

Quarterly Bulletins (1994)

Allen E. Roberts

Virginia Research Lodge

1991 - 1994

Editor's Note: At one time, Virginia Research Lodge issued Quarterly Bulletins to its members. In the 1994 Transactions, a sampling of these Bulletins from previous years were included. They were written by Allen E. Roberts (the Secretary) unless otherwise noted. They are presented here as a "bonus" research paper.

What is Virginia Research Lodge?

The search for TRUTH is one of the important principles all Freemasons should practice. This is the primary purpose for the existence of all Research Lodges and other Masonic research groups and societies.

Alfred Douglas Smith, Jr., (for whom a Research Lodge is now named) saw the need for a Research Lodge while he served as Grand Master in 1949. In 1950 the Grand Lodge agreed and a Dispensation was granted. In 1951 Virginia Research Lodge was given the number 1777 (this was the year the first Convention was held to explore the need for a Grand Lodge for the Commonwealth of Virginia). It has met quarterly since its beginning.

Virginia Research Lodge has met in various areas of Virginia; its Charter permits it to meet where invited.

For more than a decade the Transactions of the Lodge have been published periodically. These contain a summary of the communications plus the papers presented in the Lodge. Here will be found a wealth of important Masonic information.

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The membership of the Lodge has always been composed of Master Masons from the neophyte to Grand Masters. Many of them have contributed their talent in furthering the principles of the Craft and have added greater Masonic knowledge for the benefit of Freemasonry in Virginia. They have produced a complete register of all the Lodges in Virginia as well as of the Grand Masters who have served Virginia Freemasonry. Its history, *A Chronicle of Virginia Research Lodge*, was published in 1978. It is one of the few Research Lodges in the world to periodically give its members good Masonic books as a bonus.

Membership is open to all Master Masons in Virginia. Members of Lodges in other jurisdictions recognized by the Grand Lodge of Virginia are also eligible for full membership. There are no joining fees. The annual dues have remained at \$15 for more than a decade. For this each member receives bonus books, the *Transactions*, lunch at every communication, and priceless fellowship.

First time visitors are shocked. They find this fellowship is not a myth – it's a reality. They also find every chair in the Lodge filled. They soon learn they are an integral part of the proceedings. Even though the best of the Masonic speakers in the country are there, they blend in with everyone present.

June 1991

The Worshipful Master, E. Robinson Lee, explained why the June 1991 Bulletin was sent to every Lodge in Virginia: It was because he had learned that too many Virginia Masons are completely unaware of the existence of Virginia Research Lodge No. 1777. Virginia Research Lodge was chartered in 1951 for the purpose of encouraging Masonic Research. It cannot "make Masons" or confer degrees. It meets four times a year (March, June, September, December) and all Master Masons are urged to share in the search for Masonic knowledge and great fellowship. There is no "joining fee" and the dues remain low - only \$15 a year. When you consider the bonus books and other "freebies" this becomes the best investment in Virginia Freemasonry.

The Importance of Research for Freemasonry

Earlier we mentioned the search for truth as an important Masonic attribute. This truth is what all researchers, medical, industrial, scholastic, as well as Masonic must continuously seek.

Far too often "historians" search information to "prove" a preconceived thesis. This is a common practice among lawyers. The research, in contrast, searches for facts. They may have, and usually do, themes with which to start their search. But as they do their research they willingly report the truth as they find it.

For example: When Macoy Publishing in 1974 asked me to write a book about George Washington as a Master Mason I refused. I claimed he was highly overrated as a man and as a Freemason. Macoy insisted and told me to report the truth as I found it. And I'm glad I did.

I learned again that a little knowledge is dangerous. All my preconceived arguments were false. Washington was a genius! He excelled in every task he undertook. Without his leadership, I'm convinced, there would have been no United States of America! As a big by-product I found that another Freemason, Benedict Arnold, played a major role in achieving a victory for the handful of Patriots.

Was George Washington a good Master Mason? He was certainly a far better Mason than most of us today – or then. Without rewriting *G. Washington: Master Mason* I'll merely mention that most of his time was spent working for Virginia and the country as a whole. He not only learned the lessons taught in Freemasonry, he practiced them. Did he appreciate Masonry? Would a man of his stature who didn't love the Craft have his wife request a Masonic funeral?

Throughout the centuries many untruths about Freemasonry have been circulated, and not only by anti-Masons. These can be classed, charitably, as myths. For instance: About 1840 a fellow in Delaware said the Marquis de Lafayette was made a Mason at Valley Forge. He embellished the story by adding Washington wouldn't have a general who wasn't a Mason. He claimed this was the reason Lafayette agreed to become a Mason. False — on all counts. But this "myth" persists to the present day.

