



97th ANNUAL ADDRESS
HONORABLE WILLIAM C. RHEUBOTTOM
M.:W.: GRAND MASTER

Greetings:

Title 53, Section 53.01, of the Corpus Juris requires the Grand “to communicate in writing, a statement of his official acts and decisions during the year which may affect the fraternity of his Jurisdiction.” Accordingly, I come before you this morning to (1) give an account of my stewardship as Most Worshipful Grand Master for the year 1999-2000, and (2) discuss and expound upon some of the grave issues facing this August Body today. Nevertheless, as we embark upon these important undertakings, let us invoke the aid of Deity upon our labors:

O Gracious and holy Father, give us wisdom to perceive Thee, diligence to seek Thee, patience to wait for Thee, eyes to behold Thee, a heart to meditate upon Thee, and a life to proclaim Thee; through the power of the spirit of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Holy Father, giver of the good and the perfect gift, we come before Thee today with humble heart, seeking Thou blessings for this Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge, and indeed, for the whole of mankind. We acknowledge, Lord, that you own the cattle on a thousand hills, and that your power is from everlasting to everlasting. We seek thy blessings, Lord, for the health, strength, and happiness of our membership, especially for those who are aged and infirmed. Visit them, Merciful Father, and imbue them with thine own love and goodness.

We come also, Grand Artificer of the Universe, to ask thy blessings on this 97th Annual Communication. We pray for peace and harmony at all times. We pray, also, for understanding for those who may not see and perceive the hope and goals of this meeting as fully as we do. We implore you, Master of all, to shed your light and comprehension over these three days of meetings as we review our past and plan for the welfare of the Prince Hall solidity in this new millennium.

Finally, all wise and merciful Father, we ask you flood this Lodge room with the essence of your love so that we can resolve our differences, if any unhappily exist, in the spirit of your goodness. Subdue every discordant passion within us; teach us to avoid intemperance or excess; empower us with those sterling qualities, which we call friendship and brotherly love; and see that none go away dissatisfied, harmony being the support of all institutions — especially this of ours.

Approximately six years ago, I was elected to the most honorable office of Most Worshipful Grand Master of Prince Hall Masons for the State of Washington and Jurisdiction, and its fraternal family.

I was told during my installation, in so many words, that I should serve this office honorably so as to bring credit upon this outstanding fraternity. This I have tried to do, and I hope that your perception of my service is that I have, to some degree, succeeded. I believe — I repeat — I believe no man should accept this office for personal gratification, without his first priority being to serve those who are the foundation of this outstanding jurisdiction.

My appreciation of you for tolerating me for six long years cannot be underestimated. Anyone thinking he is so great as to be fully deserving of such an honor is fooling himself. Each day I have prayed, “God, make today better than yesterday — help me to lead this organization of friends and brothers in the direction you would want us to go.” I know there is a higher power and He will help you when you ask.

I know it because when troubled times arose, I didn’t have to get angry, I just had to call upon Him to help me to use the talents He had given me — whether that was mine personally or those of yours, which I used frequently. He provided me with assistance when I needed it most, counseling when it was necessary, strength when I felt my weakest, love when I felt hate about me, hope when I felt despair, and cheer when I felt saddened. And most of all, provided me with you, the Craft, who willingly gave your support — your time, your money, your commitment, and your knowledge. For this I thank each of you individually and collectively.

Unhappily, the names of some Brothers have been removed from the rolls of this Jurisdiction as we begin this historic 97th Annual Communication of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washington. Silence will be the answer as their names are called because they have finished their labors here on earth and have gone on to that celestial Lodge above, where, Job said: “The wicked cease from troubling; and where the weary be at rest.”

Fifteen (15) of our Brothers came to the end of life’s toilsome journey and dropped forever the working tools of life during 1999-2000. They were called upon to answer the final roll call, which symbolizes “the purity of life” and the rectitude of conduct.”

We, the officers and members of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the Washington Jurisdiction, extend our heartfelt sympathy to the families of our late Brothers, who died during the current Masonic year. They were respected and faithful members of the Craft, and those who knew them best attest to the fact that they were men of integrity and high standards. As we reflect on a well-spent life, we acknowledge their contribution to the Craft.

We commend the hearts and minds of the grieving to the all-wise God, who can heal all hurts, and we ask almighty God to put His arms of love and protection around family members and give them peace. Though we may not understand all of His actions, we do not challenge or question the decisions of the all wise Master of the Universe. Our hearts are with the families and we pray that God will give them happy memories, and a wealth of love and sympathy. We bow our heads in reverence to the will of God.

