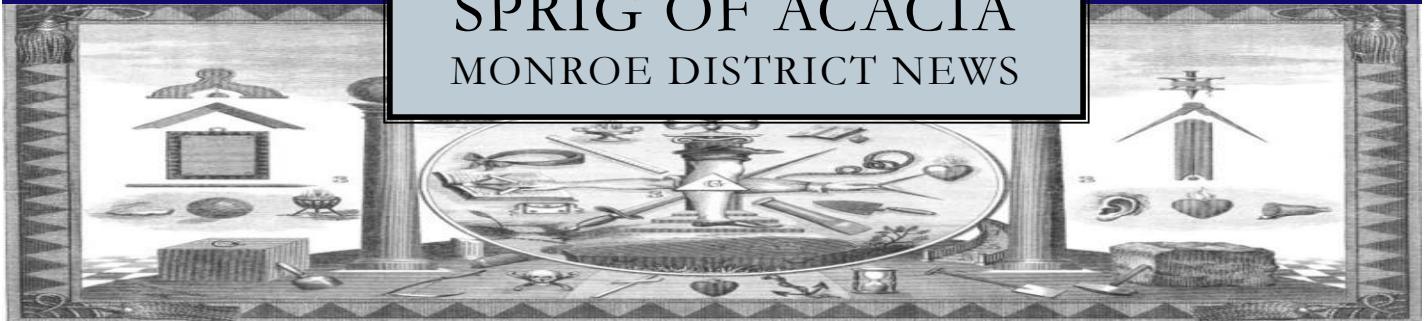


SPRIG OF ACACIA MONROE DISTRICT NEWS



Greetings Brethren, spring is in the air, albeit frigid air. Many lodge have Initiated or Passed Brothers since September, with others continuing to bring in new candidates. With the ability to now open and close lodge on any degree there is no reason that these Brothers should not be participating in all you lodge

doings. Engaging your new and current Brethren is one of the keys to retaining your membership. Remember that if there is anything your district leadership team can do to assist you in these endeavors please do not hesitate to contact us. We are here for you and your members.

DISTRICT DEPUTY GRAND MASTER

R.W. William Edwards



I am happy to report that District Deputy Official Visits to lodges in the Monroe District are now complete. One of my

responsibilities as District Deputy is to review the lodge books and records on behalf of the lodge members to ensure all is proper. It is also an opportunity to recognize the quality of work being done and share best practices and ideas for improvement. I want to thank the lodge Secretaries, Treasurers and Trustees for all their efforts to manage the lodge finances and operations.

It was enjoyable to get out and meet with each of the lodges in person this year. The District Team appreciated the warm brotherly welcome and hospitality! During the Official Visit I was able to share our Grand Masters Message, talk about the recent Grand Lodge proceedings and also share the district goals for our upcoming term which are **Improved Communication, owning your Masonic Experience and building and supporting our lodges**. One way to encourage lodge participation is with activities such as the traveling gavel and the Masonic Passport. These goals are further explored in previous issues of the Sprig of Acacia.

The Masonic Brotherhood Fund is a 501(c)(3) Charity of the Grand Lodge of New York and supports the various service and charitable projects around the state. Grand Master Kessler's pin and cufflinks raise donations for the Brotherhood Fund. I have pins and cufflinks

available and will bring them with me on my travels around the district. **To date the Monroe District has raised \$745 from donations** for these items. Please consider making a donation to the Brotherhood Fund!

The Monroe District

During the month of January lodge secretaries complete the annual return for their lodge. This report includes the current membership information for each lodge at the end of the calendar year or December 31st. I thought it would be interesting and useful to share some information about the district membership for 2021.

On May 3rd, 1999 at the Annual Grand Lodge session, it was approved to merge the two Monroe Masonic Districts into one Monroe Masonic District. Currently there are ten lodges in the district and we have approximately 1,000 members. Here is a breakdown of each lodge with their average membership age.

Lodge Name	Number	Members	Avg Age
Inspiration	0109	207	68.00
ERAC	0154	206	64.00
Union Star	0320	54	69.00
Fairport-Flower City	0476	93	67.00
Unity	0479	137	68.00
Webster	0538	114	63.00
O-At-Ka	0759	38	55.00
Clio	0779	68	61.00
Seneca	0797	61	67.00
Ecclesia	1189	15	50.00

Given the current membership rolls for our lodges, it is important to remember, we are the lodge and it takes our collective active involvement for the lodge to function. There is no one else - in simple terms, get involved and Own it! In some jurisdictions the ideal lodge is about 50 members as this provides the opportunity for intimate fraternal bonds to develop. Rather than focusing only on the quantity of members we had in years past, it is now more relevant and important that we strive to excel with a quality Masonic experience.

Here is the breakdown of membership by events:

Type	2020	2021	2022
Initiated	24	18	3
Passed	26	11	5
Raised	29	5	0
Affiliated	11	12	0
Restored	12	14	0
Total Gains	52	31	0
Died	64	38	0
NPD	36	23	0
Demitted	18	20	0
Suspended	0	0	0
Expelled	0	0	0
Total Loss	118	81	0
Net Change	-66	-50	0

About 75% of our current membership lives in the Rochester region. We have six members who are over 100 years in age. Brother Loren Knab of Unity Lodge is our oldest member at 103 years young. The average age of our membership is 65 years old. About 30% of our membership does not have active emails. We are exploring ways in the coming months to reach out to all of our members once a year with a postal mailing.



