

## **J Raymond Shute Jr.: Great American Masonic Innovator**

By

David L. Hargett, Jr.

**Presented to A. Douglas Smith, Jr. Lodge of Research, #1949**

**On**

**March 31. 2007**

*The opinions presented in this paper are strictly those of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Master and Wardens of the A. Douglas Smith Jr., Lodge of Research #1949 or the official views of the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Virginia.*



# J Raymond Shute Jr.: Great American Masonic Innovator

by  
David L. Hargett, Jr.

## A. Douglas Smith, Jr.

Doug Smith is one of a rare breed. He understood the need for non-ritualistic Masonic education. He travel thousands of miles over the years to places where he was to speak. He became a nervous wreck, constantly worrying about how he would be received.

Doug never quit. His greatest fault was loving Freemasonry too much. In 1949 he served with distinction the Masons of Virginia as Grand Master. He was Editor of the Virginia Masonic Herald for eighteen years.

You honor me highly by giving me this opportunity to speak to the A. Douglas Smith, Jr. Lodge of Research.

## INTRODUCTION

Good morning. What a joy and honor for me to stand before you this morning.

A professor in a college town, driving along a street, was attracted by a group of children on the sidewalk. He stopped to see what the center of interest was and found that a tramp was making his little fox terrier perform certain antics for the amusement of the children. After watching the performance for a while the professor said to the tramp, "I have a fox terrier at my house, but I can't make him do those tricks." And the tramp, looking up at the professor, said, "Say, Mister, you've gotta know more'n the dog or you can't teach him nothing."

So, at the outset I confess my inability to instruct you either in the practice or theory of Masonry or the workings of our great brotherhood. I am an adept neither in operative nor speculative

Masonry, but Masonic research and study hold for me a never ending fascination.

I am conscious of the fact that anything I could say to you today about the principles of our order, its history, its many lessons of virtue and truth, would constitute a repetition of things you understand as well as I do, and probably better.

Hence it is with some degree of trepidation and hesitation I undertake to share with you some of the things that began in my small hometown due to research and study. Return with me now to an earlier time.

## MASONRY IN MONROE THE EARLY DAYS

In the latter part of the 1920's and early 1930's, a Masonic study group met Sunday afternoons in Monroe, NC, usually in the homes of various members. After a time, it became their habit to meet in the home of J. Raymond Shute, II, one of the foremost students of Masonry of the time. From this study group evolved many of the York Rite research groups in existence in the United States today. Some, but not all of them are: the Allied Masonic Degrees, Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests, Grand College of Rites, Red Cross of Constantine, Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis, and the Philaethis Society. The North Carolina Lodge of Research No. 666, now defunct, the first chartered Research Lodge in the country was begun here.

This group was small but it had members whose names are familiar to many of us and who were to contribute so much to the forming of the small Masonic groups. (J. Edward Allen; J. Raymond Shute, II; Harold Van Buren Voorhis; William Mosely Brown; Wallace E. Caldwell; Walter C.

Crowell; William L. Cummings; Ray Vaughn Denslow; Luther T. Hartsell, Jr.; Kennow W. Parham; Hubert M. Poteat; Charles H. Pugh; Edgar W. Timberlake, Jr.; J. Hugo Tatsch; Junius S. Stearns.) These are not all of the members, only those whose names are familiar to some of us.

We owe a lot to this small group who were able to get the approval of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina for the North Carolina Lodge of Research, as well as other small Masonic groups that were to spread throughout the United States.

During the next two years this group corresponded with other similar groups throughout the Masonic world. It was discovered that elsewhere there existed organizations such as the Allied Masonic Degrees, the Priestly Order of the Temple, Knights Beneficent of the Holy City, Grand college of Rites, Masons of Tyre, Knight York Cross of Honour, Knight Masons of Ireland, Excellent Master, Royal Ark Mariner, Red Cross Knights and Thrice Illustrious Master, which was rewritten and made into an American institution.

These Freemasons felt that every Masonic organization should have a North Carolina subordinate body and this led to the organizing of a Conclave of the Red Cross of Constantine and the North Carolina College Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis.

Another objective of this group was to secure permission to work every Masonic degree, grade or order in existence in other parts of the world which were not known and worked in the United States. This led to the introduction of the Allied Masonic Degrees, the Priestly Order of the Temple, the Knight Masons of Ireland, the Irish Royal Arch, Knights Beneficent of the Holy City (CBCS) and Grand College of Rites.

