

Above & Beyond



**Update On The
Masonic Home of Florida**
page 24

**The Legacy Of
The Masonic Home**
page 14

Helping with Fraternal and Personal Policies



Looking for insurance advice?

*Auto *Commercial *Home *Life



"Your equilibrium partner with strength and establishment"

TK KRUMENACKER, CIC 561.844.8888
INSURE@TKKRU.COM
tkkru.com



Disclaimer: Advertisement in the Florida Mason Magazine does not imply endorsement or recommendation by The Grand Lodge of Florida, and they do not accept responsibility for claims made by advertisers.



Grand Master's Message

My Brethren,

I convey to you my warmest Greetings as we approach the 196th Annual Grand Communication this year. How many pleasing considerations my Brethren, indeed, attend this recurring occasion? As we continue to be careful custodians, of our Fraternity's time honored traditions, the truth and wisdom of the ages passed down to us with pride, and honor by the Masons of ancient times. It is our sacred obligation to be watchful sentinels of its respectable name, by continuously becoming zeal to the practice of the excellent principles inculcated by our Order.

Therefore my Brothers, join me with gratitude in recalling to our remembrance, the diligence and devotion of those Brethren, who came this way before us. Let us all work together in close harmony, as we get closer in celebrating the 200th Year of our Grand Lodge's Existence. The lapse of time has not obscured the wisdom of our forbearers, that today, we can justifiably be proud of our organization.

With humility and honor, I accepted with great pleasure the assignment you had bestowed upon me, The Office of the Grand East. Our Grand Lodge has taken the course of journey through the years to make itself a great institution. Together, my Brothers, we can, and will make a difference.

John W. Newbern stated: "People can be divided into three groups; those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who wondered what happened." Let us not watch other men make things happen or wonder what happened; rather, let us choose to join together to belong to the first group, then there can be no doubt that we will make a difference effecting positive change and the world at large convinced of its good effects.

Notwithstanding the failures, challenges, and situational complexities we have to face, I am convinced and encouraged by the strength, resilience, and the dedication of many Brethren who I have witnessed over the years, that we have one path to trek, and that is the path to success toward Fraternal Excellence. My Grand Master's Masonic Theme this year is "Leadership, Commitment, and Accountability," an essential part of the fabric of "making things happen."

"Courage in the East," is possessed by a true leader making sound, lawful but courageously firm decisions, though at times may be seemingly unpopular to a few, but must be made for the greater good.

I am very blessed, and pleased to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to Most Worshipful Richard Lynn for his inspirational wisdom, guidance,

and assistance in having a productive and successful year. And to you, the Craft, for your unwavering support, "in making things happen this year." And by meeting our successful acquisition, and the relocation of our new Grand Lodge Home Office, to all, I am eternally grateful.

As many of you know, Masonic Ritual is near and dear to me. Ritual is the catalyst for Masonic Thoughts, Philosophy, and Understanding. It is the "Language of Freemasonry" and not to learn its scope and understand its real meaning, becomes a burden to living a Masonic Life. An special note of recognition to the *Committee On Work* for their hard work and continuing effort to assist the Brethren, and Particular Lodges to make progress in Ritual Proficiency in Conferring Degrees in accordance with the Adopted Forms and Ceremonies.

It has been a very busy year. Undoubtedly, a very rewarding experience, and a memorable one. On many occasions, I have travelled and visited numerous Lodges throughout the State as we continued the Tyled Grand Master Official District Visits. It has given me the opportunity to learn more about our Members and Lodge Work Conditions. Listening and understanding Brethren's concerns, thoughts and ideas as well as their unique situational issues. Being able to observe and interact with dedicated and active Members, who are potential future leaders of the Craft as well as engaging in meaningful conversations and exchange of opinions were all instrumental, and helpful to me in making appropriate, and right decisions. My Masonic Year in the Grand East is fast approaching as I look ahead to the time when I will have to step aside and allow others to take charge as all leadership should be viewed for that moment: when one passes the reign to his successor.

My Brothers, we still have a lot of work to do, facing many "rough and rugged roads to travel" and challenges ahead of us, but with "LEADERSHIP, COMMITMENT, and ACCOUNTABILITY," let us embrace this ongoing undertaking, its outcome and success is revealed by the mere skills, consciousness, basic attitude, and philosophy; however subtly, by the kind of energy that we put in its development. True success depends on the leadership, commitment, and accountability, more importantly on the spirit of the people involved in it. And the spirit of the people is "always is a reflection of the spirit of its leader," when he is able to lead and inspire others to form and join that unique category of a noble "group of men who make things happen." ✕

Respectfully grateful,

M.: W.: Donald W. Cowart,
Grand Master



The Grand Lodge of Florida

220 North Ocean Street
Jacksonville, Florida 32202
P.O. Box 1020 • 32201
Tel: 904.354.2339
www.GrandLodgeFL.com

GRAND LODGE OFFICERS

2024 – 25

GRAND MASTER

R.: W.: Donald W. Cowart
(Valrico)

DEPUTY GRAND MASTER

R.: W.: Taleb "Tali" Atala
(Miami)

SENIOR GRAND WARDEN

R.: W.: Haskell R. Vest, Jr.
(Navarre)

JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN

R.: W.: Frederick "Rick" R. Wendling, Jr.
(Dunedin)

GRAND TREASURER

R.: W.: Rudin "Rudy" J. Boatright
(Fleming Island)

GRAND SECRETARY

M.: W.: Richard E. Lynn, P.G.M.
(Jacksonville)

All submissions
for future issues of
The Florida Mason
Above & Beyond
and Facebook submissions
should be sent to:

R.: W.: Charles R. Jordan
publications@grandlodgefl.com
727-455-7195

(Please use email address
provided here,
Do Not send text messages)



Deputy Grand Master's Message

My Brothers,

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for allowing me the distinguished honor and privilege of serving you, the Craft. This privilege has been a profound, fulfilling experience, one that I hold in the highest regard.

Our Honorable Fraternity is about "Morals and Character."

It is our shared duty to uphold these values in all our endeavors and to be exemplars of integrity and virtue in our Communities. Through our actions, we demonstrate the true essence of our Brotherhood, fostering an environment of trust, respect, and mutual support.

Each one of us carries on our shoulders, through all our actions, the honor and reputation of our Fraternity.

What we say and how we conduct ourselves on social media is a reflection of not only the individual but also of our institution. It is imperative that we exercise caution and wisdom in our online interactions, ensuring that our digital presence aligns with the principles we

hold dear. By doing so, we maintain the dignity and respect of our esteemed Fraternity and set a positive example for others to follow.

By embracing civility and a harmonious discourse we contribute to a respectful environment both within and outside our Fraternity. Let us always remember that our conduct, whether in public or private, serves as a reflection of our core values and principles.

Again, thank you for allowing me to represent you. It has been an honor to stand alongside you, to work with you, and to contribute to the betterment of our Fraternity. Together, we have achieved great things, and I am confident that we will continue to uphold the high standards of our institution. Let us move forward with renewed dedication, ever mindful of the values that bond us together and the legacy we leave behind. ✖

Fraternally,

R. : W. : Tali Atala

Deputy Grand Master



Senior Grand Warden's Message

My Brothers,

Joyce and I hope your Holiday season was wonderful and I wish you all a Happy, Healthy, and prosperous New Year.

Spring will be here soon and the time for renewal is right around the corner. Let's start the new year by giving thanks to the Grand Architect of the Universe for another wonderful opportunity for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

December and January have been whirlwinds of great Fellowship and activity. Traveling the state from Pensacola to Jacksonville to Key West and all points in between attending Lodge Officer Installations. A hearty congratulations to all the outgoing Officers for a successful year. To our newly installed Officers throughout the State, thank you for assuming the leadership role in your Lodge. If you should need our assistance do not hesitate to reach out. Brothers, let's remember they need our support during the year to accomplish goals for the Lodge and our Fraternity. We are charged during the Installation Ceremony to be ready and willing to help them in every endeavor.

We have a several important upcoming events:

In February, Jurisprudence, Endowment and Investment and Finance and Accounts Committee Meetings are in Orlando. Then on to the Conference of Grand Masters of North America. A weekend packed with information from around the world hosted by South Carolina. Finally, the District Deputy Grand Master Orientation for the incoming District Deputies and their Ladies.

In March, The Arabian Nights Fundraiser in Miami, is an event to raise money for the First Ladies Project, "A Sign of the Times," the flyers are out with the details. Come out

and enjoy the night. The Masonic Home "Pilgrimage Day" is Saturday, March 15th. Always a fun day, not only for those attending, but the residents of the Home enjoy the activities and fellowship as well. Come out and visit with us and take a look around. Speaking of the Masonic Home, the website (www.MasonicHomeFL.com) has been redesigned and now includes a host of information about the Outreach Services Program available to qualifying Florida Masons. Please visit The Grand Lodge website or call (727.822.3499), The Masonic Home, and find out if the program can help you, or another Brother in your local area.

April kicks off with the "Diamonds and Gold" fundraiser to raise money for the First Ladies Project "A Sign of the Times." This event is always fun and filled with great Fellowship. The Florida Grand Lodge will be attending the MWUGL Prince Hall Affiliated Grand Communication. Our Fraternal Organizations are getting closer to full and open visitation. With God's Grace this will happen in due time. With all this going on we as The Grand Lodge Officers are continuing to attend Rededication's, Stated Communications, Lodge Visits, and special events hosted by various Lodges and Appendant Bodies throughout the State.