Have-A-Heart is the signature fundraiser event for the Monroe Masonic District and related organizations. Established in 1988, Have-A-Heart has raised, with the help of the community, over \$440,000 for the Ronald McDonald House Charities of Rochester (RMHCR). In October 2016, the Masonic Service Bureau was recognized with a RMHCR Pillar Award. In 2022 we were able to staff the booth on two Saturdays in Eastview



and Greece Ridge Malls as well as raise funds online at www.haveaheartrochester.org. JoAnne Ryan, President and CEO of RMHCR helped staff the mall at the booth and is looking forward to working with us in the fall of 2022 to jointly plan and promote Have-A-Heart 2023 next February. To date, a total of just over \$10,000 has been raised this year approaching the grand total to over \$450,000. Thank you for your ongoing support of Have-A-Heart!

Valley of Rochester AASR

The Valley of Rochester Scottish Rite will be hosting the
Symbolic Awards on Saturday, March 26, 2022 at the
Damascus Shrine Center, 979 Bay Road, Webster NY
4:00 pm Social hour/Cash bar, 5:00 pm Awards Ceremony
followed by refreshments, pizza and wings

Contact the secretary at secretary@valleyofrochester.org for additional details
or call 585-425-0033. www.valleyofrochester.org



SCOTTISH RITE
Northern Masonic Jurisdiction



240th Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge

The Grand Lodge Annual Communication will be held on Monday and Tuesday May 2nd and 3rd in New York City at the Masonic Hall – 23rd Street. **It is important that every lodge is represented at Grand Lodge.** A particular item up for vote may come down to a few votes deciding yay or nay. Did you know that the lodge representative at Grand Lodge get more votes? That's right – every Master or their proxy gets three votes plus an additional vote for every 50 members over the first fifty. All other Grand Lodge voting members get one vote including the committee members and Grand Lodge officers. In some rare cases related to a tie, the Grand Master would get two votes. It is so important that every lodge is represented by their Worshipful Master, Warden or elected proxy who is a Past Master of that particular lodge. The Monroe District had ten of ten lodges in attendance at the October Grand Lodge. **Your lodge's vote is your voice! - Make sure your lodge is represented at Grand Lodge in May!**

GRAND STEWARD

R.:W.: Allyn J. Borrino



The **Road to the East** program took place on February 12, 2022 with officers and brothers from six district lodges in attendance. A total of eleven brothers participated in the course. Thanks to R.:W.: John Zabel, R.:W.: Michael Nohle, our District Deputy R.:W.: Bill Edwards and our Assistant Grand Lecturer

V.:W.: Jim MacDuff for assisting in the delivery of this course.

Those brothers who are elected Master of your lodge will attend the Master's Chair Training sometime in June. Much depends on completed elections and the state of our district's health this summer.





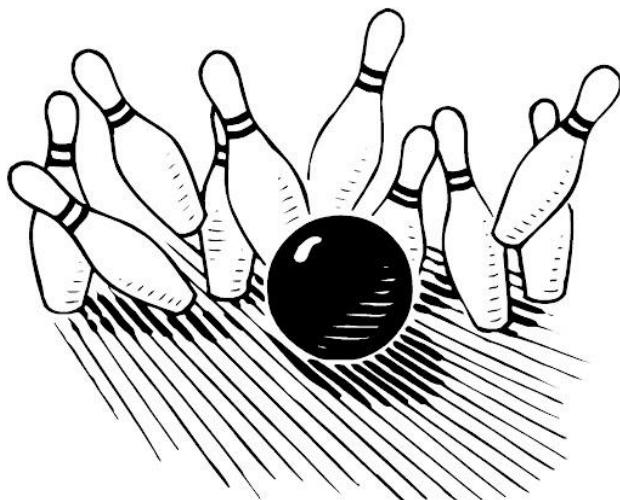
On Tuesday, February 22, 2022 Webster Lodge #538 paid a visit to Inspiration Lodge #109.

Not only to enjoy a delicious Garbage Plate dinner prepared by legendary chef Brother John Hellaby and his girlfriend Kelly, but also to try and procure the return of the Traveling Gavel back to Webster Lodge. They could have collected two gavels, with a total of sixteen Webster Lodge Brothers in attendance. Inspiration Lodge #109 were gracious hosts and good sports, and all had a great time and enjoyed the fellowship. I can't tell you how important it is to our local Craft that Brothers travel and visit other lodges. That's one reason we are called Traveling Men.



Brothers, please join the Monroe District at the April 16, 2022 **District Table Lodge**. The registration form can be found on page sixteen. Print and mail in your registration to be part of this event. The Grand Master of Masters will be in attendance, and we will also be honoring RW Richard Friedman with a recognition award for his Masonic service to the Craft, both locally and internationally. You'll want to be there.

THE VALLEY OF ROCHESTER SCOTTISH RITE PRESENTS



Masonic Family Bowling Night
Lodge vs Lodge bowling challenge at Empire Lanes
2400 Empire Blvd., Webster NY
Saturday, March 19, 2022
Bowling begins at 12:00 pm

Get your Brothers together for some casual fun and fellowship. Get a four man team together and represent your lodge for some exciting, but friendly, competition. You do not have to be a Scottish Rite member or regular bowler to participate. No team, No worries, we'll set you up.