Yet another objective of this group was to honor those who made outstanding contributions to the York rite. This resulted in the formation of the

York Cross of Honour and the Thrice Illustrious Master degree. Honoring Masonic students and authors resulted in the formation of the Council of Nine Muses, No. 13, AMD and the Society of Blue Friars.

It might be mentioned here that one of the group was Harold Van Buren Voorhis, who organized the Wahoo Band, later changed to the Order of the Bath. It was he who revived the SRICF, which consisted of only one College, the Massachusetts College, which was just about dormant. He formed colleges in New Jersey, New York, North Carolina and Virginia.

J. Ray Shute, II, and William Mosely Brown went to Geneva to be inducted into the Great Priory of Helvetia, CBCS. Shute had previously been notified that he had been invited to receive the CBCS - the first American and the second English-speaking Mason to be invited to receive this honor. Shute proposed William Mosely Brown for membership, which was accepted. While in Geneva they received all the documents necessary for the formation of the Great Priory of America.

The Mount of the Holy Cross Tabernacle No. 1, North Carolina, Garden of Gethsemane, Tabernacle No. II, of Virginia, and the Holy Sepulchre Tabernacle No. III, of North Carolina, Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests, were all erected October 31, 1931. These three Tabernacles formed the Grand College of America on May 27, 1933, with J. Ray Shute, II, serving as first Grand Preceptor. On the same date, May 27, 1933, the Grand Preceptors Tabernacle was formed.

The Knight York Cross of Honour was formed in Monroe, North Carolina on March 13, 1930 by J. Ray Shute, II. Walter C. Crowell, J. Edward Stewart, Lee Griffm and S. Henry Green. On May 30, 1930 the first charter was issued to Lily of the Valley Priory No.1 at Charlotte, North Carolina. On June 6, 1930 the Convent General

was formed to administer the Order with J. Ray Shute, II as first Grand Master.

Companion J. Ray Shute, II, received the Thrice Illustrious Masters Degree from the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland during the summer of 1931. Companions Shute and Allen were appointed by the Grand Council R&SM in NC, on a committee to prepare a Ritual for the Thrice Illustrious Masters Degree. The Degree was exemplified for the first time on May 26, 1932 at Rocky Mount, NC. The Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters adopted the Degree on May 26, 1932.

On June 6, 1935 a Charter as granted by the Grand Council Royal and Select Masters in North Carolina to the Thrice Illustrious Masters Degree.

The first Councils of the Green Degrees or Knight Masons in the United States chartered by Ireland on May 26, 1936 were:

- St. Patricks in America No. 26, Monroe, NC
- Shamrock Thistle and Rose No.27, Raleigh, NC
- Harp, Cross and Eagle No. 28, Wilson, NC.

At the formation of the Grand Council of the United States on February 18, 1967 these three Councils receives numbers 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

What we are mostly interested in is the Allied Masonic Degrees. In 1930 Brother J. Ray Shute, II corresponded with Rt. Ex. George A. Howell, Grand Scribe E of the Scottish Body, relative to the Degree of Excellent Master, it resulted in a Dispensation being issued by the Earl of Cassillis, First Grand Principal, permitting the Degree to be conferred in the Royal Arch Chapter of North Carolina in Asheville on May 12, 1931. This was the beginning of an idea which was later

to develop into the founding of the Grand Council Allied Masonic Degrees.

After securing permission from the Grand high Priest of North Carolina and the General Grand High Priest of the General Grand Royal Arch Chapter, the Rt. Ex. George A. Howell agree to consider applications from three groups which had been formed in North Carolina. Charters were issued to these three groups at the Annual Meeting of the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland on March 21, 1932 with the understanding that they would form a Grand Council Allied Masonic Degrees of USA as early as possible after Charters were received. These three were: St. Andrews No. 1-A, Monroe, NC; Cassillis No. 2-A, Raleigh, NC; Howell No 3-A, Charlotte, NC. The Charters were issued for Lodges of Royal Ark Mariners and Councils of Red Cross Knights.

On April 16, 1932 representatives from these three Lodges met in Salisbury, NC and formed the Grand Council, Allied Masonic Degrees. The first five members were J. Ray Shute, II, and H. V. A. Parsell of New York, K. Webster Parham, J. Edward Allen and Harold V. B. Voorhis of New Jersey. Shute was elected Sovereign Grand Master.

The three Lodges of Royal Ark Mariners, namely 1-A, 2-A, and 3-A were changed to Councils of Allied Masonic Degrees 1-A, 2-A and 3-A.