Finally, my Brothers, the upcoming Grand Lodge Communication is in May. Joyce and I, are looking forward to seeing you there. Have a wonderful Spring. ✖

Fraternally,

R. : W. : Haskell R. Vest, Jr.

Senior Grand Warden

Junior Grand Warden's Message

Greetings My Brothers All,

I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the newly Elected and Appointed Officers in our Lodges. This is a significant milestone, and I wish you much success and fulfillment during your term. As you step into these important roles, know that you have my full support.

Leadership is a complex, multifaceted concept that is both an art and a science. It transcends the act of managing or overseeing a group of people; true leadership involves inspiring, guiding, and empowering individuals to reach their fullest potential while achieving a common goal. Whether in this Fraternity, business, or everyday life, leadership plays a crucial role in determining success and influencing outcomes.

At its core, leadership is the ability to influence others in a way that aligns them with a shared vision or goal. It's more than simply giving orders or making decisions; it is about inspiring people to follow, often by example. While there are many definitions, one of the most enduring comes from leadership expert John Maxwell, who defines leadership as "influence – nothing more, nothing less." This definition encapsulates the essence of leadership: it's not about titles, power, or authority, but about the ability to guide and motivate others through trust, respect, and shared purpose.

Great leadership is not a one-size-fits-all model. It requires a blend of traits, behaviors, and skills that can vary depending on context. However, certain qualities are universally valued and essential for anyone who aspires to lead effectively.

One of the hallmarks of great leadership is the ability to craft and communicate a compelling vision. A leader needs to see the bigger picture, to understand where the Craft, Fraternity, or Lodge Needs to go, and to articulate that vision in a way that resonates with others. Vision provides direction, clarity, and purpose, guiding all efforts toward a common goal.

Leaders with vision are often able to inspire others, helping them see the possibilities and opportunities that lie ahead.

Integrity is the foundation of trust, and trust is the cornerstone of effective leadership. Leaders who consistently demonstrate honesty, transparency, and ethical behavior foster an environment of respect and accountability. They lead by example, acting in ways that align with their stated values and principles.

Leaders who exhibit integrity inspire loyalty and foster a culture of fairness. When people trust their leaders, they are more likely to be motivated and committed to the shared vision. Conversely, when leaders lack integrity, their credibility is compromised, and morale can quickly erode.

Emotional intelligence (EQ) refers to the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions and to recognize and influence the emotions of others. It includes skills like empathy, self-awareness, and social awareness. Leaders with high emotional intelligence are more effective in building relationships, resolving conflicts, and guiding their members through challenges.

An emotionally intelligent leader can read a room, sense when a Member is struggling, and offer support or guidance. They know how to motivate others in positive ways, and they are attuned to the moods and needs of the people around them. Emotional intelligence is often the differentiator between a good leader and a great one.

Great leaders must be resilient in the face of challenges, setbacks, and adversity. They need the strength to stay focused on long-term goals, even when short-term obstacles arise. Resilience is about maintaining motivation and optimism, even when things don't go as planned.

Equally important is adaptability. In today's fast-paced world, change

is inevitable, and leaders must be able to pivot when necessary. They need to stay open-minded, be willing to learn, and adjust strategies when conditions demand it. Leaders who are rigid in their thinking or who resist change often find themselves left behind.

Effective communication is one of the most important skills a leader can possess. Leaders must be able to articulate their ideas, listen to others, and create an environment where open communication is encouraged. Clear and transparent communication fosters trust, helps to manage expectations, and ensures that everyone is on the same page.

Leaders also need to be skilled in non-verbal communication, reading body language, tone, and facial expressions. Good communication goes beyond simply relaying information; it's about engaging with people, actively listening, and ensuring that messages are received and understood.

A true leader doesn't just dictate tasks or micromanage; they empower others. They give Members the autonomy to make decisions, contribute ideas, and take ownership of their work. This empowerment boosts morale, encourages creativity, and fosters a sense of responsibility and accountability.

Leaders who invest in the development of their Members, helping them grow and advance, often create a loyal, motivated workforce. By mentoring and coaching their people, they foster an environment of continuous learning and improvement.

While leadership is incredibly rewarding, it is also fraught with challenges. Leading effectively requires the ability to navigate complex social dynamics, make tough decisions, and balance the needs of different stakeholders. Leaders must also manage their own stress, stay focused on their vision, and sometimes make unpopular decisions.

Additionally, leadership in today's world comes with its own unique set of challenges. With the rise of busy schedules, leaders must be adaptable and capable of leading Members across different Districts and work styles. The pressures of constant change can create uncertainty, and effective leaders must be able to guide their Members through periods of disruption and change.

Leadership is not a position or title, it's a responsibility and a practice. It is about creating a vision, inspiring others, and guiding a Member through challenges. Great leaders possess qualities like vision, integrity, emotional intelligence, resilience, communication skills, and the ability to empower others. They understand that leadership is not about control or power, but about influence, trust, and shared purpose.

In a world that is increasingly complex and fast-moving, the role of leadership has never been more critical. The most successful Fraternities and Communities are those led by individuals who inspire, challenge, and support others to be their best. Ultimately, leadership is not just about achieving results, but about creating an environment where people can thrive, grow, and achieve their potential.

In closing, please remember that I am here to assist you in any way that you or your Lodge may need. Whether it is guidance, resources, or simply a listening ear, do not hesitate to reach out. Together, we can ensure that this year is one of growth, achievement, and meaningful contributions to our Fraternal Community. ✖

Fraternally,
R. W. Rick Wendling
Junior Grand Warden



Grand Treasurer's Message



Brethren,

It has been my great honor and privilege to serve the Craft as your Grand Treasurer for these last eight years. Becoming a Member of this great Fraternity all these years has been a personally rewarding experience for me beyond measure. I would like to thank each of you for the Fellowship, and hospitality you have shown me and my wife, Karen, when we were able to attend a Meeting at a Lodge or during one of the Grand Master's Official Visits in your District.

I would like to thank the staff here at the Grand Lodge Office for all they have done for me. M.:W.: Richard Lynn, in particular, has been a great mentor and a very good friend. He keeps me out of trouble and on track. Wendy and the Administrative Staff, Maegan, Pam, and Jenny, are the best. They are always willing to help and assist me with any and everything. Sally, Angela, and Deborah in the Accounting Department have been an absolute joy to work with. R.:W.: Leif Olsen and R.:W.: Howard Chase, and his wife Betty, have been a great asset to all of us here. As always, the staff is here to assist both you, and your Lodge in any way they can.

I have been asked to continue as the Chairman of the Museum and History Committee, so I look forward to being still able to give tours of our great Masonic Museum after we complete the move to our new location. This will be sometime after this year's Annual Grand Communication.

Again, thanks to each one of you for your support and friendship, and I look forward to seeing you all at the Grand Lodge Communications this year. ✕

Fraternally,

R.:W.: Rudy Boatright

Grand Treasurer

Grand Secretary's Message



Brothers,

What a pleasure to have had the opportunity to serve you, the Craft as the Grand Secretary. Every day I realize that our Fraternity offers me opportunities for service not only to the Lodges but to the community at large.

Your Grand Secretary's Office is employed by a very dedicated staff, and other supportive volunteer Masons here to provide services to the Members and more important, the Secretaries of the Particular Lodges.

This year we redesigned the traditional Secretaries' and Treasurer's Seminar and transformed them to be Lodge Development roundtable discussions. The format opened the floor to questions and answers in regards to multiple operation processes. I wish to thank Most Worshipful Jorge L. Aladro, P.G.M., for attending these forums and reviewing the processing of forms and petitions.

Having served as the Grand Secretary for over 17 years, I can express that each day opens new horizons and opportunities to be of service to the Fraternity. This will be my sunset of service as the Grand Secretary as I have not submitted a nomination for re-election for the ensuing year.

We have started the relocation process to our new Grand Lodge Home. This will be a time-consuming process and with the assistance of many Brothers, we are endeavoring to make the move in-house. Perhaps mid-summer we will have completed the move of the items in the Museum.

As I look back on my Masonic Endeavors, I feel very fortunate to have been involved for more than 50 years. From my early Masonic Career I recall the statement offered to me by Most Worshipful Clyde McLaren, P.G.M., who served as Grand Master in 1968, "In your future involvement you will come across situations in your Masonic Career that may lean toward the dark side and be troubling to you." He stated further, "I want you to remember all the great experiences, and the actions of good Masons and note to yourself that they outnumber by far the negative actions of the few." How true his statements were!

This May will mark 51 years attending the Grand Lodge Annual Communications for me and I look forward as always to see my old friends and perhaps meet a few new ones. It is my hope to be able to attend many more and continue to the advancement of our Fraternity, with God's Blessing.

Remember, If your presence doesn't make an impact, your absence won't make a difference. ✕

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

M.:W.: Richard Lynn, P.G.M.