\$20.00 per person includes two hours of bowling, shoes, pizza and soda.

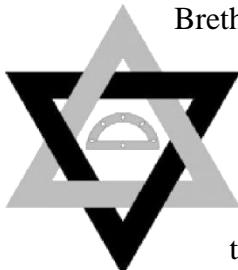
Reservations and payment deadline is **Friday, March 11 2022**.
Call the Valley Secretary, Gary Burke with any questions, at 585-425-0033
The Valley of Rochester . 811 Ayrault Road . Suite 3 . Fairport NY 14450
secretary@valleyofrochester.org



SCOTTISH RITE
Northern Masonic Jurisdiction

ASSISTANT GRAND LECTURER

V.:W.:James MacDuff



Brethren: At this point of the year, we are on the other side of Old Man Winter. AND, if you're like me, you're looking forward to the renewal that Mother Earth brings to us in Spring.

I've been thinking of renewal from the standpoint of Ritual. In February I had occasion to travel with the Grand Lecturer to Corning, for the Grand Lecturer's Convention for Steuben District. Before long the Grand Lecturer put me into the Marshal's chair for the evening's work ... the Marshal present was over 90 years young and had difficulty mobilizing! So we gladly had him take his rest and enjoy the Work of the evening. Think about the COMMITMENT of that Brother ... over 90, and he's at the GLC ... and oh, by the way, Brother Frank was the first one at Lodge at 5:30pm, to let the caterer in.

To continue with my thought, how long had it been since I was Marshal of my own Lodge, linking up with the Senior Deacon in the South to march our way to the inner door. While that evening was not a true Degree, we were under the direction of the Grand Lecturer, but what an enjoyable experience. Reciting the work with Brethren I'd never met before: It served to, in a small way, renew within me the joy of doing the WORK of a Master Mason.

I think this example serves as a reminder - "What came you hear to do?" We all know that answer by rote. ***What does it actually MEAN though?***

The Ritual of the Marshal doesn't inherently include any special meanings or lessons, but that's not the point, is it? DOING your part ... developing discipline ... developing the ability to train your mind to REMEMBER the Ritual...that which we **all of us** had to be proficient in, to advance ... **THAT** is the work. ALL OF THIS, too, builds confidence ... confidence in character. **There are no strained connections here.**

When we fail to hold ourselves to that standard ... proficiency ... discipline ... we're failing ourselves. When we do not know our assignment in a Degree part, our work is shoddy. When we do not know our parts memorized, our work is shoddy. And when we, the individual components of our Lodge, let the work suffer, our Lodge suffers ... because of haste, or lack of care. When we as Brothers do not hold ourselves accountable ... then tell new Brethren brought into the Craft that THEY must be accountable to these, when WE are not ... then the Lodge too will start to suffer and decay, and quickly. This is no coincidence.

The Ritual is built with renewable energy – spirit energy. What Came You Here to Do? RECAPTURE that energy for your Lodge, your Brethren and yourself. Don't over think meeting programs ... **practice the Ritual;** wipe off the dust. Get your younger Brethren in the right habit. RENEW the reason why you walked through that Inner Door in the first place.

Be well my friends.

BROTHERHOOD FUND

R.:W.:Derek Van Houten

In the winter issue of the Empire State Mason there is an update on the donations made to the BHF for 2020 thru 2021. From June 1 to May 31, 2021 we're at \$472,210.51. That being said we can further break this down to the Monroe District level where a total of \$18,470.88 was donated by 224 brothers out of a membership of 1031 members. Monroe has always been in the top 10 Districts for years. We are currently in 5th place in this period of time.

This is commendable; however I know that we can do better. When you look at the number of donations and the percentage, we are 21.73 percent.

The word CHARITY comes to mind as one of the cornerstones of our Fraternity. As your District Chair for the BHF one of my goals was to make sure that every lodge in the district has a chairman who can respond in helping your lodge achieve the best outcome for the Fund.

I have asked the Masters to appoint a Brother that has the interest and desire to fill a multiyear assignment as your lodge's Representative for this very important calling.

The DDGM has allowed me to come out to your lodge on his Official Visits to speak about what we as Masons can do to assist your lodge in raising funds for the BHF. I wasn't able to attend every lodge as weather and other commitments kept me from attending a couple of lodges.

If any lodge either lacks a BHF Chair or wants a speaker for the evening please call me or text me. I am here to assist you anytime.

We only have until May 31 to complete the Campaign for this year. Please consider any donation. Just a remember that checks are preferred, the system won't accept cash, but if necessary the cash can be given to the Treasurer and in turn a check from the Lodge will be submitted to the Brotherhood Fund on your behalf.

In closing, let me say that the BHF is the engine that runs the various committees' of the Grand Lodge. In addition I want to thank those that are being leaders in their lodges as Chairman of the BHF, your commitment is noteworthy.