NECROLOGY

1999-2000

Walter Milton Williams

Union Lodge #43

July 4, 1999

Clardy Lee Cartwright Jr.

Hamma Hamma Lodge #35

July 14, 1999

Selmon Jackson Jr.

Lee Grant Rogers #61

September 4, 1999

Joseph W. Boston Sr.

Egyptian Lodge #44

September 18, 1999

Clarence T. Jones

Lee Grant Rogers #61

September 20, 1999

Troy M. Whitehead

Rising Sun Lodge #84

September 21, 1999

Will Joe Davis

Cassia Lodge #5

November 2, 1999

Walter Beauchamp

Union Lodge #43

November 29, 1999

Andy Anderson

James W. Davis Lodge #100

November 27, 1999

Stillman Jones

Cassia Lodge #5

February 14, 2000

Sanford L. Barnes

Guiding Star #6

March 6, 2000

Roger O. Laskey

Egyptian Lodge #44

March 29, 2000

James Earl McCall

Okinawa Military Lodge #68

April 3, 2000

Henry Jackson Jr.

J.C. Logan Lodge #53

April 30, 2000

Wilberforce Howard

Egyptian Lodge #44

May 4, 2000

The Obituary Committee will conduct the appropriate service at an appointed time.

STATE OF THE NATION

History: Our Children's Best Tool for Success

Our children are born into history, with no remembrance of things past, they yet find themselves being regular characters, charged with improvising their way through continuing stories that began long before they stepped into the part.

As parents or grandparents, your attitude about our history and who you are can make a difference in your child. You are the foremost role model, not Michael Jordan, Derek Jeter, or Whitney Houston. Rediscover for yourself the pride of being African Americans with a wondrous, complex history, and your children may be inspired to pursue the best of the destinies open to all of us humans.

During the 20th Century, Black scholars and historians in numbers joined the few white ones in smashing the myths of the victors that blind America to its nature and its needs. It is imperative that we continue to promote the study of African American History in the schools and at home. Knowledge of our history enables us to understand ourselves as a people. It provides us with those things that bind us together as well as that which divides us. It will also help us to recognize our strengths and the central ideas and values that have sustained us. As we become aware of our history, we will begin to see ourselves as fully present on the world stage, from ancient times to the moment in time. This will give us a better sense of other cultures in relation to ourselves.

THE CONFERENCE OF GRAND MASTERS

Objective

The objective of this Conference of Grand Masters, Prince Hall Inc. shall be to perpetrate fraternal harmony among Grand Master of Grand Lodge of the Masonic Jurisdictions -- to share constructive ideas, promote and encourage community involvement with the business sector, conduct educational workshops and seminars, support charitable organizations and agencies that assist those persons less fortunate than ourselves, and, to extend strong educational support to our youth through Annual Scholarships.

The Grand Masters of the Jurisdictions that make up the Prince Hall Masonic family have formed the Conference of Grand Masters, whose purpose is to foster progress and well-being for Prince Hall Masons, wherever dispersed around the globe. It is an advisory body, assuming no powers except those agreed upon by Grand Masters when in attendance at any one meeting.

As a matter of tradition and law by the several Grand Jurisdictions, the following bodies of Free Masonry are recognized as being either Concordant, Appendant, Adoptive, or Affiliated:

1. Royal Arch Masons
2. Royal and Selected Masters
3. Knights Templar Masons

4. Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Masons
5. Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine
6. Order of Easter Star
7. Heroines of Jericho
8. Circle of Perfection
9. Cyrene Crusaders
10. Order of the Golden Circle
11. Daughters of Isis

The above organizations are rooted in symbolic Masonry through the Master Mason or symbolic Masonry, and by the recognition granted by the Jurisdictions represented in the Conference of Grand Masters. They shall frame their constitutions and by-laws, and administer and enforce such laws pertaining to the governance of their members as long as those laws, rules, and regulations shall not be in conflict with those of the Grand Masonic Jurisdictions in which they reside.

FRATERNAL RELATIONS

We have established a very good relationship with all but one of our Sister Jurisdictions, with the other Prince Hall Grand Lodges. Our ties to these bodies and my personal relationship with Most Worshipful Grand Masters have 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.

The Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Oregon, at their 39th Annual Communication, unanimously approved Grand Master Scott's recommendation to suspend fraternal relationship with the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washington. As of this date, fraternal relationship has not been restored (see attachment #1 for additional information). Note that the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washington has not severed relationship with the Prince Halt Grand Lost of Oregon.

I am pleased to report that relations between all but one of our Grand Organizations of the Prince Hall Family of Washington are excellent. The Prince Hall Grand Lodge severed relations with the Grand Chapter on December 9, 1999 (see attachment #2).

Relations with the Prince Hall Grand High Court are excellent and I have had a cooperative working relationship this past Masonic year.

STATE OF THE CRAFT

I am pleased to report that the overall state of the Craft is excellent. It has been said to me, during my travels, that the Prince Hall Masons of Washington State and Jurisdiction are one of the strongest and most cohesive groups of Masons in the world. I am pleased to report that the true spirit of Prince Hall Freemasonry prevails throughout the Grand Jurisdiction, and the overall state of the Craft is excellent.

However, 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 is 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.

STATE OF THE DISTRICTS

We have at present, in the Jurisdiction, 65 Chartered Lodges. As of this report, our membership is at 2,219. It is a slight increase over last year-- however, not as much as our potential shows it should be.

All of our Masonic Districts, as a whole, are fairing well, although we do have problems with a few lodges paying their taxes on time. WMs have to learn to set their priorities in the correct precedence.

During my official visits to the Districts, I found that Masonry is practiced in its truest sense. The various lodges are engaged in —

- Community Outreach projects/programs
- Increasing membership
- Acts of charitable giving
- Leadership training
- Involvement in the church
- The Community
- Mentoring programs
- Adopt-a-Street programs
- Giving educational scholarships
- The Knights of Pythagoras program
- Supporting the District's goals and objectives
- Supporting the Grand Lodge programs
- Supporting the Grand Lodge staff

3-5 YEAR PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Grand Lodge, at its 96th Annual Communication, approved a Capitol Improvement Plan for its buildings —

Property in Seattle

1. Roof and gutters were replaced
2. Interior of Grand East was painted
3. Handicapped Ramp will be built in the second phase of the CIP.

Property in Tacoma

1. Installed a new heating system
2. Replaced door
3. There has been an increased amount of vandalism being committed at this property. We recently had to install a fence around the property and are replacing outside lights. Example — the following:

Dear Sir,

/ am Deoris J. Carrere, and I live next door to the Lodge Hall in Tacoma, WA, at 1108 South 17~ St. I want to personally thank you and the members of the Lodge for responding to my request to fence in area around the hall. It is beautiful and / now feel safe in my home. / live alone and I have suffered my fourth stroke, the constant running to the window every time I would hear a noise was getting me down; the fights, the gambling, and the foul language they use, the Bar-B-Que Wagon was also an attention-getter, he would play music into the night. The drug selling and dealing was the worst offender, it was driving me crazy. My son and / had to keep calling the police. They had hiding places for their drugs and they included under the buses and plants in my yard, as well as the drainpipe or gutter at the Hall. I would attempt to do yard work on nice days but my presence would not bother them. We have picked up all kinds of needles, bottles and bags, rubbers, and supplies on our property. / can now sleep at night without fear.

My son and I are going to pay to have the side between my house and my mother's house fenced in also, this will be done Saturday. / again would like to thank you for responding so quickly. Thank you to Mr. Berry, who listened to our concerns about this matter and also to Mr. Johnson forgetting the locks and keys.

You may also be interested to know that the City has also put in a new street light on 17~ St., and it really makes a difference. At night, it looks like daylight along the whole street. That also helps to keep the kids from gathering and the drug dealers from being seen.

Things are looking much better.

Thank you very much.

*Deoris J. Carrere and Kevin Carrere
1108 South 17th St.
Tacoma, WA 98405*

Property in Bremerton

1. Replace outside ramp.

Property in Spokane

- 1. Waiting for bids to replace or repair roof

Palmer Property

- 1. Recently valued at \$20,000

Portland Avenue Property

In December 1999, I had the property appraised. It has a Fair Market Value of \$60,000. The Grand Lodge’s records indicate the following:

Purchased 1990-91

Cost at Purchase = \$79,000
Financial Agreement = \$25,000 down, cash to owner
= \$54,000 in monthly payments of \$1,120.00

Completed purchase in 1996

Total cost of Purchase = \$92,000

6 lots at \$10,000 each = \$60,000

Market Value = \$60,000 as of December 1999

GRAND LODGE OFFICERS, ELECTED AND APPOINTED

Robert Louis Stevenson tells us that: “He has achieved success who has lived well, laughed often, and loved much, who has gained the respect of intelligent men and the love of little children; who has filled his niche and accomplished his task; who has left the world better than he found it, whether by an improved poppy, a perfect poem, or a rescued soul; who has never tacked appreciation of earth’s beauty or failed to express it; who has always looked for the best in others and given the best he had; whose life was an inspiration, whose memory a benediction.”