Grand Secretary



The men on either side of the Eagle Scout Troop are: L: Kelvin Williams, Council Executive of North Florida Council and R: Eagle Scout Richard Schlegal, Guest Speaker, a Master Mason, and a Member of the Ocala Shrine Club. ✕

Bushnell Hernando Lodge No. 30 Presents Brother Bosley with 75-Year Pin

Worshipful Master, Clifford Spiller, (Bushnell Hernando No. 30, F.&A.M., District 14, Florida), had both the pleasure, and honor of Presenting a 75-Year Pin to Brother John Bosley, on November 16, 2024. Brother Bosley, was Initiated and Raised at Shadyside Lodge No. 724 The Grand Lodge of Ohio, F.&A.M., but since moving to Florida has recently been attending our Lodge. ✕



Gulf Beach Lodge No. 291 Presents Madeira Beach Fire Department \$300 Gift Card

Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291 recently presented our firefighters at Madeira Beach Fire Department a \$300.00 gift card to Publix. This simple gesture was to show our grateful appreciation for the hard work these local heroes have been performing since hurricane Helene and Milton devastated the beaches. We salute the brave men and women who serve and protect us every day. Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge was not spared the effects of the storms and is currently in the process of rebuilding the ground floor of the Lodge. We, as so many of our neighbors on the beaches, hope to return to some sense of normalcy in the near future. ✕



Gulf Beach Lodge is located at 14020 Marguerite Dr., Madeira Beach

To Advertise in *The Florida Mason's Above & Beyond*. Fill out the form on page 22, email advertising & form to: masonicpublications@grandlodge.com



Alexandre Ferrari
Mortgage Loan Originator

📍 8316 Via Di Veneto, Boca Raton FL 33496
📞 561-571-2552
✉ info@ferrarilending.com
🌐 www.ferrarilending.com

Here are some of the mortgages we offer:
ITIN, Foreign National, DSCR, HECM, USDA, VA, FHA, Conventional, and Business Loans

Disclaimer: Advertisement in the Florida Mason Magazine does not imply endorsement or recommendation by The Grand Lodge of Florida, and they do not accept responsibility for claims made by advertisers.

Ribault Masonic Lodge No. 272 Supports Local Education Through Grand Lodge Programs

Submitted by R.:H.: Stephen M. Meserve, P.M., Secretary - Ribault Lodge No 272, F&AM, 327 2nd Ave N. Jacksonville Beach FL 32250

Ribault Masonic Lodge No. 272 recently reaffirmed its commitment to education by presenting donations to Atlantic Beach Elementary School and First Grade Teacher Allison Tabone. These contributions were made as part of the Grand Lodge of Florida's Adopt-A-School, and Adopt-A-Teacher programs, initiatives designed to foster strong partnerships between Masonic Lodges and local schools.

This ongoing collaboration with Atlantic Beach Elementary has yielded remarkable benefits for students. Last year, the school utilized the combined donations to provide an immersive, day-long virtual field trip to Colonial Williamsburg for the entire first-grade class, complete with a special lunch to enhance the experience. Ribault Lodge eagerly anticipates seeing how this year's contributions will be used to enrich the students' learning journey.

Freemasonry has long recognized that investing in the education and development of young minds is an investment in the future. By supporting schools and educators, Masons uphold their enduring commitment to shaping the leaders of tomorrow. Ribault Lodge remains dedicated to this mission, ensuring that local students have access to enriching educational experiences that inspire curiosity and growth. ✖



Pearl Of The West Lodge No. 146 Donates 311 Lbs Of Food

On November 26, 2024, Pearl of the West Masonic Lodge No. 146 donated 311 lbs. of non-perishable food to Metropolitan Ministries in New Port Richey, to help feed the Community for Thanksgiving. ✖



L to R: Bro. Craig Franklin and Right Worshipful Scott Mitchell.

To Advertise in *The Florida Mason's Above & Beyond*,
Fill out the form on page 22, email advertising & form to:

masonicpublications@grandlodge.com

All article submissions for *The Florida Mason's Above & Beyond*,
or Facebook submissions, please email to: R.:W.: Charles R. Jordan
at: **publications@grandlodgefl.com**

Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291 Recognized For 15-Years Of Consecutive Volunteer Work With Salvation Army



On December 14, 2024, Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291 demonstrated its commitment to community service and philanthropy by participating in the annual Salvation Army Angel Tree program. Members of the Lodge eagerly volunteered their time and resources to bring joy to needy children in the local area.

With a holiday spirit, the Lodge Members helped at the Angel Tree Warehouse ensuring that each child in need will receive a special gift during the holiday season. Their involvement in the Salvation Army Angel Tree Program not only exemplifies the principles of charity and goodwill but also highlights the importance of Community collaboration in making a positive impact on the lives of those less fortunate.

This year Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291 was recognized by the Salvation Army for the fifteen consecutive years they have volunteered for this worthy program. ✖

*Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge is located
at 14020 Marguerite Dr., Madeira Beach*

MASONIC REGALIA ONLINE STORE Grand Lodge of F&AM Florida



<http://grand-lodge-of-florida.myshopify.com/>

Masonic Charities of Florida, Inc.

501(c)(3)



**The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of
Free & Accepted Masons of Florida**



Over the years, we have stood together through thick and thin, fostering bonds that transcend time and circumstance. Today, I am reaching out to you not only as Brothers but also as vital pillars of support for a fund, we know well – Masonic Charities of Florida, Inc. a 501(c)(3) organization. The Masonic Charities of Florida, Inc., fund is used to support our Masonic Home; Masonic Youth Association and Youth Groups; Disaster Relief; and College Scholarship Programs, just to name a few.

Show your support with a premium donation of \$200.00 or more and receive this Grand Lodge of Florida Classic Bone Stag Knife

To order give us a call 904-354-2339
or email gs@glflamason.org
Order yours now supplies are limited

For additional registration information, please contact Masonic Charities of Florida, Inc., Address: 220 N Ocean Street, Phone: 904-354-2339. FLORIDA REGISTRATION NUMBER CH5968 "A COPY OF THE OFFICIAL REGISTRATION AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM THE DIVISION OF CONSUMER SERVICES BY CALLING TOLL FREE 800-435-7352 WITHIN THE STATE OR VISIT <https://www.fdacs.gov/ConsumerServices>. REGISTRATION DOES NOT IMPLY ENDORSEMENT, APPROVAL, OR RECOMMENDATION BY THE STATE".

TRUST YOUR BROTHERS

WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT HOME DECISIONS



Mark Capes

HOME | AUTO | LIFE

(352) 523-0800

www.InsuranceBrother.com



Bob Pittman

NEXA
Mortgage

MORTGAGE LOAN OFFICER

(813) 362-4742

NMLS ID #206271

WWW.BOBPITTMAN.US



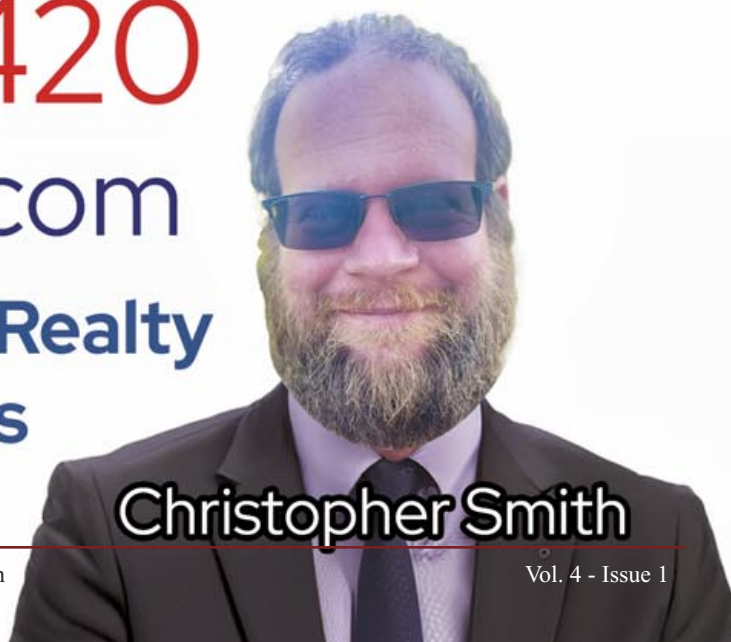
30740 State Road 54 Suite 117
Wesley Chapel, FL 33543

(352) 613-4420

www.SoldCitrus.com



**Southern Realty
Associates**



Christopher Smith

Disclaimer: Advertisement in the Florida Mason Magazine does not imply endorsement or recommendation by The Grand Lodge of Florida, and they do not accept responsibility for claims made by advertisers.

Florida's J. Edwin Larson Lodge No. 361 and Prince Hall's J.R.E. Lee Sr. Lodge No. 459 Came Together for Ritual Fellowship and a Shared Meal

By Bill Eichhoefer, Zone 2 Chairman Public Relations and Publicity Committee

"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success." ~Henry Ford.

This past November, for the second time in Florida Masonic History The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Florida J. Edwin Larson No. 361 came together with the Prince Hall's J.R.E. Lee Sr. Lodge No. 459. Grand Line Officer R.: W.: Marlon Honeywell, Junior Grand Warden of The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, Prince Hall Affiliated, also attended.

The room was filled with excitement. The gathering began by the Lodge Members sharing a meal together. During that time the Members of both Lodges shared stories about family, friends, and our Masonic Culture. By the end of the meal, the Brethren were laughing and filled the room with smiles.

