



94th ANNUAL ADDRESS
HONORABLE WILLIAM C. RHEUBOTTOM
M.:W.: GRAND MASTER

As Grand Master of Masons for the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washington and Jurisdiction, I extend to each and every one of you a very warm welcome. I am particularly pleased to welcome our distinguished guests, who are visiting from other Grand Lodges and Jurisdictions. We are honored that you have made it your priority to be with us on this auspicious occasion. We appreciate the opportunity to return the hospitality and friendship our representatives have received while visiting your Grand Jurisdictions.

To the Brethren of Prince Hall Lodges in the Jurisdiction of Washington, I am extremely pleased to see you here. My Brethren, we are at the crossroads of a new era. What we do during the next two and days will have a serious effect on the direction this Grand Lodge will take, as we move closer to the new millennium. We as a Grand Lodge must position ourselves to effectively respond to changes forthcoming in the next century.

My Brethren, on the 94th Annual Communication another page must be added in our history book and new dimensions in the development and expansion of Prince Hall Masonry, wherever disbursed around the globe, are due to the successes that were accomplished this year.

I wish to thank the excellent staff of officers and each of you for your prayers and support. I cannot say enough about the officers this past year; they all worked overtime to bring credit to our great Jurisdiction. Not once did I see or experience any unwillingness to meet a new challenge placed before them. Each time I called upon their services, the Deputy Grand Master, Senior and Junior Wardens, Grand Lecturer, Grand Trustees and the various committee chairmen and those serving on those committees were always there and willing to take on another task or project. A special tribute must be made to Grand Senior Warden Miller, during the last six months for performing the duties of Deputy Grand Master Slogan.

As always the Grand Secretary and Grand Treasurer performed their duties quietly and proficiently. As for the Grand Lecturer, he was very busy traveling all over the Jurisdiction. Needless to say, I was not with him most of the time, but word of his great work always got back to me.

NECROLOGY

Life is like a flower which blooms today and tomorrow fades and is cast aside, most of us, Brethren, are fast approaching, or have already passed the median of life; the Grim Reaper continues to invade our ranks.

We pause to remember with Brotherly love the memory of those of our craftsmen who have fallen asleep in death and passed from our sight during the year. Silently one by one they glided away, leaving a memory rich in love and affection. Let us show by our deeds that we are not unworthy of having known those who have passed.

Stephen H. Hinton Jr.	Mabuhay Military Lodge #59	December 28, 1995
Elbert Barnes, Sr.	Cassia Lodge #5	April 27, 1996
Adam Chandler	Lee Grant Rogers Lodge #61	May 1, 1996
William Gardner, Jr.	Martin Luther King Jr. Lodge #65	May 16, 1996
Benjamin F. Booth	Cassia Lodge #5	May 10, 1996
Charles R. Walker	Cassia Lodge #5	May 17, 1996
Bennett Wilborn	Harmony Lodge #2	May 27, 1996
Parker B. Harris	Cassia Lodge #5	July 28, 1996
James Alexander	Abiff Lodge #37	August 30, 1996
Irvin O. Williams Sr.	Hercules Lodge #17	September 11, 1996
William D. Johnson	Harmony Lodge #2	September 15, 1996
Thomas P. Waggener	Hercules Lodge #17	September 27, 1996
John W. Alexander	True Resolution Lodge #16	October 20, 1996
George Williams, Sr.	Abiff Lodge #37	November 22, 1996
Henry A. Smith	Hercules Lodge #17	November 4, 1996
Arthur L. Hill	Harmony Lodge #2	November 23, 1996
Lanie Ferguson	Harmony Lodge #2	November 28, 1996
Leonard Satcher	Hamma Hamma Lodge #35	December 27, 1996
William W. Dotson	Inland Empire Lodge #3	December 28, 1996
Robert E. Lindsay	Evergreen Lodge #9	January 1, 1997
Willie Lee Sanders	Cassia Lodge #5	January 7, 1997
Robert V. Kent	Cassia Lodge #5	January 21, 1997
Edward Marshall	Harmony Lodge #2	March 9, 1997
Lee Andrew Jones, Jr.	Cassia Lodge #5	March 10, 1997
James B. Sloan	Egyptian Lodge #44	May 29, 1997
Charles D. Stubblefield	Cassia Lodge #5	May 30, 1997
Joe Baldwin	Evergreen Lodge #9	June 12, 1997