The second meeting of the Grand Council was held in Washington, DC, on May 12, 1931 at which time five new Charters were granted.

The Allied Masonic Degrees have grown from the original three Councils in North Carolina, with approximately 21 members to 370 Councils with approximately 8000 members as of 2007.

The Grand Council is incorporated in North Carolina under the name of The Grand council of the Allied Masonic Degrees of the United States of America, Inc. with no capital stock. Its legal

objectives are to assume, hold and exercise control over such Masonic Degrees as are not under the jurisdiction and control of some other recognized and regularly constituted body of Freemasonry, to preserve these Degrees and to engage in research.

We owe a lot to the Brethren of Monroe, especially J. Ray Shute, II. They called themselves the Innovators, which means "persons who make changes or who introduces new methods." Brother Shute was the incomparable innovator.

John Raymond Shute, II, was born in Monroe, Union County, North Carolina on January 14, 1904. He was educated in the public schools in Monroe, later attended the Georgia Military Academy and Trinity College (now Duke University). In 1924 he was married to Miss Sarah Catherine Mason of Durham, NC. To them were born two sons and one daughter.

Brother Shute was active in all community affairs in Monroe. He served as President of the Chamber of Commerce, Director of the Rotary club, the Country Club, and Mayor of our fine city. He was also a North Carolina Senator.

He joined the Masonic fraternity when he was twenty-two. He was initiated, passed, and raised in Monroe Lodge #244, and was a Past Master. He organized and served as the first Master of the North Carolina Lodge of Research No. 666, the first chartered Masonic Lodge of Research in the United States. He was also Grand Orator of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina. He was also a member of the following:

#### **Monroe Chapter #64, RAM, Past High Priest**

- Past District Deputy Grand High Priest
- Past Grand High Priest of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter in North Carolina.

#### **Monroe Council #24, R&SM**

- Founder
- Past Illustrious Master

- Past Most Illustrious Grand Master of the Grand Council of R&SM In North Carolina - 1934
- Past Presiding Thrice Illustrious Master - 1934 - 1935
- Past Provincial Grand Master

#### **Malta Commandery #19, KT**

- Past Eminent Commander
- Lily of the Valley Priory #1
- Past Prior Knight of the York Grand Cross of Honor
- Past Grand Master General of the Convent General

#### **St. Andrew's in America Council #1-A, Allied Masonic Degrees**

- Founder
- Past Sovereign Master
- J. Ray Shute III Council #184 Allied Masonic Degrees

#### **St. Andrew's in America Lodge #1-A Royal Ark Mariners**

- Founder
- Past Commander
- Grand Council AMD - Past Sovereign Grand Master - KGC.

#### **St. Patrick's Council #1 - Knight Masons of the USA**

- Founder
- Past Excellent Chief
- Grand Council of Knight Masons
- Past Right Eminent Provincial Grand Supt. of the Southern Jurisdiction

#### **North Carolina College SRICF**

- Founder Past Chief Adept 1X

#### **Red Cross of Constantine**

- Past Sovereign
- Past Intendent General

#### **Grand College of Rites of the USA**

- Past Grand Chancellor

### **Holy Order of Knights Beneficent of the Holy City (CBCS)**

- Past Most Reverend Great Prior and one of the original fourteen founders. (When Ray received the grades in Geneva, less than a dozen English Freemasons had been admitted.)

### **Council of Nine Muses**

- One of the founders

### **Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priest**

- Founder
- Past Grand Preceptor

### **Society of Blue Friars**

- Founder
- Past Grand Abbot

Ray Shute wrote twenty Masonic books, poetry, and several of our degrees. He traveled in all fifty states and in over one hundred foreign Countries. He had probably the single greatest influence on Free Masonry during our lifetime. After demitting for a time, he re-affiliated and was received back into the folds of nearly every Masonic organization that he was previously associated with.

John Raymond Shute, II  
January 14, 1904 - November 27, 1988

Twilight has truly come to his temple. We surely miss him.

Let me share with you The North Carolina Lodge of Research activities for their first 11 months. Maybe this should be the standard that we should strive to achieve.

### **REPORT OF NORTH CAROLINA LODGE OF RESEARCH NO.666**

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge, AF&AM, of North Carolina:

Feeling that it is but due this Grand Body to have a report of Lodge 666, which began its operation in February of last year, I herewith submit a report of the activities of the Lodge for the past eleven months.