The Meeting was held at J. Edwin Larson Lodge No. 361. The Meeting was opened in the standard fashion of The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Florida's Ritual. The Worshipful Master, W.: Harris Wiltsher, of J.R.E. Lee Sr. Lodge No. 459 was presented with a signed Masonic Bible by J. Edwin Larson Lodge. The Worshipful Master of J. Edwin Larson Lodge, W.: Rainey Basinger, along with Senior Warden Brother Bill Eichhoefer, were presented with handcrafted Masonic Symbols by J.R.E. Lee Sr. Lodge.

Then the Meeting began in earnest. The Members of the Lodges began to discuss the opening Rituals and their differences and to generally ask questions. I'm sure you understand my not revealing



the details of the discussion. After much lively and informative conversation, the Meeting was closed. Worshipful Master Rainey Basinger said, "It was an honor and privilege to preside over the Brethren on this historic Masonic Evening and not something I will soon forget. I look forward to strengthening our Fraternal ties as we bring Florida Freemasonry into the next chapters of history." Pictures were taken and both Lodges agreed that they would like to join in Masonic Brotherhood again. ✖



Gumbo Cook-Off At Cantonment Lodge No. 322

On September 8th and 9th, 2023, the Brothers of Cantonment Lodge No. 322 entered a Gumbo Cook Off at the local Hadji Shrine. With minimal preparation time and no real knowledge of the competitive cooking world, we entered both the Seafood, and Non-Seafood Gumbo classes, as well as the Best Booth Contest. While winning the Best Booth was a great success, we also got a great education on competition cooking. Presentation is just as important as taste, so just making good gumbo, won't take home a trophy.

So, when September 6th and 7th, 2024, came around, we were a little more prepared. While defending our Best Booth win from 2023, we also had our eye on taking home more trophies. This year, the Brothers of the Lodge entered Best Booth, Seafood and Non-Seafood Gumbo categories, Best Anything Mushrooms, Anything Bacon, and St. Louis Ribs. Taking what was learned from our previous experience, the Brothers put their best foot forward and turned in respectable entries in Ribs, Mushrooms, Bacon and Seafood Gumbo, and won 1st Place in Non-Seafood Gumbo, while defending the Best Booth Title from last year.



L to R: SCA Rep. Brett Galloway, Bro. Mitch Esser, W.M.: Sean Boulanger and Potentate Bruce Stewart



L to R: Bro. Mitch Esser, W.M.: Sean Boulanger, and R.W.: Chuck Folmar



L to R: R.W.: Chuck Folmar, W.M.: Sean Boulanger, R.W.: Jeff Fisher



L to R: W.M.: Sean Boulanger, R.W.: Chuck Folmar, Bro. Cas Harmatys, and Lady Peggy Folmar

While additional categories were entered in the Cook Off, some of the Brothers conducted a fundraiser that has had previous success, by grilling hot dogs and sausage dogs for donations and a raffle. This fundraising proved to be a success when, during the Cook-off Awards Ceremony, the Lodge was able to present the Shrine with \$850.00, which was raised.

At the end of the day, the best and most successful and rewarding part of the event, was the outreach in the Community, and the potential candidates who showed interest in becoming a Member of our great Fraternity. This event was truly a success for so many reasons. ✖



L to R: Brother Mitch Esser and R.W.: Chuck Folmar

Brother Collie Receives 50-Year Recognition

Worshipful Brother Charles Collie received recognition for his 50-years of Membership in The Grand Lodge of New York. Brother Collie resides in Central Florida and Received his Apron, Certificate, and Lapel Pin in The Villages Lodge No. 394 on September 9. He is a Past Master of Palmyra Lodge 248 (now Drumlin Square No. 1180) in the Wayne District, in 1982. Worshipful Brother Jeffrey P. Lessard of The Villages Masonic Lodge Presided, as M.W.: William Thomas, P.G.M., of The Grand Lodge of New York, made the Presentations. Congratulations, Brother Collie! ✖



Star Lodge No. 78 Brings Holiday Cheer To Pre-K Students At Ponce De Leon Elementary

On Friday, December 13th Star Lodge No. 78 paid a surprise visit to Ponce de Leon Elementary School with Santa Claus in tow!

Santa took pictures and passed out gifts to about sixty Pre-K students. Brother's present were R.W.: James Clouser, Brother George Feaster, Brother Mark Griffiths (aka Santa Claus), Brother Jay Dingman and Brother J. J. Smith who received the Entered Apprentice Degree just four days earlier! Ponce de Leon has been the school of charity for Star Lodge No. 78 for years but this was the first opportunity to bring a little holiday spirit to some great kids! ✖



Middleburg Lodge No. 107 Provides Masonic Brother Wenzel With Worthy Memorial Service

Submitted by Glenn A. Zier, Secretary, Middleburg Lodge No. 107 F.&A.M. • secretarymburg107@gmail.com • 904-449-4350

Toward the end of November, beginning of December, the Secretary of Middleburg Lodge No. 107 received a call from Brian Wenzel. Mr. Wenzel, a retired Navy Master Chief, said he was trying to arrange a Masonic Service for his father, Richard Wenzel, an Ohio Mason. Brian told the Secretary his father had just moved here to Florida due to his health and realizing his journey was near an end, told his son he wished a Masonic Service of some type. He said to his son, "just call a Lodge near you, they will take care of it."

This morning, December 20th, 2024, eighteen Master Masons, including a D.D.G.M. and a P.D.D.G.M., showed up and helped Brian Wenzel and his family, many of whom came from out of State, to honor the memory of their father, our Masonic Brother, Richard Wenzel, a 10-year, Ohio Master Mason.

Brother Wenzel loved barbershop quartet music and had a special relationship with the Dapper Dans, of Walt Disney World Fame.

The Dapper Dans sang several songs, accompanied by other Barbershop singers and

ended their tribute with "My Wild Irish Rose."

Past Master James "Bill" Murray, assisted by Brother Christopher Hobbs as Chaplain, provided a worthy memorial service. ✠



L to R: Andy Wenzel, Bill Wenzel (NC Mason) and Brian Wenzel

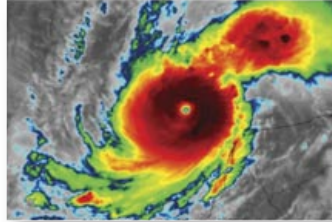


Brian and Andy Wenzel in the middle of the Barbershop Singers



Tribute to Dick Wenzel

District 29 Brothers Helping Clean-Up The "Masonic Home" From "Debris" Left After Hurricane Milton



An inferred image of Hurricane Milton as a Category 5 storm that hit Florida.



The Legacy Of The Masonic Home In St. Petersburg Florida

By Howard W. Knapp, P.G.M., P.D.I., P.D.D.G.M., Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291

Southland Seminary, St. Petersburg, Fla.



Ill fated Southland Seminary, later to become
The Masonic Home of Florida



General John C. Williams

In 1875, General John Williams arrived in Florida from Detroit and purchased 2,500 acres of land along Tampa Bay. With a vision of a grand city featuring broad streets and elegant parks, he laid the foundation for what would become St. Petersburg. Initially a small town just six blocks square, St. Petersburg named its first hotel, the Detroit Hotel, after Williams' birthplace. The historic building still stands today at 216 Central Avenue.



Peter Demens

Thirteen years later, in 1888, Peter Demens extended the Orange Belt Railway to St. Petersburg. On June 8th of that year, the first train arrived, carrying empty freight cars and a single passenger – a shoe salesman from Savannah.

By 1893, St. Petersburg had grown enough for local Freemasons to seek a charter for a lodge. The Grand Lodge of Florida granted this charter in 1894, assigning it Lodge No. 139 – before the town had even incorporated as a city.

The Formation of the Masonic Home

In 1902, Brother Albert Gilchrist, who would later become Most Worshipful Grand Master and Florida's 20th governor serving in both positions at the same time, proposed establishing a Masonic Home. He served as the first chairman of the Board of Trustees, a position he held from 1902 to 1926. Upon his passing, Gilchrist bequeathed a substantial portion of his estate to support the future Masonic Home.



Albert Gilchrist,
Grand Master

By 1911, St. Petersburg was experiencing its first land boom, gradually expanding its boundaries. The city, known as the Sunshine City, attracted increasing numbers of seasonal visitors. In 1913, local developer H. Walter Fuller led the Coffee Pot Bayou Land Company in securing a deal to relocate the Southland Seminary, a girls' finishing school from Gainesville to St. Petersburg. The school planned to enroll 200 students upon its opening in the fall of 1915.



H. Walter Fuller

However, global events soon impacted the local economy. In June 1914, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo set the stage for World War I, triggering a worldwide economic downturn. As land sales declined, Fuller offered the Grand Lodge of Florida 20 acres of land adjacent to the Southland Hotel, free of charge, for use as a Masonic Home. Several Florida cities, including Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Live Oak, Palatka, Ocala, Lake Weir, Silver Springs, St. Petersburg, DeFuniak Springs, Zolfo Springs, White Springs, Polk County and Punta Gorda and Miami, also vied for the Masonic Home's location.