2022 Annual Widows Luncheon

Sponsored by Masonic Service Bureau

Date: Saturday, April 30, 2022

Time: Doors open at 11:00 am, Lunch served at Noon

Place: **Red Fedele's Brook House**

920 Elmridge Center Drive, Rochester NY

Entrée Choice: Family-Style Sit-Down Dinner

Includes Beef, Chicken, plus appetizer, salad, pasta and dessert

Cost: \$20.00 per person

Reservations, with PAYMENT, must be post marked to the Masonic Service Bureau by Friday, April 22, 2022. NO tickets sold at the door

Contact the Service Bureau for further details and Flyer Announcement



Monroe District History

Unity Lodge #479

A brief history of Unity Lodge No. 479

By R.W.: Phillip R. Hurwitz, Secretary of Unity

As its name suggests, Unity #479 is made up of a number of lodges which have consolidated with each other; these lodges are: Etolian 479, Charlotte-Corinthian 1088 (which itself was a merger of Charlotte 1088 and Corinthian 805), and Churchville 667. What follows is a brief history of each Lodge.

Etolian 479

Grand Lodge granted dispensation in 1859 to some brothers from Yonnandio 163 (now part of ERAC 154) and Valley 109 (now part of Inspiration 109) to form a lodge in Spencerport. In 1860, that Lodge was chartered as Etolian 479. For roughly forty-five years thereafter, Etolian met first at Temperance Hall, and then Upton Hall, both located on Union Street in Spencerport. During these intervening years, Etolian was instrumental in helping form Churchville 667, in 1867, and Clio 779 in 1877. According to a 1969 Trestle board, Clio Lodge was a tenant of Etolian, until it moved to its own lodge, that same year.

In 1904, the Lodge formed a separate corporation to build its own Masonic temple, the cornerstone for which was laid in 1905, by the M::W:: William Sutherland. In 1906 the building was completed and formally dedicated by the M::W:: Townsend Scudder. The cornerstone is plainly visible at the NE corner of the lodge, just above the sidewalk.

Five years later, the Lodge was nearly destroyed by fire; it was rebuilt. Pictures of the devastation can be viewed in the anteroom leading into the lodge.

Do you remember Bully Hill Wine? In the day, it was a popular wine, due in some part to its iconoclastic owner, Walter Taylor. In 1977 Etolian hosted Mr. Taylor to present a Wine tasting at the lodge. It was co-sponsored by Etolian Chapter 308 (OES)

Etolian Lodge was involved in the affairs of the community. The then Ogden Town Supervisor (where the Village of Spencerport is located), was W:: Don Walzer, PM of Etolian. During his watch as supervisor, the Town built a community center. In 1992, the cornerstone to the new center was laid in a Masonic ceremony led by the M::W:: Sheldon Blank.

1992 was also a time of sad remembrance of a dearly departed brother. Bro. Charles Dyer was very devoted to the lodge, and so very much wanted to become Master. At the time of his death, he was Senior Warden. He made quite an impression on his brothers, so much so that a memorial service was held in his honor at a local church.

In 2004, Etolian merged with Charlotte-Corinthian to become Unity Lodge 479.

Corinthian 805

Corinthian 805 received its charter from Grand Lodge in 1893. The lodge was formed out of a desire to have a lodge located in the northern part of Rochester (generally Charlotte). A number of the charter members came from Yonnandio 163, Genesee Falls 507 (both now ERAC 154) and Valley109 (now Inspiration 109). The physical lodge itself was built by a very generous Brother; his name being John Ashton. The lodge was first located at 693 Lake Avenue; which is just south of Glenwood Ave., near Lexington. The Lodge would later move in 1903 to the newly built Masonic Temple on North Clinton Avenue (where the current RTS Depot now stands).

The Lodge in 1928 would relocate again, this time to the newly built Downtown Temple on E. Main Street; there it would remain until its merger with Charlotte 1088 in 1986.

Corinthian was highly regarded for its skill in performing the third degree. There was demand for Corinthian's talents throughout our region.

In 1920, the Lodge was invited to exemplify the 3rddegree at Jesse L. Cooley Lodge 966 located in Elmira (now known as General Sullivan 95, located in Horseheads).



It turns out that getting to Lodge was an ordeal. The brothers first had to take a train to Canandaigua, where they then transferred to another train to take them to Elmira. Here is what is contained in the Lodge's historical record: " says Worshipful Brother Claude' E. Van Houten . . ."We left on the 11:15 train on March 8, 1920, for Canandaigua, and transferred to the Pennsylvania Railroad. Because of a train wreck beyond Penn Yan, we were four and one-half hours late upon our arrival at Elmira. Dinners had been saved for us and we ate in a hurry. We began work at nine o'clock, and finished about twelve. We then went to a hotel for the night and returned to Rochester the next morning. "

Charlotte 1088

Charlotte 1088 was chartered in 1928, although amid some controversy regarding jurisdiction.¹ The Charlotte area of Rochester at the time came under the Masonic jurisdiction of every lodge within the first Monroe District. This jurisdictional issue was worked out.

Charlotte initially met in the Odd Fellows Hall on Stutson Street (the Hall remains standing today; look for the I.O.O.F rings at the top of the building). Due to the economic depression that gripped the Country, the Lodge was forced by the landlord to vacate the Odd Fellows Hall in 1935. A new building in which to meet was found at the corner of Lake Avenue and Stutson Street. It was not an ideal situation, since there were residential apartments in the building. The records note that the brothers had to navigate wet laundry hanging about while they made their way to the lodge room on the third floor.