On February 10, 1931, the Lodge was consecrated and the officers installed by P.G. M.E. W. Timberlake, Jr., since which time the Lodge has held stated Communications each month for the transaction of business. In addition to our stated Communication, the Lodge has held eleven educational meetings, at which papers of value have been read and discussed.

Lodge of Research has held educational meetings within several Lodges of this State, which have been well attended and much good resulting there from. These meetings have been held in Charlotte, Asheville, Wilmington, Raleigh, Salisbury, Gastonia, and Monroe. The total number of Masons attending these educational meetings has been carefully estimated from lodge minutes and the number is found to be approximately two thousand. This would indicate that Masons of North Carolina are interested in educational work and research in particular.

Our papers have been delivered by prominent members of the Fraternity, the titles and authors of the papers are:

E. W. Timberlake, Jr., PBM, "The Landmarks of Freemasonry."

Hubert McN. Poteat, PGM, "Some Aspects of Masonic History."

J. Edward Allen, Jr., Grand Steward, "William Preston."

J. Ray Shute, Jr., PM "The Triangle Theory of the Origin of Freemasonry."

Creasy K. Proctor, PGO, "The Story of St. John's College And Oxford Orphanage."

Brig. General Albert L. Cox, PM, "Army Lodge AAF&AM"

O. Frank Hart, PGGM, Grand Secretary of South Carolina, "The Ethics of Freemasonry."

Rev. A. A. Walker, PAGL, "Freemasonry and Judaism."

J. W. Rowell, PM, PAGL, "Story of the Stevenson Work Of Freemasonry."

J. S. Livingstone, Supreme Court Librarian, "History of St. John's Lodge, No 1."

N.D. Saleeby, KHS, "The Principles of Freemasonry."

H.V.B Voorhis, of New Jersey, and H.V.A. Parsell, of New York, "666."

In addition to these papers there has been printed a book review and several discussions on the papers delivered. In all, the work has been good.

Lodge 666 has cooperated with the Associated Press in supplying data for their use, which has been collected from our files of information. We have furnished hundreds of individuals with information of a Masonic nature from our Library and borrowed sources. Lodges have written us for many items of information, which we have gladly furnished. Letters have come to us by the hundreds asking for information about our work and for knowledge concerning North Carolina Masonry. These have all been answered; in short, Lodge 666 has acted as a sort of clearing house for Masonry for the past year. This has cost us lots time and money, but the

service has been rendered gratis and with a genuine love for the Institution.

Our transactions have been published four times during the year, under the title of "Nocalore." This publication has carried one hundred and sixty-six pages of pertinent information to Freemasons and has resulted in North Carolina receiving much valuable and constructive publicity for this constructive and instructive work.

"Nocalore" has been mailed into forty-two different States of the Union, as well as into Mexico, Canada, England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Germany, Syria, Egypt, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, South America, and the East and West Indies. The fame of North Carolina's Lodge of Research has by no means been local in nature, but has reached into every corner of the globe.

During the year the Lodge has conducted several outings which have resulted in many valuable objects of "antiquity" being added to the list and collection now in Grand Lodge. During the year the original Warrant for the first council of Royal and Select Masters, Roanoke Council, No 1, in North Carolina was located and secured for permanent display in Grand Lodge. This Warrant is one of the first groups of warrants ever issued in the world for Cryptic Councils and bears the date of 1821. An apron, which was worn by one of our Grand Officers at the Grand Lodge laying of the cornerstone of the oldest State University in America in the latter years of the 186 century, was located and secured for the walls of Grand Lodge. A Royal Arch apron, over a century in age, was, likewise secured and now is displayed in Raleigh. An enormous collection of jewels, medals and convention badges, numbering nearly a hundred, have been secured for Grand Lodge of North Carolina. Likewise, many other valuable items of the Craft have been promised to the Grand Lodge, through Lodge 666, which we hope to have displayed and arranged in Grand Lodge during the next year.

This is just a part of the great work that Lodge of Research has done during the year, and we feel that Grand Lodge and the Masons of this State should know about the work that is being done free of expense to Grand Lodge.

Lodge 666 is in fraternal correspondence with practically every research group in the world, exchanging Correspondence Circle Memberships with the following Lodges: Lodge Quatuor Coronati, London; St. Claudius No.21, Paris; Lodge of Research No. 200, Dublin; Nova Scotia Lodge of Research, Halifax; Masters' and Past Masters' Lodge, Christ Church, New Zealand; and other Associations and Lodges.

Fraternally submitted,

J. Ray Shute, Jr., Secretary

Once more, thank you for the great privilege and high honor addressing you today.