And to the appointed Grand Officers; thank you for your excellent services and support as well; I truly, truly appreciate each of you. A special "thank you" to all my District Deputies for their hard work and support, as well as all our Past Grand Masters for their wisdom and council.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to stand here today before you, with much humility, and render to you and accounting of my stewardship for Masonic year 1996-1997. First, I must say thanks to God for allowing me to serve you, my Brethren, as your Chief Executive Officer. The Bible has always been my guide in my everyday life. This protects me from being robbed of my self-dignity, skills, mental, physical and economic resources by wolves in sheep clothing, or those who masquerade as Brothers!

I wish to thank my wife, family and my very close friends who I talk to daily for the support they gave me this past year. When the real test came, the Bible and prayer were there to give spiritual and physical strength to carry me through.

STATE OF THE CRAFT

I am pleased to report that the overall State of the Craft is excellent. In an organization such as this, we always expect some problems as a normal part of our everyday business. We meet those problems, make the necessary decisions, and move on. I feel that I have been a Grand Master that was sensitive to the needs of those who I was put here to serve, yet mindful of the fact that decisions are based on the needs of the whole, not the individual.

We have in the Jurisdiction at present, 64 chartered Lodges. Our membership has not increased as much as our potential shows it should, but I think we will begin to pick up in the coming year. Our new lodges have great potential for growth.

As most of you are aware, we continue to experience a negative impact on our lodges in District #9 (Europe). District Deputy Grand Master Andrew Morgan has done a truly remarkable job in holding those lodges together. He reported that Masonic year 1996-1997 has been a watershed year. It has been one peacekeeping mission after another, and the latest operation joint endeavor, to support the Bosnia Mission, totally impacted all of the lodges in the District to some degree.

This district has established programs to visit the family members of the Brothers who were left behind. Mainly providing transportation to and from shopping areas and doing maintenance on cars, which seemingly break down everyday. Additionally, the District is providing care packages to the Brothers in Bosnia. They mostly want food and personal hygiene items. The Bosnia Peace Mission has severely plagued our operation in Europe, I believe if we can survive through December 1997, when everyone is supposed to return, and I have no doubt, they will, the lodges should be fully functional in a few months thereafter.

State of District #1

Membership in the District is slowly growing. Community projects in this District have increased, and interest in Masonic activity is drawing attention. Harmony appears to prevail in the District.

State of District #2

Membership is also increasing in this District. Most of the Worshipful Masters are dedicated, and hard working, whose goals are the betterment of their lodges and the Grand Lodge. The District's commitment to community and charitable programs and projects is commendable -- keep up the good work.

State of District #3 & #4

Lodges in these two Districts have experienced a slight increase in its membership. The lodge in Yakima is not functioning as well as I would like it to. Hopefully, and soon more military people will be permanently stationed in the Yakima Firing Center.

State of District #5

This District, located in Vancouver B. C. was the host lodge for our 93rd Annual Communication. This lodge is doing an excellent job in pursuing Masonry in its truest sense, both in ritualistic work and community outreach programs. Our Grand Lodge has had at least two other Prince Hall Lodges in the province of British Columbia; one lodge located in Victoria B.C. was chartered in 1923. We also had a Prince Hall Lodge chartered in 1920 in the province of Alberta called Pride of Alberta #20. Evergreen #9 was recently moved to this District - and is doing very well.