In 1944, the lodge instituted a building fund in the hopes that an opportunity might present itself. It's said that luck is merely when preparation meets opportunity . . . and so Charlotte became lucky that same year. Word came out that there was a building located in

¹ At the time, there were over 30 lodges in Monroe County, necessitating that the County be divided into two Masonic districts. The two Monroe Districts were merged in the early 1990's

Charlotte that was no longer needed by its owner. This building, built in 1911, contained electrical transformers that were used to power trolley car lines. Time, along with the advent of alternative transport, made the need for this infrastructure, obsolete. The Lodge purchased this building from the Rochester Transit Company for a “nominal” sum in 1944. Apparently this was a cash transaction because no mortgage was used to secure the purchase of this building.



Converting an industrial building into a Masonic lodge took a huge amount of imagination and sweat equity, but the brothers pulled it off. You can see the fruit of their labors in the pictures that hang in the anteroom at Unity Lodge. The Lodge's conversion was completed and dedicated by a contingent from Grand Lodge in 1945.

As of 1961, the Lodge boasted a roster of nearly 500 members. From a 1976 program for the installation of officers . . . came these words: "LET US BE TOLERANT OF THE IDEAS AND WAYS OF OTHERS."

Churchville 667

Churchville 667 was chartered in 1868. Both Eolian Lodge and Olive Branch (Leroy NY) Lodges assisted in the formation of Churchville Lodge.

The record is unclear as to where in Churchville (or the town of Riga for that matter) the Lodge initially met. In or around 1924 the Lodge purchased the building that it was meeting in. M.: W.: Arthur Tompkins dedicated the new lodge building. The lodge remained in this building until it was sold, and the lodge later consolidated with Unity Lodge in 2008.

At the time (and to this day) there is a grain mill located within the Village limits. The Mill was a major employer in the village, and counted a number of masons as its employees.

A bit of remarkable history connects Churchville Lodge to the M.:W.: DeWitt Clinton (who in addition, was the Governor of New York and the motivating force behind the development of the Erie Canal). Under Bro. Clinton's hand, Grand Lodge issued a charter in 1813 to Harmony Lodge 212 which met in Riga (the town in which the Village of Churchville is located). The Morgan Affair, and the subsequent Anti-Masonic rage throughout the

Northeast which followed, led to the Lodge going dark. According to one historical account, the Lodge surrendered its charter to Grand Lodge. Another account has it that the original charter wasn't surrendered to Grand Lodge, but instead was discovered roughly 100 years after its issuance, in a trunk in someone's attic; that someone being the great-granddaughter (Janet Kelsey) of the Master to whom the Grand Master issued the charter to. Another account quotes Ms. Kelsey telling a local reporter that she would be willing to relinquish control of this charter to the "proper Masonic authorities on request. . ."

Another tie that Churchville 667 had to Harmony 212 was found in the minute's book for Harmony. It covered the years 1814 to 1825. For over a century, this book was unaccounted for, when it was discovered in all places, in a college library (Berea College) located in Kentucky. The college returned the Minute Book to Churchville, who in turn turned it over to Grand Lodge



Congratulations

On February 28, 2022 W.: **Erin Burruto** of Fairport-Flower City Lodge #476 was presented the Daniel Carter Beard award. This award is named in honor of Brother Daniel Carter Beard. Brother Beard was the first National Commissioner when the Boy Scouts of America program began in 1910, and was a New York Mason. The award was established in 2001 by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and has been adopted by many other grand lodges, including New York, and is one of the "Community Organization" service awards approved by the BSA for organizations to recognize members of various community-based organizations (such as the Elks, Rotary, Lions, and VFW).



DDGM R.: W.: Bill Edwards, Mr. Randy Prader of the Seneca Waterways Council, W.: Bob Shaf and W.: Erin Burutto

W.: Erin has been an Assistant Scoutmaster and Scoutmaster of Troop 325. He completed advanced leadership training ("Wood Badge") and has been honored with the Scoutmaster Award of Merit, District Award of Merit (the highest District award for volunteers), and the Silver Beaver (the highest Council award for volunteers)

Fidelity Triangle #4 Upcoming Event

March 26, 7pm: Spa Social on Zoom (Open to All)

April 9, 2-4pm: Coffee Shop Fundraiser (CLIO Lodge/Open to All)

April 20, 7pm: Game/Trivia Night on Zoom (Open to All)

April 23, 6pm: Open Meeting with Potluck Dinner & Pound Auction (CLIO Lodge/Open to All)
Attention all Triangle Alumni: This year we will be celebrating Fidelity Triangle's 95th Birthday!

On Saturday, June 25 we will have a meeting with Degrees at 4pm followed by a Dinner Dance at CLIO Lodge. Then, on Sunday, June 26 we will have a Fideli-Tea with Alumni hosted by Ms. Wendy Burrows & Mrs. Doreen Rhodes. Please save these dates!!

Please contact Jr. Deputy Erika Hansen (nycmshansen@gmail.com or 585-435-2157) for more information about any of these events.