Securing the Masonic Home's Future

By early 1915, Southland Seminary was facing financial difficulties. Construction had stalled for much of the year, and when the school finally opened, enrollment reached only 50 students. By late 1916, Fuller and the Coffee Pot Bayou Land Company had taken control of the struggling institution. Recognizing that he was neither an educator nor a headmaster, Fuller closed the seminary on February 4, 1917, and reopened it as the Grand Hotel one week later.



Worshipful
Frank B. Duryea

At the same time, Worshipful Frank B. Duryea, then Master of St. Petersburg Lodge No. 139, worked to secure the Masonic Home for St. Petersburg. Acting as a liaison between Fuller and the Grand Lodge, Duryea made multiple trips to Jacksonville to advocate for the city's bid. On June 30, 1917, a deal was finalized, and Fuller's 20-acre donation to the Grand Lodge was secured.

However, financial difficulties continued to mount. Shortly before the U.S. entered World War I, Fuller placed the Coffee Pot Bayou Land Company into receivership. Duryea and Fuller then proposed a new arrangement: the Grand Lodge of Florida would purchase the Southland Hotel, now in receivership, for \$70,000. This sum was drawn from funds set aside by Gilchrist 15 years earlier.



Worshipful John
Leroy Brandon, later to
become Grand Master

On July 2, 1918, Judge John Leroy Brandon, for whom Brandon Lodge No. 114 was named, closed the deal on behalf of the Grand Lodge. By January 26, 1919, the Grand Lodge announced the home's official opening, with an additional \$45,000 allocated for improvements. The Masonic Home would serve as both an orphanage and a residence for elderly Masons.

Growth and Development

The Masonic Home quickly became a vital part of the community. In 1926, the Grand Lodge purchased a 40-acre farm near the Home for \$5,000, intending to provide vocational training for the orphans. However, by 1930, the farm was deemed impractical due to its distance from the facility. It was sold for \$7,500, with payment made in milk deliveries to the Home.

By 1928, ten-years after its establishment, the Masonic Home needed expansion. On October 14, a new annex was added, housing dormitories for 100 children and expanding the Home's educational programs, which included a school band, woodworking, printing, and mechanical departments

Masonic Home Orchestra to Attend Jacksonville Parley



1927 Masonic Home Orphanage Orchestra

Throughout the 1930s, and 1940s, the Masonic Home continued to grow, supporting Florida Masons, their widows, and orphans.

In 1956, the Masonic Home transitioned fully to an elder care facility. Its last orphan, Mary Virginia Allen, left to attend Florida State University. The facility's superintendent, Dan Partin, "noted that for many orphans, the Home had been their only family." In a 1955, St. Petersburg Times article, he reflected on how the institution continued to support its former residents well into adulthood.



Mary Virginia Allen

The Masonic Home Today

Since 1956, Masonic Home has functioned exclusively as a Residence for the elderly. Over time, newer, more functional buildings replaced the original Southland Hotel. The current facility is the third major reconstruction since the Home's inception in 1918.

Today, the Masonic Home remains a refuge for aging Masons and Members of the Order of the Eastern Star, offering accommodation also to non-Masons on a pay-as-you-go basis, with priority always given to those in need within the Masonic Community.

As the Masonic Home of St. Petersburg celebrates its 107th Anniversary on July 2, 2025, it stands as a testament to the vision and dedication of those who brought it to life. The facility continues to be funded through the Masonic Home Endowment Fund, supported by annual voluntary donations from Florida Masons. The legacy of Brotherly Love and service that shaped the institution endures, ensuring that future generations will benefit from its mission of care and support. ✠



727.822.3499

3201 1st St. NE • St. Petersburg, FL 33704

www.MasonicHomeFL.com



A Legacy Of Caring

Roe Fulkerson Lodge No. 299 Distributes 500 Bags of Food For Thanksgiving To Local Community

The Brothers of Roe Fulkerson Lodge No. 299 conducted another successful Community Food Distribution Drive on November 12th, 2024.

Over 500 bags of food and dairy products were given out at the Lodge for the benefit of the local Community in advance of the Thanksgiving Holiday.



Over the last few years, Roe Fulkerson Lodge No. 299 has become well-known in the neighborhood for its Community support projects, particularly with food distribution events. ✠





Welcome

We would like to officially welcome our new Administrator of the Masonic Home, Dan Newland. With his many years of experience in the Healthcare Industry, he will be a great asset to giving our residents the best care.

Dan has lived here in St. Petersburg since 1987 after moving here with his family from Norfolk, VA. He is a graduate of Boca Ciega High School, St. Petersburg College, and the University of South Florida. He has nearly 30 years of experience in the field of healthcare administration and has worked in a variety of roles both in the private and public sector, including Skilled Nursing Facility Administrator, Assisted Living Facility Administrator, and Program Administrator for the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Homes Program. Dan has been married to his wife Dawn for 32 years and has two grown children Molly and Jacob who live locally. Dan is also a proud veteran of the US Navy.





SKILLED NURSING AND ASSISTED LIVING SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY

A Legacy of Caring

At Masonic Home of Florida, every day is filled with hundreds of caring moments. From social interactions to hands-on support we are a community that thrives on our care for each other, whether that's our residents, staff, family members or neighbors. It's not just who we are today, it's who we've been for more than a century. No change in ownership, no change in mission.



JOIN OUR COMMUNITY
THE MASONIC HOME OF FLORIDA IS
OPEN TO ALL APPLICANTS. WE ARE
A SINGULAR, SUPPORTIVE, CARING
COMMUNITY FOR ALL OUR
RESIDENTS, WITH AN ADMISSIONS
PROCESS THAT HAS A PLAN FOR
QUALIFIED FLORIDA MASONS AND
THEIR WIVES OR WIDOWS, CALLED
FRATERNAL CARE, AND A PATH
OPEN FOR THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY
THROUGH A PRIVATE PAY PLAN.



(727) 822-3499



INFO@MASONICHOMEFL.COM



3201 1ST ST. NE
ST. PETERSBURG, FL 33704

Update On The Masonic Home of Florida

Masonic Home of Florida

An update on the Masonic Home of Florida. After more than a year bogged down in the quagmire of government bureaucracy with the name of the entity being the main issue, we have finally come to the resolution of that problem with the assistance of Worshipful Brother Allen W. Norwich of Tampa Bay Lodge No. 252 and our General Counsel, Right Worshipful Brother Stephen R. Gladstone.

That being said, we are resubmitting the application with the new information and starting from scratch to obtain the Medicare, Medicaid Certification, from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This will allow us to bring in more Residents with this program to our Masonic Home, which will be a win, win situation for us not only in helping to increase the census in the Home, but also to be able to use those benefits for our Lifecare Residents as well.

We continue to work on the Outreach Program to contact Brothers, wives, and widows that the Home may not meet with their needs and keep them in their Communities close to their families; we are trying to streamline the process and update our forms that are required to be processed through the Florida Office of Insurance Regulation for approval. None of these efforts can be achieved from one day to the next. However, the ball is rolling and we will achieve our goals down the road hopefully in the near future.

We have completed the authorizations of the last repair and cleaning contracts of the two Hurricanes and will put that phase behind us. We want to thank the staff of the Masonic Home for their dedication to the Home during the difficult times of the storms, words seem to fail in our expression of gratitude to all of them. We also want to thank District Deputy Grand Masters of the 22nd and 29th Masonic Districts, Right Worshipful Brothers Kenneth G. Barefield, and his family and Right Worshipful Brother Alexander Zambrano, and Board Members Right Worshipful Brother



Jorge L. Filgueira, and Worshipful Brother Angel Sardina, and the Brethren of the Miami area that came up for the clean-up efforts, even the Most Worshipful Grand Master Donald W. Cowart worked in the cleaning.

Our instructions from the Corporate Board were to look at everything we could in order to bring the cost down, and report these changes where needed; the Board is complying with these instructions. We are making changes in vendors; in order to save money and improve the quality of care to our Residents. We continuing these efforts and will have a more comprehensive report for you by The Grand Lodge.

We have a new website and are hoping to add videos soon to the website with more information on the Masonic Home,



www.MasonicHomeFL.com

its charm and southern lifestyle in the sleepy and beautiful Coffee Pot Bayou, of Saint Petersburg. We are working together with



Brother Patrick Joseph Hall in expanding our Facebook presence and our initial views have increased dramatically and will expand this program. We ask the Brethren to please add the Masonic Home Facebook page to your friend's list and share the postings with your list of friends. This will increase our presence and help us drive traffic to the Masonic Home of Florida in a positive way.

We have entered in a contract to change the sign letting so our neighbors know what this beautiful facility does for the Community, and that we are open to the public, thank you Right Worshipful Brother Raymond Ali. Also, our new Administrator is visiting the Doctors' offices as well as social workers in the area to be able to increase awareness of our Home, initially with the Private Pay program.

Last, but not least, is a big shout out to the Members of the Board of Trustees, this year has not been easy, and I have asked much of you, and every time you have stepped forward and met the challenge; we are very proud of your commitment to the Masonic Home and our Fraternity. No doubt you have made a difference. Thank you for your generosity and dedication to the Craft with your time, and wealth it is greatly appreciated by all. ✕

So, What Is Leadership?