State of District #6

These lodges are located in Japan and are doing very well. They are also pursuing Masonry in its truest sense, both in ritualistic work, community outreach programs and charitable contributions.

State of District #7

This District is the home of Toni Lodge #46 and is located in Okinawa, Japan. This District is showing a slight increase in membership. They are also doing very well in their ritualistic work and an excellent job in its community outreach programs and charitable contribution.

State of District #8

This District, home of the Marianas Travelers Lodge #49, is located in Guam. Whose District Deputy is Billy Hall. They are doing very well keeping with rich traditions of Prince Hall Masonry. In fact, WM Glenn Marshall is present here today. This District is also pursuing Masonry in its truest sense, both in ritualistic work as well as community outreach programs and charitable contributions.

State of District #10

With its five lodges in the District, located in South Korea, are performing very well considering the fast turnover of its members, long field training exercises and the diversity of Masonic organization operating in Korea. District Deputy Shepard has instituted a campaign to simply get “back to basics,” both ritualistically and administratively. They have automated and simplified administrative procedures, assuring continuity throughout the District. Training of leaders in those areas is on going, because of the rapid turnover of members. The lodges have donated over \$3000.00 to community programs and have provided more than over 5000 hours of community service.

State of District #11

This District is located in Puyallup, Fort Lewis, Lacey, Olympia, Vancouver, and all points between. In the past Masonic year, these Brothers have had a very successful working year. This District is very visible by the public, and events centered on the family -- keep up the good work.

State of District #12

This District is located in Angles City, Philippines and is the home of Mabuhay Lodge #59. This lodge was reissued its charter on February 22, 1995. Members of this lodge consist mainly of retired military personnel. They are proud to have their charter back and are busy performing their Masonic duties.

STATE OF THE CRAFT — CONCLUSION

For many, membership, pure numbers is important. Numbers and totals are important because it is from this source that we derive revenue by which our various charities, philanthropic and other programs are funded. Fewer members mean less revenue. To overcome this reduction, additional funds must be sought from those who remain dedicated to our principles and purposes, or we adjust our operating budget, with current and projected membership without incurring taxes - no we are not considering raising taxes.

Sure, numbers and totals are important. But, is this where our greatest concern should lie, in numbers? In quantity?; I think not. It is my contention that we as a total Fraternity, that we as the complete body of Freemasonry should be concerned with quality. Quality of character, quality of knowledge, quality of our charities, quality of our actions as Masons in the work place, in our communities, our home, our places of worship and in our lodges.

Yes, numbers, quantities are important. Numbers and quantities without substance, without quality will not enhance the status of Freemasonry. Numbers and quantity alone without imparting and instilling the beauties and philosophies of Masonry in each member will not generate long-term success and recognition for our cause.

Is there a solution to the small number of members attending their lodge meetings, or those that have dropped out because of lack of interest or other causes? Is there an answer to a need to inspire leadership and participation in our lodges? I believe there is. But it will take planning, direction, dedication, commitment, and work on the part of every concerned Mason if we are to realize success. The lack of involvement of those members mentioned above speaks loud and clear of a crying need to give attention to the care, education, and nurturing of these important people.

All in all, I would describe the State of the Craft as being relatively healthy with known and recognized illnesses. Some of our ailments have been identified and prescriptions for recovery are being addressed by our Membership Committee. Our illnesses have been generated over a long period of time. Some ailments are so deeply imbedded that quick cure and a rapid recovery need not be expected. Application of good leadership principles, education of members and training of officers will play a large part in making Prince Hall Masonry a healthy, vital part of society, and will enable us to practice charity and do good unto all mankind.

