids.

After the assembled Brethren exhausted all their rivalry and before they hauled off their booty from the auction, they were commended for their charity and fraternalism by Ill. Edmund Cohen, 33°, Personal Representative of the S.G.I.G. in the Orient of Virginia. Brother Cohen extended personal thanks on behalf of Ill. James D. Cole, 33°, Sovereign Grand Inspector General of Virginia, and Ill. Ronald A. Seale, 33°, Sovereign Grand Commander for their participation. He noted that the proceeds of the silent and regular auctions will be shared between our Valley charities and the House of the Temple Reconstruction fund.

A special thanks to John Light, KCCH, the Wise Master of the Chapter of Rose Croix, for his work leading this event.

Planning is already underway for the 2013 edition of “Friends & Family Night” to be held next spring in our Temple Building. We look forward to breaking bread with even more Brethren and their guests and to sharing each other’s company at a wonderful event. Stay tuned for further details!
Scottish Rite Bulletin
ALEXANDRIA SCOTTISH RITE BODIES
Post Office Box 175
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-0175
Return Service Requested

Upcoming Events

July 2012
July 9 – 9:00 a.m.
Dave Kruger Rite Care Summer Language Clinic
James Madison University
Harrisonburg, VA

July 13 – 6:00 p.m.
Executive Council Meeting
Lodge of Perfection – 7:30 p.m.
Refreshments – 9:00 p.m.

July 16 – 6:30 p.m.
Blue Ridge Club Meeting in Culpeper
(reservations required by July 13)

July 25 – 6:30 p.m.
Shenandoah Valley Club
Butcher Block Restaurant, Stephens City
(reservations not required)

July 28 – 11:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
Annual Valley Family Picnic
Open to All
(reservation required by July 26)
Donation requested

August 2012 (continued)
August 20 – 6:30 p.m.
Blue Ridge Club Meeting in Culpeper
(reservations required by August 17)

August 22 – 6:30 p.m.
Shenandoah Valley Club
Woodstock
(reservations required by August 17)

September 2012
September 13 – 7:00 p.m.
Master Craftsman II – Quiz 2

September 14 – 6:30 p.m.
Pre-meeting Dinner
Consistory & Lodge of Perfection – 7:30 p.m.

September 17 – 6:30 p.m.
Blue Ridge Club Meeting in Culpeper
(reservations required by Sept 14)

September 21 & 22
Scottish Rite Conference
Orient of Virginia
Holiday Inn, Lynchburg

September 26 – 6:30 p.m.
Shenandoah Valley Club
Butcher Block Restaurant, Stephens City
(reservations not required)

September 29 – 6:30 p.m.
Feast of Tishri Dinner & Program

REMINDER:
Clubs Information on page 4.