That, in a nutshell, my Brothers, describes the members of the Grand Lodge staff who have served with me and who have given so much, so much to the implementation of the Grand Lodge programs during these years.

My Brothers, your elected and appointed Grand Lodge officers have executed their responsibilities in a superior way. Their work speaks for them as depicted in each of their reports. Their support, efforts, dedication, and devotion to purpose are herein commended. Their leadership abilities and skills will serve them well in the years to come. Please accept my heartfelt thanks for a job well done. And, I will cherish the memory of each of you forever.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this address, you were all properly greeted according to your respective titles as used within our Order. By these titles we accord respect to those who have standing and merit within the Craft. How often, though, are these titles actually sources of pride and vain-glory, and occasions for hypocrisy? How often are they sought out by those who have such pride in themselves that they want nothing more than to lord their titles over their lesser brethren? While I am quite sure that such has never been the case in Washington, nevertheless we have all heard dismal stories from other grand jurisdictions that wound and grieve the soul.

Rank, title, and privilege with our lodges, chapters, councils, and preceptories, are all human inventions which are only meaningful and only have importance when they further the cause for which they were designed. When we have fights and squabbles, intrigues and jealousy within our order; when friends and brothers fall out over disputes, and sides are taken and enemies made: how on earth does this further the Masonic belief in the sacredness of life and the necessity of love. If I hate my brother whom I have seen, how can I say that I love God, Whom I have not seen?

Freemasonry was established upon the principles of brotherly love, relief, and truth. These three principles are all expressed by and summed up in the one word "charity." In the eleventh chapter of Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle writes of charity, and tells us that without charity all of our other actions are worthless and without meaning. Charity is wanting what is best for one's fellow in spite of oneself. Charity is patient, kind, selfless, truthful, and of an inexhaustible supply because it comes directly forth from the heart of Almighty God Himself. Charity is the exercise of love.

There is no use learning fancily-worded lectures, reciting portions of Holy Scripture, bowing before the Almighty Creator, and giving glory to the Most High, if we are not in love and charity with our brethren. God has often accused 1-us people, saying that they "honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." If one hates his brother, how can he have the love of God in his heart? Hate is a sin; and out of hate come murders, envying, strife, contentions, and divisions — against all of which things Holy Scripture warns and our Masonic principles condemn.

Without earnest, sincere, and selfless love of each for his brethren Freemasonry will be doomed to become just another human political organization where power and control are exercised over people by those who think themselves better. If we Freemasons, though, take God at His Word, and love our brothers as ourselves, always seeking peace and harmony, fellowship, friendship, and the good of others, our gentle Craft will prosper and flourish now and in the years to come.

We each of us may have our own private thoughts, our own personal understandings of God, and our own personal relationships with Him, all of which might put us at a perpetual distance from our fellow man. However, Freemasonry teaches us to practice charity, which is the exercise of love and the bond of all peace.

This is the true spirit and message of Freemasonry, and this will carry us forward into the new century that is dawning before us, as we work towards building a society which is pleasing to Almighty God and safe and secure for all mankind.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Grand Lodge affirms my decision to sever fraternal relations with Prince Hall Grand Chapter of Washington.
2. That the Grand Lodge affirm my decision to recognize the formation of a new Grand Chapter, whose members wish to remain as an adopted rite operating under the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Washington and Jurisdiction.
3. That the Grand Lodge affirm my decision to issue a Charter to our newest lodge named Mediterranean Lodge #104.
4. That the Grand Lodge donate \$100.00 to the Shiloh Baptist Church Building Fund for their Children's Center.

My Brothers, the power in which you entrusted and turned over to me at the close of our 96th Annual Communication, I now return to you. Thank you for allowing me to serve you.

Fraternally submitted,

William C. Rheubottom
MW Grand Master
Prince Hall Grand Lodge of
Washington and Jurisdiction