STATE OF THE NATION

With the State of our Nation as it appears today, there is even a greater need for our Masonic Order to open its door and become more visible. With some progress having been made, racism is still around and doing well. There is much to concern ourselves with today. "For African-Americans, the future is looking like the past once again, black churches are burning, a repeat of the 1890's and the 1960's; Affirmative Action and immigration policies are under attack and/or repealed; supremacist militias are returning unchecked. Recently a conservative U.S. Supreme Court struck down two more "majority-minority" voting districts, making it tougher to elect people of color to congress and to state offices. Ironically after the Civil War there were two Black U.S. Senators, one more than there is now. The Reconstruction Act of 1867 forced southern states to allow black men to vote, resulting in former slaves being elected in record numbers. Between 1870 and 1900, southern states sent 22 blacks to congress and hundreds to local offices. But by 1901 all the southern black congressmen had been driven out of office, along with local elected officials. North Carolina's George White was the last to go. Whites (the majority) rigged the primary to get rid of him. Blacks were burned, shot and mutilated by lynch mobs to destroy their political rights."

While much progress has and is being made, more needs to be done. There is much to concern ourselves with today. To list a few.

Proposition 48— California Health Care issues -- Decision made by the United State Supreme Court that Federal Affirmative Action Program ruled unlawful.

- Sexual Harassment issues
- Federal Government Secret Syphilis Experiment conducted on unsuspecting black men.

- Welfare Reform.
- Drug Infestation in our communities.
- The Glass Ceiling System.
- Misunderstanding and/or perception between the races.
- Increasing numbers of homeless.
- Increasing numbers of the hungry.
- National concerns over the recent Supreme Court decisions.

My Brothers we cannot afford to be complacent, we must wake up and involve ourselves. We must take responsibility for our own destiny; no one is going to do it for us. We must remember our forefathers and the sacrifices they made in an effort to make things better for us. What about our future generations? Let's face it, America, with all of its problems; I cannot name any other place that I would want to live. Can you? Let us all work very hard to make America a better America for all of its citizens!

1996-1997 SIGNIFICANT GRAND LODGE PROGRAMS

Listed below are the Grand Lodge Programs that a considerable amount of human resources were devoted in carrying out the purpose of said programs. Each of the program chairmen will report on their programs in their perspective reports.

- Scholarship & Investment
- Roslyn Cemetery
- Membership Expansion Committee
- Annual Spring Workshop
- Committee on Clandestine Masons
- Grand Historian
- 3-5 Year Planning Committee
- Grand Entertainment Committee
- Prince Hall Community Development Association

During my official visit to District #5, we invited the families of our membership and the community to attend this visit. There they observed the host lodge receiving (the altar disarranged) the Grand Lodge officers and the Grand Master (and giving them public Grand Honors only). A short program followed, with the Grand Lodge officers introducing themselves and briefing the audience on Prince Hall Masonic history, the structure of the Lodge, the Grand Lodge and some of its programs.

3-5 YEAR PLANNING COMMITTEE

During the Annual Session you will be briefed on the various projects. This is an attempt to do some long range planning on those nine improvement projects identified by the committee.

THE CONFERENCE OF PRINCE HALL GRAND MASTERS

In May of this year I had the privilege of attending the Conference of Grand Masters, held in Omaha, Nebraska, hosted by Most Worshipful Grand Master John W. Reed, Sr. The conference was very enlightening and well attended, with thirty-eight Prince Hall Grand Masters present.

While there, I had the honor of serving for the second year as the chairman of the Audit Committee.

This was very rewarding and afforded me an opportunity to review and offer minor adjustments to the financial structures of the Conference of Grand Masters. I, also, wrote a letter of commendation to the executive secretary-treasurer Past Master John D. Howard for the excellent management of the finances of the conference.

There was some dialogue regarding those jurisdictions having passed joint resolutions of recognition and rights of visitation, between Prince Hall and Caucasian Lodges. I was impressed by the number of jurisdictions desiring and working toward the achievement of that goal. Needless to say there were some jurisdictions that opposed this action, but respected the right and decisions of those who were in favor. "The Mission Statement of the Conference of Grand Masters; Prince Hall Masons is to identify Masonic and Non-Masonic research subject(s); present the product of that research for use by jurisdiction so disposed, publicize appropriate positions and issues at a press conference as desired and necessary".