Lafayette came to the colonies when he was 19; he had been made a Freemason in France before leaving. Not all of Washington's generals were Freemasons, and never would be.

In some speeches and publications Thomas Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Alexander Hamilton and others who never received a Masonic degree, have been called "Masons." They were not. But the rumor persists. So do hundreds of other untruths.

Unfortunately the truth is often difficult to define. When Freemasons such as Joseph Fort Newton (one of my Masonic heroes), Josiah Hayden Drummond, William Moseley Brown, and Charles H. Callahan say something, it's difficult to refute them. But we must if we find they are wrong (and each of them has been!) None of us are immune. All of us fall into traps because we must rely on the writings of others.

Insofar as possible we must take nothing for granted. We must search and research for original documents. We must tell the truth as we find it.

And so it goes. Masonic researchers must continue to debunk the "debunkers."

June 1991

Masonic Myths: Are They Harmless?

Adam was the first Mason. Masonry can be traced back to Noah and the Ark. George Washington only let Masons be generals. All Presidents were Masons. All signers of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution were Masons.

Sound familiar? These are among the less harmful of the myths concerning Freemasonry that have been traveling about for years. And these are the type propagated by well-meaning leaders of the Craft.

Are they harmless? Not by any stretch of the imagination. These are what the enemies of the Craft leap on to "prove" Freemasons can't be trusted. This organization whose members say they are seeking truth too often spread untruths. And these untruths can easily be discredited.

We don't need to exaggerate or lie. Freemasonry is by far the oldest and largest fraternal association in existence. It has existed in its present form (Speculative) since 1717. It can trace its ancestry back another 300 years, at least. It still employs the tools of operative masons to teach wise and moral lessons.

One-third of the signers of the Declaration and the Constitution were or would become members of the Craft. An excellent percentage without exaggerating. Many, but far from all, of Washington's general officers were Freemasons. That's good enough. We don't have to lie. Without the expertise of non-Masons we wouldn't have the United States of America.

We know that no one man can speak for the Craft as a whole. Grand Masters can for their jurisdictions, but only for the time they are in office. This can create problems if they believe and spread the myths floating around. Writers are often quoted out of

context by the antis trying to "prove" some point. And there are occasions when these writers are quoted verbatim causing the Masonic world no end of trouble. We know they can only speak for themselves, but others don't know this.

We have problems with interpretations because "**meanings are in people, not in words.**" Then, too, the 500 most common words have over 15,000 dictionary meanings. Myths, parables, legends in many cases are viewed as having the same meaning. As I see it, though, **legends** can easily be identified as stories designed to imprint valuable lessons on the mind. Example: the Hiram legend in the Master Mason degree.

Parables are simple stories used to illustrate moral or religious lessons. Example: ". . . neither cast ye your pearls before swine . . ." (Could this be a warning to the Freemasons to come?) **Myths** are half-truths; outright lies; fiction; imaginary stories.

The grammaticians can have a field day with this!

Checking the "swine" quote caused me once again to read the "Sermon on the Mount." It also reminded me how I stopped a religious fanatic from insisting I appear on his program. I simply suggested he study this portion of the Bible.

March 1991

The year 1991 was a banner year for speakers in Virginia Research Lodge. This is what the Bulletin reported:

The speakers who have agreed to grace our rostrum this year should please the most discriminating among us. R: W: Thomas P. Tignor is dedicated to the Craft and one of its hardest workers. He will be with us as we start our 40th year as a Chartered Lodge.

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M: W: Richard E. Fletcher is a Past Grand Master of Masons in Vermont. He served his community as a banker for many years. Now he is the Executive Secretary of the Servant of Freemasonry, The Masonic Service Association of the United States. His knowledge of the Craft, and especially the Grand Lodges in this country, he will share with us in June.

John J. Robinson, not yet a Freemason, but one of its most vocal defenders, will be with us in September. He is the author of the highly readable book *Born in Blood*. It has received mixed reviews by Masonic scholars, but most agree it should be read by every Mason. Anchor Communications has been carrying it for months, and I have asked it to make it available to you.

E. Robinson Lee, Master

Two years later the Bulletin reported: *Pilgrim's Path: One Man's Road to a Masonic Temple*

That's the title of the last book that John J. Robinson wrote as a non-Mason. And as I said in *The Philalethes*: "This book is the best answer to the enemies of Freemasonry yet written."

Unlike most Masonic books (or books about Freemasonry) this one is receiving wide support. Both of the Scottish Rite bodies are giving it rare publicity. So is every other branch of the Craft, including The Masonic Service Association.