So, what is Leadership? Genuine leadership is an art. Author J. Donald Walters, defines genuine leadership as only of one type; “Supportive. It leads people. It doesn’t drive them; it involves them. It never loses sight of the most important principle, governing any project or task involving human beings; namely, that people are more important than things.” People in leadership positions should not see their roles as ‘the one almighty big shot,’ but as an artist, whose medium is the dynamics of human co-

operation and teamwork. Leadership is not an ego game. It has to be applied sensibly and not be confused as a mere position. It is involving others. It means vision, planning, and foremost... execution. Because action is the very essence of achievement and success.

It takes one year, one Masonic Year in the Grand East, to make a big difference. To put into a meaningful concrete action, our vision, mission, and commitment of being accountable making an impact; a positive change. The Board of Trustees, under the leadership of the Chairman, Most Worshipful Jorge Aladro, in springing the Committee to get the job done. Working together towards a common purpose, finding creative measures and initiatives, i.e.; expanding the Masonic Home Outreach Program, and many other operational improvements at the facility, even when convention says, there are none, and ready to take and admit responsibility for failure or success.

A leader has a limited choice of accepting some degree of an outward symbol of authority. Otherwise, he may lose the respect due his position. In his leadership role he must constantly remind himself that without cooperation, he may not even be looked at as a leader. For that position is not in the deepest sense, any more important than that of the humblest follower, rather than individuals simply contributing whatever skills they possess to the advancement of an undertaking. One who is willing to do the lowest and most difficult task is a good leader, never assigning jobs to others, that he would not be willing to perform himself.

A leader is accountable in developing the nucleus of performing Brothers, who will work well with him, and who work well together, so others will be drawn in the magnetism they generate. The Jurisprudence Committee, under the Chairmanship of Most Worshipful J. Dick Martinez, was instrumental in forming that nucleus of Brethren, evaluating the legitimacy, fairness, and effectiveness of actions and directions on decisions I made, offering me assistance and guidance as well as wise directional recommendations to the Craft; whether it is Fraternal, or corporate in nature, consistent with upholding the values, tenets, and principles of our time-honored Institution.

The State, Zone, and District Chairmen had worked diligently in promoting the importance of Masonic Education and that those requiring training courses are completed and recorded accordingly, thus ensuring accountability in regulatory compliance.

“The Book of Constitutions, guarded by the Tyler’s Sword reminds us to be watchful and guarded in our thoughts words and actions.” We are accountable in the observance and to the strict conformity of our laws, rules, regulations, and edicts including being accountable in accepting with humility and remorse, the Masonic discipline consequent of exhibited un-Masonic Behavior. A leader

must exercise “Courage in the East” as he may find himself making decisions that are not quite popular, making certain that those decisions are lawful and honorable and in compliance of Masonic Laws and Regulations.

It is also sensible that opposing views are given the opportunity or chance to show themselves in the right or express opposing views, in which everyone, more particularly a leader, should be thankful for their voice, opinion, or suggestions as the best decisions are made in consideration of different views and ideas. Nevertheless, those opinions must be expressed in proper form or process. Not giving them the opportunity rightly enough, they will continue to grumble and their dissension to fester. One has the right to speak from his personal likes or dislikes, but not from a level of emotion for “it is useless parade of the subjection of irregular passions within the walls of the Lodge if we permit them to triumph in our intercourse with each other,” but respectfully to speak from a sense of what is right and true; otherwise, he will only win the disrespect from his peers and subordinates as to any uncontrolled display of unpleasant emotions. Rest assured, there will always be a few who are willing to listen. However, no one will listen, once by their own actions they have proved themselves wrong and justifiable Masonic Discipline is applied.

I am very blessed and pleased to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to Most Worshipful Richard Lynn for his inspirational wisdom, guidance, and assistance in having a productive and successful year. And to you, the Craft, for your unwavering support, “in making things happen this year,” meeting our successful acquisition, and the relocation of our new Grand Lodge Home Office, to all, I am eternally grateful.

As many of you know, Masonic Ritual is near and dear to me. Ritual is the catalyst for Masonic Thoughts, philosophy, and understanding. It is the “Language of Freemasonry” and not to learn its scope and understand its real meaning, becomes a burden to living a Masonic Life.

A special note of recognition to the “Committee On Work” for their hard work and continuing effort to assist the Brethren and Particular Lodges to make progress in Ritual Proficiency in Conferring Degrees in accordance with the Adopted Forms and Ceremonies. ✕

It is also sensible that opposing views are given the opportunity or chance to show themselves in the right or express opposing views, in which everyone, more particularly a leader, should be thankful for their voice, opinion, or suggestions as the best decisions are made in consideration of different views and ideas.

Joint 50-Year Ceremony Held for Brother Thomas Bingham, He Was Applauded And Congratulated For His Dedication And Leadership

W.: Thomas R. Bingham Received his 50-Year Service Award last night in a Joint Presentation by Gulf Beach Lodge No. 291, Madeira Beach, Florida, and Morning Star Lodge No. 94. The Ceremony was held at Morning Star Lodge in Silver Springs. Eight Members of Gulf Beach Lodge made the long trek to show their Fraternal Love.

Thomas Rudolph Bingham, who served as the Worshipful Master of Gulf Beach Lodge in 1979, was born on June 22, 1941, in Cleveland, Ohio, to John and Gertrude Bingham. His father was a police officer for the City of Cleveland, and his mother worked as a secretary in the same department. Tom was the eldest of four sons.

At the age of 14, Tom became a Member of the Bedford Chapter of DeMolay, while attending Bedford High School, from which he graduated in 1959. After graduation, Tom joined the United States Navy, and spent four years aboard the USS Franklin D. Roosevelt aircraft carrier. He later served two additional years in the Naval Reserve aboard the USS Greenwood, a Buckley-class Destroyer Escort. In 1961, during his service on the Franklin D. Roosevelt, Tom married Ms. Marianne Decker, a recent graduate of Northeast High School in St. Petersburg, who was employed at General Telephone Company at the time. The couple was blessed with two sons, Thomas C. and Bryan A., both of whom became Members of DeMolay, and Gulf Beach Lodge No. 291. Notably, his son Thomas C. "Tommy" served as Worshipful Master of Gulf Beach Lodge in 1993.

In 1963, Tom began his civilian career when he was hired as the 4,000th employee of Honeywell's Aeronautical Division, working as a detail draftsman. During this time, he attended classes at St. Petersburg Junior College. In 1965, he joined Florida Power Corporation, where he spent the next 35-years. In 1973, Tom was promoted to Manager of Generation Services and eventually retired as Maintenance Superintendent of the Bartow Plant.

Tom petitioned Gulf Beach Lodge for the Three Degrees of Masonry in 1974. He was Initiated on September 12, Passed on October 24, and Raised on December 12th of the same year. In 1975, Tom began his Journey through the Officer Chairs, and also served as Chapter Dad for DeMolay at Gulf Beach Lodge from 1975 to 1978. In 1977, as a Senior DeMolay, Tom received the Degree of Chevalier, the highest honor for outstanding DeMolay

Activity. That same year, he became a Scottish Rite Mason, and a Member of the Egypt Temple Shrine. In 1978, Tom was Honored with the DeMolay Legion of Honor and the DeMolay Cross of Honor.

Tom was elected Worshipful Master of Gulf Beach Lodge in 1979. From 1980 to 1988, Tom served as Dad Advisor for the Lodge's DeMolay Chapter. In 1980, he was elected President of the 19th Masonic District. Between 1982, President of the "Master's and Warden's Association for the 19th Masonic District." In 1985, Tom served as the District 19 Masonic Youth Chairman, and from 1985 to 1986, he was the District 19 Chairman for Perpetual Memberships. In 1986, Tom served as Worthy Patron of Gulf Beach Lodge Chapter No. 291 of the Order of the Eastern Star. He earned his Green Proficiency Card in 1989, and became one of Gulf Beach Lodge's First Perpetual Members in 1994.

In 2006, Tom became a Plural Member of Morning Star Lodge No. 94, in Ocklawaha, Florida, and served as its Worshipful Master in 2011. He is the only Worshipful Master of Gulf Beach Lodge to have served as Master of another Lodge after completing his term. In 2007, Tom was Appointed Scribe for the Ocala Shrine Club, where he served for 10-years. In 2008, he became a Charter

Member of the Ocala Shrine Legion of Honor, serving twice as Commander of the Unit and, for the past 13-years, as Adjutant and Financial Officer. From 2012 to 2014, Tom served as District 15, (Marion County) Chairman for Masonic Youth, and Perpetual Memberships.

On January 23, 2025, Tom was Honored with his 50-Year Service Award, in a Joint Presentation by Gulf Beach Lodge No. 291 and Morning Star Lodge No. 94. The Ceremony took place at Morning Star Lodge and was Conducted by Worshipful Buck Owens, the sitting Worshipful Master of The Gulf Beach Lodge, assisted by Tom's son, Past Grand Master Tommy Bingham.

Tommy read Tom's Masonic History, Presented the Certificate, and Past District Deputy Grand Master Howard Knapp, Pinned the 50-Year Service Pin on Tom's lapel before leading the Craft in Rendering Grand Honors. Many Brothers in attendance stood to congratulate Tom on this milestone and express their gratitude for his dedication and leadership.