Regularly, throughout the conference of Grand Masters, and throughout the individual jurisdictions, charitable contributions are made to organizations such as: NAACP; NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund; Supreme Council; Knights of Pythagoras; Youth Fraternities; Boy Scouts; Girl Scouts; OIC; various charities such as Homeless Shelters, Battered Women Shelters, Homes for Girls, Homes for Boys; Youth Camps; Scholarships for Students; Grants to Colleges and Educational Institutions; Church Programs; Storm Damage Shelters; Sickle Cell Anemia Foundations; Blood Banks, Organ Donors, and AIDS Prevention Projects, etc.

It was the consensus of all the Grand Masters present that, while Prince Hall Masonry is primarily an African American organization, there are a number of Caucasians, Asians, and people of other ethnic and national groups to be found in Prince Hall Lodges. The organization does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, or any other detriment that may hinder a coming together of all God's creations. Most all religions are represented in the various lodges, except those that bar membership in Masonic lodges.

The Grand Masters who attended the Conference of Grand Masters authorized Grand Master Howard Woods, the president of the Conference of Grand Masters, to travel to Pittsburgh, PA, July 12-14, 1997 for the National Meeting of the NAACP and make a donation there in front of some 20,000 to 40,000 delegates, for optimum effect. The total amount to be donated will be \$36,600.00. They are printing 10,000 copies of a souvenir book and the Conference of Grand Masters will be given a free page.

GROUP INSURANCE

The Royal Financial Services Company was present and gave a slide presentation of their plan for those Grand Lodges that are interested in group insurance for their members. The company announced the establishment of the Howard C. Woods/Royal MacCubees Scholarship Fund to be funded thusly: \$1000 to be given to each of the seven (7) regions; \$1500 each to be given to the Knights of Pythagoras and the Empress of the Galaxy for a Grand total of \$10,000.

Future meeting sites for the Conference of Grand Masters are:

1998 - Washington D.C.

1999 - Albuquerque, New Mexico

2000 - Massachusetts

2001 - North Carolina

2002 - Pennsylvania

2003 - Washington State

2004 - South Carolina

For entertainment the Buick Motor Company sponsored a reception and musical entertainment. This affair was most enjoyable.

FRATERNAL RELATIONS

We have established a very good relationship with most of our sister jurisdictions throughout 46 Prince Hall Grand Lodges. Our ties to these bodies, and my personal relationship with Grand Masters, has been a wonderful experience for me. I have gained personal friends whom I feel I can call on at any given time, to assist this Grand Lodge in any worthwhile endeavor.

I am pleased to report that relations between our grand organizations of the Prince Hall family of Washington are good. Grand Worthy Matron Millicent Blocquer of Prince Hall Grand Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star and Most Ancient Grand Matron Rose Enoch of Prince Hall Grand High Court, Heroines of Jericho and I have had a cooperative working relationship this past Masonic year.

I must state that an excellent and harmonious relationship existed with Sovereign Grand Inspector General Frank Russell, Deputy of Scottish Rite Masonry, Orient of Washington. I also have similar working relationships with Deputy of the Desert William Spenser and Grand High Priest William Spenser of the Holy Royal Arch Masons.

The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washington and Jurisdiction now shares and enjoys a harmonious and productive relationship with the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Washington, F. & A. M., contrary to some beliefs, and for perceptions, Prince Hall Masonry has maintained its uniqueness, customs, tradition and its proud heritage. There has not been any attempt from either Grand body to merge, change, or infringe upon each other's sovereignty and I seriously doubt that there ever will be.