Robinson has told the truth, as he sees it, about Pat Robertson, John Ankerberg (both reaping thousands of dollars by being anti-Mason zealots), and others. He recites the background of Dr. James Holly of Texas, the fellow who railroaded a resolution to study the "anti-Christianity" of Freemasonry. He shows almost line by the line the lies and misquotes Holly used in his booklet "The Southern Baptist Convention and Freemasonry." How Robinson handles this is what all Freemasons should read.

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This resolution was turned over to Dr. Gary Leazer, head of the Interfaith Witness Department for investigation. But the instigators made it clear that Dr. Leazer must condemn Freemasonry – or else.

This is just in. The "or else" occurred. Dr. Leazer submitted an 89-page report favorable to Freemasonry. He has been removed!! And these fundamentalist Baptists call themselves "Christians"!? A short time later, Leazer was fired!

A Pilgrim's Path is definitely a book that should be read by every Freemason, and actually every person who wants to know the truth about Freemasonry. It will tell you the unbelievable story of the Masonic haters.

Now – a few words about John J. Robinson who was our Guest Lecturer a couple of years ago.

Since his *Born in Blood* was finally accepted, he has defended Freemasonry on hundreds of "talk shows" on radio and television. He has spoken in more Grand Lodges than has any other man — Mason or non-Mason. His travels have taken him to Lodges with 10 present and those with hundreds in the audience.

Many asked him not to become a Master Mason. They felt he could continue to do more good for the Craft as a non-Masonic author. I wasn't among them — I urged him to petition a Lodge. Why? Because he continually told me that's what he wanted to do.

He did! On November 25, 1992, he became an Entered Apprentice in Nova Caesarea Harmony Lodge No. 2, Cincinnati Ohio. On November 29 his wife, Bernice, rushed him to a hospital. He was deathly ill. My informants told me he couldn't survive. After talking to his wife, I did much soul searching and praying, then I called Grand Master H. Ray Evans on the morning of December 3 and suggested he call an Emergent meeting of the Lodge

and Grand Lodge to make John a Fellowcraft and Master Mason. John and Brother Evans were personal friends. John had also told him he wanted to be a Master Mason before he died.

So the Grand Master went to the hospital, saw John (who was in a coma and would be for more than two weeks), talked with doctors and was told John had a thousand-to-one chance of not surviving. The Grand Secretary's office notified the Master and officers of the Lodge to meet the Grand Master at 2 p.m. Brother Evans called me at 1:15 p.m., then called the Lodge and Grand Lodge to order in an Emergent Communication at 2 p.m. December 3. He then entered the ICU and made John J. Robinson a Fellowcraft and Master Mason.

This was the third time in the history of the Grand Lodge of Ohio that a Grand Master had exercised this privilege. The first was to make William Howard Taft a Mason at Sight; the second was in 1978 to confer the three degrees on John H. Glenn who had been elected in 1964 to receive the degrees in Concord Lodge No. 668. For varying reasons Glenn had to wait "a time with patience." The final two degrees were conferred by another Grand Master on a candidate who was also on his death bed.

At this writing, John Robinson has whipped the odds, but is far from out of danger. After weeks of being in and out of the hospital, he is at home attempting to build up his blood and strength for a series of operations. *In September John succumbed to the toxic poisoning that had sent him to the hospital.*

March 1993

Tie Into the Masonic World Via Computer Modem

CompuServe now has a forum especially for Freemasonry! It's new, but already many dedicated Freemasons in the United States and other countries are corresponding. It's one of the best things to happen to the Craft in many, many years.

It didn't just happen. A lot of work and persuasion was exercised to make this forum a reality. And it happened because of a Masonic book. Neil Shapiro of New York has been working with CompuServe for several years. Among other things he was the SysOp (System Operator) for its New Age forum. He picked up a Masonic Book, *The Mystic Tie*, was intrigued with its content, and started a Masonic section on his forum. Then he petitioned a New York Lodge. Later he talked with the folks at CompuServe. As a result, subscribers can log on, type GO MASONRY, and be connected with the thinking of Freemasons from all over the world! None of us will ever agree with every statement we encounter, the thinking is indeed varied, but there's much good Masonic information out there.

You can become a part of this world-wide fellowship and brotherhood easily. Call 800-524-3388, ask for representative No. 378; tell 'em you're a Mason and would like a trial subscription to CompuServe. You'll be mailed an ID number and password. You'll receive a \$15 usage credit and one free month of Basic Service! After you access CIS, at any "!" prompt, type 'go masonry' — and there you are. Happy modeming!!

December 1992

Editor's Note: Clearly, with the rapid growth of the Internet, CompuServe was overtaken by more advanced forms of communication. Their forums moved online for a time, and finally shut down in 2017. We have preserved the original article and phone number as written to give you a flavor of what was an exciting moment in Masonic history, a chance to communicate with other Brothers who lived far away.