Tom continues to reside in Ocklawaha, Florida, with his wife, Marianne. He enjoys spending time with his sons and grandchildren, cherishing the bonds of family and Brotherhood. ✠



L to R: Buck Owens, Worshipful Master; Tommy Bingham, Past Master; Tom Bingham, Past Master (All from Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291), Norman Dennison, Worshipful Master of Morning Star Masonic Lodge No. 94, Howard Knapp, Past District Deputy Grand Master

Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291 Feed Eight Families Scrumptious Thanksgiving Feast

Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291, located at 14020 Marguerite Dr. in Madeira Beach, helped bring Holiday cheer to eight local families in need. Members of the Lodge prepared and delivered the Thanksgiving food baskets to less fortunate families in the area. The baskets included a turkey, pies, and all the sides necessary for the most scrumptious Thanksgiving dinner. Gulf Beach Lodge is pleased to be able to assist in making this a great holiday season for those in most need. Gulf Beach Lodge has provided holiday baskets for over

46-years and looks forward to continuing the tradition well into the future.

In 2021 the program was named the "Bengston Holiday Basket Program" in honor of Brother Nils Peter Bengston, long time Member of the Lodge who ran the program for many years.

Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291 was Chartered in 1950, and has been an active force on the Gulf Beaches for 75-years. ✕



Annual Grand Communications

196th Annual Grand Communication of The Grand Lodge



The following information is given to the Craft in preparation for their attendance at the 196th Annual Communication of The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge F. & A.M. of Florida to be held at the Rosen Plaza Hotel, Orlando, Florida, on May 22 – 29, 2025.



It is the desire of Most Worshipful Donald W. Cowart Grand Master, that EVERY LODGE IN FLORIDA BE REPRESENTED BY THE ATTENDANCE OF THE MASTER AND WARDENS.

I respectfully refer you to Regulation 29.01 in the Digest of the Masonic Law of Florida wherein it states that it is the DUTY of the Master and Wardens (or at least one of them) to attend EVERY GRAND LODGE ANNUAL COMMUNICATION.

ROLL CALL: Most Worshipful Donald W. Cowart, Grand Master, will expect the Right Worshipful District Deputy Grand Masters to call the roll of Lodge Representatives of their respective Districts at each morning and afternoon Session of The Grand Lodge which will assist the Returns and Credentials Committee in preparing per diem checks.

REGISTRATION: The Committee on Returns and Credentials will begin registration on Sunday, May 25th, at 9:00 a.m., in the Ballroom Foyer of the Hotel.

HEADQUARTERS HOTEL: The Rosen Plaza Hotel, 9700 International Drive, Orlando, Florida 32819-8114
Reservations number (407) 996-9700 ✕



The Grand Lodge of Florida is Offering Advertising Opportunities for Upcoming Issues of The Florida Mason *Above & Beyond* Magazine

Distribution of *Above & Beyond* is over 30,000

Readership is over 60,000 PER ISSUE = as much as 120,000 Readers per year

Each advertisement runs for two (2) consecutive issues

- ☐ **Outside Back Cover:** 7.875" X 7.5" no bleed • 8.625" x 7.85" w/bleed.....\$2,000*
- ☐ **Inside Back or Inside Front:** 7.875" x 10.125" no bleed • 8.625" x 11.125" w/bleed.....\$1,500*
- ☐ **Full Page Ad:** 7.875" x 10.125" no bleed • 8.625" x 11.125" w/bleed\$1,000*
- ☐ **Half Page Ad:** 7.875" x 4.9"\$ 750*
- ☐ **Quarter Page Ad:** 3.775" x 4.9\$ 500*
- ☐ **Business Card Ad:** 3.775" x 2.4"\$ 250*
- ☐ **FL Masonic Lodge or FL Masonic Org or Allied Body....full page.....\$ 750**

half page\$ 300

*Masonic Members in Good-standing receive 20% discount on full-priced advertising

All media subject to the approval of The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge.

.....

Graphic design service for your advertisement is available

Sharon Bendix: ebou@bellsouth.net • 904.829.5112

\$250⁰⁰ per ad, for design fee

"Your advertisement is a reflection of your business, so let's make it shine"



The Florida Mason *Above & Beyond* Magazine

Winner of the "2022 Masonic Renewal Committee of North America Best Newsletter/Newspaper Award"

Advertisement Form Complete form and email with advertising to: masonicpublications@grandlodgefl.com

Name _____	Florida Mason? Member Number _____
Company Name _____	
Type of Business _____	Web Page _____
Address _____	Commercial Advertisement? Yes _____ No _____
_____	Lodge Name / No. _____
City _____ State _____	
Phone Number _____	Email _____ @ _____
Ad Size _____	Allied Body Name _____

.....

*All article submissions for future print or online issues of **The Florida Mason's Above & Beyond**, or Facebook submissions should be emailed to: R.∴W.∴ Charles R. Jordan at:*

publications@grandlodgefl.com



An Update From Kate Deviney *A Scholarship Recipient* ←

Happy New Year!

I hope this note finds you well, as we begin 2025. I just began the spring semester of my junior year at Florida State University. I greatly appreciate the college scholarship you awarded me, and am writing to update you on my progress and activities since last spring semester.

Last summer, I spent 13 weeks studying in San Joaquín de Flores, Costa Rica, as a Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program scholar, supported by the U.S. Department of State. I took 12-credit hours of classes – Spanish Composition, Spanish Grammar, Spanish Conversation, and Latin American Cinema - all of which, were taught in Spanish. I also lived with a host family that only spoke Spanish. This total language immersion truly elevated my Spanish language skills, and moved me closer to reaching my goal of becoming a bilingual lawyer. This semester I will be presenting to local high school students about the importance of college readiness, and the transformative power of studying abroad, as a college student.

Last Fall semester, I earned a 3.9 GPA, and a spot on the Dean's List, once again. I earned this GPA while working two jobs. In one job I served as an Engage 100 Leader, teaching a class throughout the semester to a group of freshman students on Florida State University academic culture. I really enjoyed this teaching opportunity. In my second job, I worked at a local restaurant. I will continue to work these two jobs this semester, to help defray my college expenses.

At the end of the Fall semester, I was inducted into the Florida State University Garnet and Gold Key Leadership Honorary, the oldest and most prestigious leadership honor society at the university. Members are selected based on their outstanding contributions in leadership, service, and scholastics.

After undergoing a highly competitive selection process, I was also chosen as a Florida State University Social Science Scholar. The Social Science Scholars Program provides career accelerating leadership training and experiences to outstanding juniors in the College of Social Sciences and Public Policy. This includes a 3-credit Social Science Scholar Leadership Seminar, which I am currently taking, and a one-credit seminar next fall. I was also selected for membership in the Pi Gamma Mu International Honor Society for outstanding students enrolled in the FSU College of Social Sciences and Public Policy.

I currently serve as Vice-President for External Affairs for the FSU Women in Pre-Law Society. I coordinate guest speakers for monthly general body meetings and assist the President in her duties and assume the President's responsibilities in her absence.

I have now completed 617.25 hours of Community service while in college, as verified by my "ServScript," which is the FSU transcript for community service. Community Service will always be a significant part of my life.

This semester I will be taking a course to help me diligently prepare to take the Law School Admissions Test next summer. I will apply to law schools in the Fall, with an eye towards starting law school in the Fall of 2026.

I am deeply grateful for your support of me and my academic and professional goals, and cannot thank you enough. I look forward to sending you future updates.

May your new year be filled with peace, love, and joy! ✖

Kindest Regards,

Kate Deviney



Step up to our plate!

You can now get a **FLORIDA MASONIC SPECIALTY LICENSE PLATE**; You can switch your existing specialty plate outside of your registration period or choose to include it at your annual registration renewal. You can also personalize the Masonic License Plate (choose the characters you want on it or keep your existing plate number). **All proceeds go to OUR Masonic Home of Florida.** ✖





Prime Spaces in Masonic Cemetery

FOR SALE in SARASOTA

Palms-Robarts Memorial Park
2 spaces/Bronze marker/
Perpetual Care

941-302-4500
\$6,000 OBO

Contact W.. Mark Tishman



Masonic Supply Shop

Toll Free 1-855-666-2766

www.masonicsupplyshop.com

Disclaimer: Advertisement in the Florida Mason Magazine does not imply endorsement or recommendation by The Grand Lodge of Florida, and they do not accept responsibility for claims made by advertisers.

Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291 Feed Eight Families Scrumptious Christmas Feast

Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291 located in Madeira Beach, helped bring holiday cheer to eight local families in need. Members of the Lodge prepared, and delivered the Bengston Holiday Christmas food baskets to less fortunate families in the area. The baskets included a ham and all the sides necessary for the most scrumptious Christmas dinner. Gulf Beach Lodge is pleased to be able to assist in making this a great holiday season for those in most need. Gulf Beach Lodge has provided holiday baskets for over 46-years, and looks forward to continuing the tradition well into the future.

In 2021, the program was named the “Bengston Holiday Basket Program” in honor of Brother Nils Peter Bengston, long-time Member of the Lodge who ran the program for many years. This year the program was coordinated and run by Brother Al Yoder, who did a fantastic job. ❖



Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291 Installs 2025 Officers

Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291 held its 75th annual Installation of Lodge Officers on Thursday, January 9, 2025, in the presence of Members, visitors, family and friends. This year, due to Hurricane Helene, and the four feet of water that entered the Lodge Building on Madeira Beach, the event was held at St. Petersburg Lodge No. 139, located at 3325 1st N.E., in St. Petersburg, and was also streamed live on Facebook.