We are also enjoying a harmonious working relationship with the Grand Lodge of Idaho, who are, in my view, trailblazers in their own right.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

I recommend the following:

1. Dr. Rev. E.S. Brazil, who has served this Grand Lodge faithfully for 14 dedicated years, is given Emeritus status as Grand Chaplain.
2. Establishing a committee on religious awareness (the goals of the committee is charged with informing the public in regard to Freemasonry's compatibility with religion and to provide the same to our members.
3. Establish a committee on public schools (the committee will design program(s) to assist needy children in grades preschool through eighth grades (to teach basic reading skills, reading comprehension and character development.
4. That the Grand Lodge, at the 94th Annual Communication, sustain me in my act of waiving Section 73.01, contained in Title 73, located in the By-laws section of the Masonic Code Book, in order to appoint James B. Sloan as an Honorary Past Grand Master.

IN CONCLUSION

I would like to say "thank you" to a fine staff of officers who have worked diligently throughout the year. To the executive team, the cabinet, and the deputies, both special and at-large, your loyalty and support throughout the year has been immeasurable. I compliment each of you for giving unwaveringly of your time, money, and dedication.

And so, my Brothers as I come to a close, I must offer you my personal perception of how I view our organization. Freemasonry does not exist to combat any particular evil, to provide a solution for national, regional or local problem, or to propagate any specific dogma. It has no patent remedy for the ills of the humanity and no special theory for the political or economic adjustment of the problems in national life. It does not solely exist even for social fellowship or benevolent ministries. It is aware that everywhere want, misery, crime; vice and racism abound, but for these things it makes no economic or remedial provision. Freemasonry does however, emphatically say to its members. "Act on the Square." The assumption is that, just as a building is unreliable and unsafe, if not built on the square, so a man's life will only be to the community what it ought to be in so far as it is lived. "On the Square." Living on the square, to all devout and sincere Masons, means the dedication of personal knowledge, acquirements, and possessions to the highest purposes of life. In other words, Freemasonry exists to ensure the right direction for man's power and purposes, and that in all the circumstances and relationships of life his character and conduct shall be in complete harmony with those principles and high ideals to which the Fraternity is dedicated.

The three great tenets of the Craft are Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth, and its four Cardinal Virtues are Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice. Unfailing adherence to these Tenets and Virtues is demanded of every Freemason whatever be his rank or profession, and failure in the application of any one of these Tenets or Virtues means failure to live out in daily life the traditions and ideals of the Craft. It is well that non-Masons should know these things, and the result inevitably will be that Freemasonry will stand higher in their esteem.

Some men are known for their knowledge; some for their eloquence and some for their wealth, but Freemasonry does not measure men by these standards. Unfortunately some members of the Craft do, and find it very difficult to stay with the truth and carry out their promises.

Nevertheless, Freemasonry measures men by the presence or absence of love in their souls, love for one another and love for humanity, It's endeavors to develop a fraternity of great feats. A true Mason is never knowingly guilty of rudeness, never selfish, never resentful, never glad when others go wrong, but is always hopeful, always patient, and always eager to believe the best. He is generous, mild, and modest; his hand is ever ready to lift the fallen, cheer the disheartened help the widow and orphans, and give relief and comfort to those in distress. Hence, it will be seen that love is the dominating quality in applied Masonic teaching. It is a reflection of divine love in our dealings with our fellow man. Without love, the beautiful ceremonies of the Craft would be nothing more than empty and idle words. Love is above eloquence, above knowledge and certainly above wealth. No true sense of love can be expressed by men who cherish thoughts of envy, malice, resentment, or ingratitude. If we are ever to have "peace on earth" and goodwill among men, it can only be mutual love and by sharing each other's trust and confidence. My Brothers, Act on the Square.

And, finally, my Brothers, do not judge men by the swiftness of their tongue, judge them by the content of their character and the deeds they have performed in time, all that dwells in darkness will soon come to the light. "Let your light so shine."

My Brothers, the power in which you entrusted and turned over to me at the close of our 93rd Session, I now return to you. Thank you for allowing me to serve you.

Fraternally,

Is/WILLIAM C. RHEUBOTTOM
Most Worshipful Grand Master
Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washington
and Jurisdiction