MONROE DISTRICT TABLE LODGE

MASONIC RECOGNITION AWARD RECIPIENT
R.W.RICHARD FRIEDMAN
GRAND LECTURER

Special Guest – Most Worshipful Richard J. Kessler
Grand Master of Masons in the State of New York

SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2022
Damascus Shrine Center

979 Bay Road, Webster NY - 5:00 – 6:00 Cocktail & Appetizer hour

6:00 pm – Dinner and Festive Board Table Lodge

- EA, FC and Master Masons only - Standard Lodge Attire -



**BEHOLD, HOW GOOD AND HOW PLEASANT IT IS
FOR BRETHREN TO DWELL TOGETHER IN UNITY!**



MONROE DISTRICT TABLE LODGE

DEADLINE: RESERVATIONS MUST BE MAILED BY APRIL 1, 2022
NO WALK-INS CAN BE ACCOMMODATED

RESERVATION FORM

MENU

**CHICKEN FRENCH, ITALIAN SAUSAGE W/ PEPPERS & ONIONS,
PENNE ALFREDO, ROLLS & BUTTER, CAESAR SALAD
CANNON, WINE, COFFEE AND DESSERT
\$35.00 PER PLATE
CATERING BY PROIETTI'S**

RESERVATION CHOICES

INDIVIDUAL BROTHER \$35.00

MULTIPLE BROTHERS SEE BELOW

(Please Print Legibly)

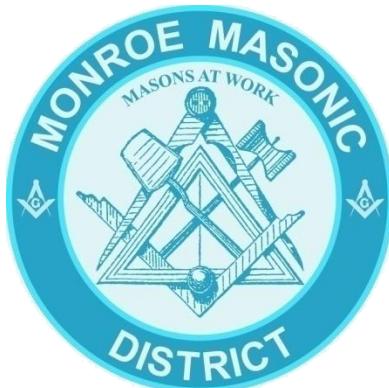
	Meals
1-BRO: _____	LODGE _____
2-BRO: _____	LODGE _____
3-BRO: _____	LODGE _____
4-BRO: _____	LODGE _____
5-BRO: _____	LODGE _____
6-BRO: _____	LODGE _____
7-BRO: _____	LODGE _____
8-BRO: _____	LODGE _____

TOTAL - _____

X \$35

TOTAL AMOUNT DUE : \$_____

Questions: Allyn J. Borrino 585-329-4761 or ajborrino@gmail.com
Make check payable to: Masonic Service Bureau - 979 Bay Road, Webster NY 14580



Fireside Chat

Excerpts from interview with Masonic Recognition Award Recipient

R.: W.: Richard C. Friedman

Interview conducted by Bro. Christopher Carosa

Bro. Chris Carosa: Let's actually begin with a little bit about you and what it was like when you were growing up. Where did you grow up what was your childhood like and what are some of the things that you remember that kind of stuck out from that era.

R.: W.: Richard Friedman: Okay that's a very broad; I mean I grew up on the lower east side of Manhattan. My father was a construction worker who was also a very violent alcoholic man. And would beat my mother, beat the kids, he broke eleven bones in my body when I was growing up. I had two Sams in my life, and these are the fondest memories I have of my childhood. My grandfather Sam Spitz is the guy who actually stepped in and acted as my father. And Sam Brontman, who is not a Friedman, and wasn't related, was married to my father's sister and he lived in an apartment right across the hall from me. Whenever things got hinky in our apartment he would open the door ajar to let us know it was okay to go in there. And we would go in there, usually kind of bloodied up and he'd always put a bowl of M&M's in front of us, which is always a great treat, and he had those big Jewish man Dumbo ears, so he would wiggle his ears and he would make us laugh. So between the two Sams I really learned the things I needed to know in life, I didn't, unfortunately ever get a chance to learn much from my dad even though I looked up to him in a lot of ways, he was a highly decorated Marine Corps veteran, World War Two and Korea. He lost his toes to frostbite in Korea and I think that really twisted him when he came home. But growing up on the lower East side was very interesting experience.

Bro. Chris Carosa: When did you first realize there was this thing called the Masons?

R.: W.: Richard Friedman: I was sitting in my office in Rochester, in 1982 I moved up from New York City, I ran the adolescent program a Convalescent Hospital for Children, which is now Crestwood Children's Center and my Secretary buzzed in and said, your uncle's on the phone. And he never called me, we always talk on Sunday, so I picked the phone and said "hey Unc, how you doing". He said "you sitting down" and I said "yeah". He said "I've got pancreatic cancer and I'm going to die in a year and there's no cure for it. I was flabbergasted, shocked, upset and I said to him, "what can I do. I'll do anything. And he said, "I want you to become a Mason". And I said, "I'm a shrink, what do I know about bricks and mortar and being a Mason. He said "No, a Freemason dummy. And I literally had no clue. Now he would leave our apartment building in a tuxedo once a week and everybody thought he had a second job as a maitre d', that's why he was wearing a tux, but he was a Mason all that time. He never told me, he never told anyone, but now he was dying and he wanted me to become a Mason. So I looked in the yellow pages in Rochester and there were no Mason's listed. I looked in the white pages too. There was no Internet. So I had a guy on my staff, who's still a Mason, his name is Art Mason, And I pulled him into my office I said "Art, are you a Freemason? He goes "well how'd you know"? I said "well your last name is Mason". He said "not everyone whose name is Mason is a Freemason". That's how ignorant I was. I knew nothing, zero! I said "I gotta join. My uncle's dying". So it was a Monday and I said I need an application. He said "It's called petition". So Tuesday came, Wednesday came, and Thursday I said "where's the petition"? Friday there was no petition so I finally pulled him into my

office and said “look, knowing who my uncle was, I may not fit the mold of who a Mason is. I might not meet the requirements. I get that. I just want you to tell me honestly so I can tell my uncle. He says “It’s not that at all. I’m ashamed to bring you into my lodge”. And I said “why would you be ashamed to bring me into your lodge”? He goes, “because we have six guys, then me. I’m the youngest guy by 35 years. My whole job is to bring Limburger cheese, stale pumpernickel bread and Bermuda onions into every meeting. I serve these guys Limburger cheese and Bermuda onions and they play poker, we do a lousy opening, a lousy closing and I don’t want my boss to join”. I said, “Art, you’re the only person I know”. And so I did join that lodge, it was Ancient Craft Lodge #943 at that time. But my first inkling of being a mason was when my uncle told me he wanting me to join. I said to myself, I’m going to go into this until my uncle dies. He said he has a year to live. I never really had an interest, I didn’t know what it was, I had no clue, I’m going to do it for him and when he passes away I’ll quit. And then I took my first degree.