The Installation of the 2025 Lodge Officers was open to the Members and public alike.

Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291, F. & A.M., was Chartered in 1950, and has been an active force on the Gulf Beaches for 75-Years. Its Members have included bankers, contractors, teachers, Congressmen, Soldiers, pharmacists, police, firefighters, and a myriad of men from all walks of life. Freemasonry is open to men ages 18 and older, and offers an opportunity to be proactive in the Community, as well as to be a part of a Fraternity that dates back hundreds of years.

Some notable Freemasons were George Washington; (and 15 other US Presidents), Ben Franklin, Henry Ford, Danny Thomas, and General Douglas MacArthur. Those interested in more information about Freemasonry can visit the Lodge Website at: www.gulfbeachlodge.org

The new Lodge Officers for 2025, are:

- Christopher ‘Buck’ Owens, Worshipful Master;
- Tim Delaney, Senior Warden;
- David Marrs, Junior Warden;
- Bobby Burkett II, Treasurer;
- Steve Johnson, Secretary;
- Russ Wood, Chaplain;
- Dago Cruz, Marshal;
- David Neville, Senior Deacon;
- Jim Tizzano, Junior Deacon;
- Brian Marshall, Senior Steward;
- Albert Yoder, Junior Steward;
- Mark Niceley, Tyler;
- Jared Ezzard, Musician.

The Installation was led by Worshipful Mark Sawa-Szostak, Past Grand Master of Gulf Beach Lodge who was assisted by Right Worshipful Derryl O’Neal, Installing Marshal; Brother Russ Wood, Installing Chaplain and Right Worshipful Alan Rosenthal, Installing Musician. ❖



L-R: Jared Ezzard; David Neville; Russ Wood; Dago Cruz; David Marrs; Tim Delaney; Buck Owens; Al Yoder; Jim Tizzano; Brian Marshall; Mark Niceley; Bobby Burkett; Steve Johnson) Photo by Howard Knapp, P.G.M., P.D.I., P.D.D.G.M., Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291

Mokanna Masonic Lodge No. 329 Presents A Check To The Russell Home For Atypical Children

Worshipful Master Jeff Tindall, of Mokanna Masonic Lodge No. 329 presented the annual donation on February 13, 2025, to The Russell Home for Atypical Children.

The Russell Home for Atypical Children in Orlando, has been operating for over 60-years, without ANY government support and is still under management by the Russell Family. It is the only private, non-profit facility, for severely disabled children in Central Florida.

A central tenet of the Russell Home is to encourage every child to develop to his or her highest potential. They celebrate the efforts and accomplishments of every child in the home. As a result, the children demonstrate pride in their achievements.

The Russell Home provides around-the-clock specialized care in a home-like atmosphere. The love in this home, expressed through the eyes, sounds, and smiles of the children, will make you count your blessings for the simple things in life.

The home can continue the level of care for their children through private donations and earnings from their thrift store. The Lodges within the 16th Masonic District, have been PROUD Supporters for most of the Home's 60-years of existence through monetary donations, donated supplies, and voluntary efforts. ✖



Worshipful Master Manny Vila Honors Heroic Officers For Life-Saving Actions

Fort Lauderdale, FL – In a heartfelt ceremony held at Doric Lodge No. 140 on Tuesday evening Worshipful Master Manny Vila Presented certificates of appreciation and gift cards to two Fort Lauderdale police officers, whose quick thinking and bravery saved the life of a critically injured 2-year-old. The officers, identified as Officer Joseph Hoffman, and Erick Flores, responded to a shooting call late last year that left the toddler in grave danger.

The fateful day began with the two officers arriving at the scene to find the child suffering from a gunshot wound to the head and leg. Without hesitation, Officers Hoffman and Flores took immediate

action, providing critical first aid and transporting the child to the hospital themselves.

During the ceremony, Worshipful Master Vila, expressed profound gratitude for the officers' bravery. "In moments of crisis, true heroes emerge," he said. "Today, we honor not just their bravery, but their unwavering commitment to protecting our Community. Officers Joseph Hoffman and Erick Flores exemplify what it means to serve with courage and compassion."

Asst. Chief Patrick Hart and other officers attended the event. The toddler has fully recovered thanks in large part to the swift actions of the officers on that tragic day.

In addition to the awards presented by Worshipful Master Vila, the Fort Lauderdale Police Department has made them officers of the year.

"Every day, our officers put their lives on the line for the Community," Asst. Chief Patrick Hart commented. "We are incredibly grateful to Officers Joseph Hoffman and Erick Flores for their bravery in the face of danger and for saving this child's life. They embody the very essence of our duty."

As the Community continues to heal from the traumatic event, the recognition of these heroic actions serves as a reminder of the profound impact law enforcement can have in critical moments. The ceremony concluded with a standing ovation for the officers by everyone in the Lodge. ✖



Photos:
(left) L to R:
Asst Chief Hart,
Officer Flores,
Worshipful Master Vila,
and Officer Hoffman
displaying their awards

(right)
Worshipful Master Vila.
presenting Officers
Hoffman & Flores their
awards



Harry Jackson Masonic Lodge No. 314 Present Teacher Of The Year Awards

Highland Park Elementary School



L to R: Ms. Gloria Gibson, teacher of the year, Highland Park Elementary School, receiving award from Worshipful Master Matt Richardson

Mowart Middle School



L to R: Ms. Heather Anderson, teacher of the year, Mowart Middle School, receiving award from Worshipful Master Matt Richardson

Harry Jackson Masonic Lodge No. 314 Presents Law Enforcement Officer Of The Year With Award

We would like to thank the Harry Jackson Masonic Lodge No. 314, Lynn Haven, FL, for recognizing Sgt. Jared Turner as their Law Enforcement Officer of the Year.

One year ago, Sgt. Turner bravely responded to the destruction of an apartment complex on Thomas Drive during the tornado outbreak and conducted rescues of trapped and endangered citizens. ✖

Law-Enforcement Officer Of The Year - Bay County Sheriff's Office



L to R: Sgt. Turner receiving award from Worshipful Master Matt Richardson

Firefighter Of The Year - Lynn Haven



L to R: Mr. Ryan Chapman, Lynn Haven Fire & Emergency Management Service, presented with firefighter of the year award from Worshipful Master Matt Richardson

Harry Jackson Masonic Lodge No. 314 Present Firefighter Of The Year Award

Presenting The Officers Of Harry Jackson Masonic Lodge No. 314



- Matt Richardson, Worshipful Master
- Bradley Clark, Senior Warden
- W.: Mitch Hagans, Junior Warden
- Jim Madden, Secretary
- W.: Joseph Heath, Treasurer
- Dwain Purswell, Senior Deacon
- Vincent Wilder, Junior Deacon
- James Ketsel, Chaplain
- R.: W.: Gary Gatewood, Marshall
- David Peterson, Senior Steward
- David Taylor, Junior Steward
- Matthew Standish, Tyler
- Guy Pettis, Lodge Instructor

Gulf Beach Masonic Lodge No. 291 Held A Table Lodge With Great Turnout And Success

Gulf Beach Lodge No. 291 in Madeira Beach, held a Table Lodge on Saturday, September 21, 2024, which was a resounding success! The food and Fellowship was outstanding! Worshipful Master, Bobby R. Burkett, II, led a great program and all the Officers did very well with the toasts and responses. The Italian meal was second to none and the Junior Warden Tim Delaney, and Stewards Jim Tizzano, and Brian Marshall, (with help from Brother Jon Reed, one of our new Master Masons), did a fantastic job in preparation, serving and cleaning up.



We were honored to have our sitting D.D.G.M., Michael St-Laurent, with us and enjoyed the Grand Master's Message he presented.

Howard Knapp, P.D.D.G.M., was the guest speaker giving a talk on what Freemasonry has meant to men throughout the ages. It was an event that will not soon be forgotten by those in attendance. ✠



Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of Florida , Presents:

Nitram Lodge No.188

100th
Anniversary
Redication

1925-2025

SATURDAY APRIL 26, 2025
5pm

4275 78TH ST N, ST PETERSBURG, FL 33709

Must RSVP by: MARCH 2025. nitram188faam@gmail.com



Disclaimer: Advertisement in the Florida Mason Magazine does not imply endorsement or recommendation by The Grand Lodge of Florida, and they do not accept responsibility for claims made by advertisers.

GRAND LODGE F. & A. M.
OF FLORIDA
P.O. BOX 1020
Jacksonville, FL 32201-1020

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Jacksonville, FL
Permit No. 742

The Florida Mason
Above & Beyond

The Official Newsletter of The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Florida

Volume 4, Issue 1

Did You Know?

You can review The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge F.&A.M. of Florida's Proceedings in one location.
You can perform a topic search by year. Type in website (in blue) below:

<http://gwm.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/view/all/where/FLORIDA>



Thank You To:

THE · GEORGE · WASHINGTON
MASONIC · NATIONAL · MEMORIAL

gwmemorial.org