Bro. Chris Carosa: Tell us more about how you became a Mason.

R.: W.: Richard Friedman: Well you know it's actually pretty funny, I mean you probably heard of the program; Brother Bring a Friend night. Well, I wrote that program for the whole State based on what I experienced. So what happened was I showed up at downtown temple. I walked in the door, and a guy I don't even know walks up to me and says "You Rich Friedman?" I say, "Yeah." He says "Just come with me". We go up these back stairs into this little Ante room. There is literally a bulb hanging from the ceiling, and a bench. And the first thing the stranger says to me is "Take your clothes off". I said "Excuse me"? He said, "Take your clothes off". I said "No. I'm not doing that". So they ran down stairs and got Art. Art came up and said "Look Rich, the reason you do this is this....". "Okay". So I took my clothes off and I got in this costume. The next thing he says to me is "give me your valuables". Now I'm a New York City kid, I said no. Then the third thing he said to me was "take your wedding ring off". And that's when I started to get dressed. I said I promised my wife I would never take the ring off. Not ever, and it's not coming off. They had not taken a candidate in, I don't know, twenty years? They didn't know what to do so, luckily Art went next door to Germania Lodge, which was still a lodge back then. It was an all German lodge. They did all the work in German, and Heinz Gunkel, who was the Master, said "just put a band-aid around it". So they came upstairs with a band-aid and they put it around my ring and I took my degree. You want to talk about a reluctant candidate. So I walk in this room and they started the degree and all sudden I started listening to the words. You know how we always talk about when you blindfold somebody there hearing is more acute? That was totally true for me. I'm listening to these words. And they're beautiful words. When I went to Columbia I got my Master's and Doctorate in social work, but I always audited English classes, because I'm a poet. I like to write poetry, and the Masonic ritual sounded like poetry, to me. And then the cataclysmic event, the galvanic event, was when I got my apron. Maury Solomon, I had no idea who he was in Masonry, I just knew he was this kindly old Scottish guy who was trying to look after me; one of the six guys in my lodge. Maury did the Apron presentation. Maury was Chairman of the Custodians of the Work at that time. I had no idea. I didn't even know who the Custodians were. Myself, and there was a guy at Valley Lodge, Grant Romer, who was the conservator for the George Eastman house, I mean he had a big job at George Eastman House. The two of us were crying. We looked at each other and we both had tears in our eyes. It was so beautifully done.

Bro. Chris Carosa: So that just totally changed your perception.

R.: W.: Richard Friedman: Because everything that I believed in my life; honor, integrity, doing the right thing, that's what they taught us in the Marine Corp. Everything I believed in was encapsulated in that Apron presentation.

Bro. Chris Carosa: Did it surprise you, that given your own philosophy and how deep it is within you, that you'd never really heard of this organization?

R.:W.:Richard Friedman: I got mad at my uncle. I said to him, "you know, you son of a bitch, I'm 30 years old. I could have joined at twenty-one, I found out what the rules were ". I said "all you had to do say to me, I want you to join my lodge, and my hand would have been up". He cost me nine years of Masonic membership by not getting me in until I was close to 30. I think I was 29 when I took my degrees. From the minute I heard what that apron presentation says. "It is yours; yours to wear throughout an honorable life". I mean, there's nothing in that Apron presentation that doesn't speak directly to my heart.

Bro. Chris Carosa: This is interesting because you mentioned the fact that you wished your uncle would have introduced you beforehand. Your sons are Masons. And so, how did that process go? Did you have to do anything to convince them to join?

R.:W.:Richard Friedman: I'm a New York Giants fanatic. I bleed Giant blue. So during football season I'd take the boys out to breakfast first, and then we'd go to lodge on Sunday morning and they would set up lodge while I was doing my secretarial work. So by the time Sam was seven or eight years old could set a lodge up like a Tiler, and Jake was not far behind him at five. They knew all the symbols, they knew all the emblems, all the other stuff. I knew nobody when I moved to Rochester, I mean no one. I had no friends up here, nobody. When I joined the Craft that's when I started developing my Rochester community. So the guys that I was friends with, like Bruce Chilton or Terry Whalen, my son's know them as uncle Bruce and uncle Terry. You know, when Maury was alive he was uncle Maury. These are all their uncles. So Sam was in Albany going for his degree, comes home on a weekend and hands me a white envelope. I said "dude, it's six in the morning, I don't need to see your tuition this early in the morning". He says "no Dad, open it". and it was his petition. And I didn't sign it. I wasn't even his top line signer. He got three other guys. Terry Whalen was his top line, and Bruce was one of his sponsors, and two other guys from lodge signed.

Bro. Chris Carosa: How old was he when he did this?

R.:W.:Richard Friedman: Sammy was twenty-two and Jake was twenty-five when he joined.

Bro. Chris Carosa: Same thing? Did he go into your lodge, ERAC?

R.:W.:Richard Friedman: Yeah. I mean, I never asked either one. In fact when Sam gave me a petition, I really sat down with him and said, "Are you ready?" I said, "You're a Friedman. We don't do anything half assed. I said, "Are you ready to be able to finish out school and go to graduate school and still be a Mason?" And he said "Yeah."

Bro. Chris Carosa: So let's move forward a little bit and talk a little bit about your inner relationship with masonry and really how the power of brotherhood impacted you, especially as it related to the passing of your wife Joanne and your own recent diagnosis.

R.:W.:Richard Friedman: If it wasn't for my brothers Chris, I never lived through it. I was master of lodge. We had it with a great young guy named Zack Taylor who got transferred to Syracuse so they asked me to step in as Master of ERAC. I started a lodge discussion program and midway through the term is when she got diagnosed with stage four ovarian cancer.

R.:W.:Richard Friedman: I immediately got a hold of Matt Muller and Jim MacDuff, my Senior and Junior Wardens, and Jimmy Wright was the Senior Deacon. They came to the House and we met up at the hospice. They said “Rich, don’t worry, we got you.” Joann wrote a letter to the Craft thanking the Brothers for being so supportive of her and me.

Bro. Chris Carosa: Turn this around a little bit. So if you were speaking to other Masons, based on your experience how would you encourage other Masons to help their brothers face challenges like this?

R.:W.:Richard Friedman: I say this at every Grand Lecturer’s Convention Chris; the power of masonry is far beyond anybody's real comprehension. Think about this, I get diagnosed with stage four kidney failure. I get a call from Strong Memorial Hospital and they say to me that once you qualify to be on the kidney donor list you'll never hear another word from us. Then I get a call from a woman at Strong and she says “I'm breaking the rule, we've had 700 Freemasons calling to offer you kidney. That's out of a total membership of 30,000 Masons in New York State. Seven hundred men!

R.:W.:Richard Friedman: Chris, I've never sought a title of my life, I've never wanted to be in the limelight. Someone might say you're in the limelight every time you teach a ritual, but when I'm teaching Ritual I'm representing the Ritual, because the topic is not me it's the Ritual. I happen to be a very humble person and this whole thing they're doing at the Table Lodge makes me extremely uncomfortable.

R.:W.:Richard Friedman: As far as what masonry did for me; it changed my entire life. Up until the time I became a mason I had a substance abuse problem. When I joined the Craft and I started memorizing the first degree material the message of that material came out on the page. “Where were you first made Mason? In my heart.” I learned to subdue my passions, and improve myself in Masonry. And in my case that's exactly what it was. It was transformational for me. I learned the Middle Chamber lecture in six weeks of having been Raised, and I gave it at Flower City Lodge, which was Maury's other lodge and there were a bunch of big shots in town and I gave it letter perfect. In six weeks I fell into it, because I needed Masonry.

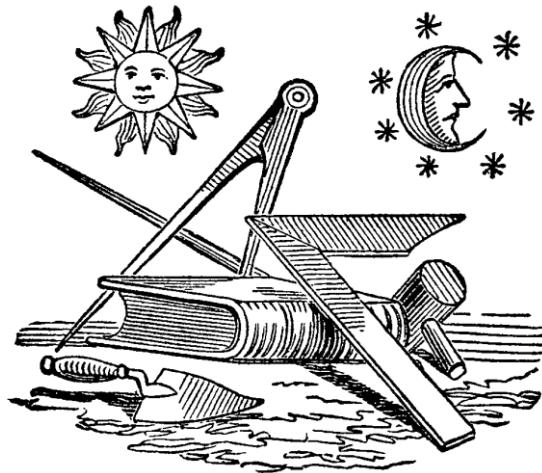
Bro. Chris Carosa: Is there any particular part of the ritual that really spoke to you?

R.:W.:Richard Friedman: I can open up the ritual book to any random page and there's something on that page that I'm going to say “yeah, damn right.” You know there's never a page in that ritual that I don't look at and say, wow I'm still in reverence and awe about the ritual. You know the apron presentation is a transformational thing to me. And when I do the Middle Chamber lecture, in my heart and head I am walking in the shoes of that ancient brother.

Bro. Chris Carosa: If you had a chance to change one thing in Freemasonry what would it be and how will that make masonry viable for generations upon generations.

R.:W.:Richard Friedman: If you don't know the meaning of the ritual it's the end of the discussion. Why would you become loyal to something that you don't even understand? Think about it. So if I could change anything, and I can do a mind melt with the Craft, it will be learning the meaning of the Ritual. Take it into your heart and exhibit it twenty-four hours a day, and you can't lose doing that because you will become a better man, a better husband, a better worker, a better citizen, a better everything. It means you take the Ritual to heart and you live it every day. If you do this the world will be a better place. I'm completely convinced that if there were 4 billion Masons in the world, we would not be in the

situations that we're in. I truly believe that. I've been a therapist forty years and I've seen the downside of life. I'm telling you that when it comes to Masonry I'm a cockeyed optimist. I think we have something that the whole world needs.



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