

# THE ALBERTA FreeMason



Editor: MWBro  
Robert E. Juthner

Vol. 69, No. 7

## MWBro Rodney Bowman Ponech

Most Worshipful Brother Rod Ponech has been an Albertan all his life. He was born in Edmonton on 1 February 1946, spent most of his early years living in rural Alberta, and then returned to Edmonton to complete high school and his post-secondary education. His father, a banker, was a member of Star of the West Lodge No. 34 in Leduc and later Carbon Lodge No. 107. Rod's mother was a schoolteacher and a member of Windsor Chapter No. 110, Order of the Eastern Star, in Leduc.

Rod's wife of 33 years, Marilyn, is a pharmacist. She is a Past Honoured Queen of Job's Daughters, and a Past Matron of Allenby Chapter No. 38, OES. Several years ago she was appointed a Grand Chapter Officer. They have three daughters, two sons-in-law, and a granddaughter, the apple of his eye.

MWBro Ponech has always lived the creed that his family comes first in his life, and now credits their support for whatever successes he may have achieved. In particular, his wife Marilyn is not only his spouse and the mother of his children, but also his confidant, sounding board and best friend. He often speaks of his family's incredible encouragement and assistance which has made his distinguished Masonic career possible.

Rod holds Bachelor of Commerce and Master of Business Administration degrees from the University of Alberta. Rod spent a number of years in the accounting and finance fields with a firm of chartered accountants, the Bank of Montreal and Revenue Canada. In 1971 he joined the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, where he is the Chair of the Accounting Degree and Diploma Programs.

He has served on the Minister's Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary



**Grand Master 2004–2005**

Education in Alberta, the Academic Council and the Board of Governors at NAIT and he is currently the President of the Management Education Coordinating Council of Alberta, an association of senior administrative officers for business programs from all universities and colleges in the Province. Four years ago Rod was appointed to the Senate of the University of Alberta and will continue to serve as a Senator through 2007.

His 25 years of volunteer service to public education and the communities of Edmonton were recognized when he and his wife received a special award for unprecedented service in the District from the Edmonton Public School Board in 1999. He is also active at St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church in Edmonton, where he has served on the

Vestry and is a Reader, Intercessor, Lay Administrant and Lay Preacher.

MWBro Rod Ponech has been a Mason for 37 years, having petitioned on his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. He joined Acacia Lodge No. 11 in Edmonton, being sponsored by his two brothers-in-law, Bob and Tom Taylor, and raised by his father-in-law, Bruce Taylor. He has held office in his Lodge for 33 consecutive years, including Worshipful Master in 1980. One of his sons-in-law, Jeremy Burke, recently joined Acacia Lodge, carrying on a tradition in this Lodge now spanning four generations. He served Lakeland District as DDGM in 1994 and completed eight years on the Board of General Purposes. Rod was elected Junior Grand Warden in 2002 and progressed to his installation as the 100<sup>th</sup> Grand Master of Freemasons in Alberta on June 12, 2004 in Edmonton, at the 99<sup>th</sup> Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Alberta.

His business and financial skills are recognized in his service to the Craft as a board member and treasurer of both Acacia Masonic Hall and Edmonton Freemasons' Hall. He has served on both the Jurisprudence Committee and the Finance Committee of Grand Lodge, chairing the latter. He is the Grand Representative of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon near the Grand Lodge of Alberta, and has represented Alberta Masons at Grand Lodge Communications in Regina, SK; Victoria, BC; Great Falls, MT; and Lewiston, ID. In 2004 he attended the All Canada Conference in Winnipeg, MB, and the Conference of Grand Masters of North America in Minneapolis, MN and Washington, DC.

In January of 2003, as Senior Grand Warden, he instituted Far North Lodge

UD in Inuvik, NT, the northernmost Lodge on the continent as well as in the Commonwealth. On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2004, he led a team of Grand Lodge Officers back to Inuvik to constitute and consecrate Far North Lodge as No. 199 on the Register of Grand Lodge.

MWBro Ponech is active in concordant bodies, having served as Commander-in-Chief of Alberta Consistory, A&ASR and Grand Treasurer of the three bodies of the Scottish Rite in the Valley of Edmonton. Rod will be coroneted an Honorary Inspector General 33<sup>o</sup>, in September of this year. He is a member of North Star Chapter No. 2, RAM, a Shriner in Al Shamal Temple, AAONMS, and a Past Master Councillor and Past Chapter Dad of the Order of DeMolay, where he holds the honorary degree of Chevalier. Rod is a firm believer in the importance of the "Family of Masonic Organizations" and constantly encourages cooperation and coordination among the many branches of the Fraternity.

MWBro Ponech is the author of *The Winding Staircase*, a play depicting Freemasonry in a manner suitable for the public. It was written for, and performed at, Edmonton's Fringe Festival in 1997, at Acacia's Centennial, and has been featured at the Masonic Spring Workshop as well as at numerous Lodges and "Family and Friends Nights." *The Winding Staircase* showcases the many aims and practices of the Masonic Family, with a strong emphasis on the strengthening of personal ideals as well as our diverse charitable works.

While he plans a complete year of administrative and ceremonial functions as the Grand Master for Alberta's 100<sup>th</sup> year, Rod particularly looks forward to June of 2005 when he will preside over this Jurisdiction's Centennial Celebrations in Medicine Hat, as the Grand Lodge of Alberta returns to the site of the first Annual Communication on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1906.

His theme as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Alberta is:

### From Darkness to Light

"Let your Light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." *Matthew 5:16*

His theme and his personal beliefs reflect his desire for all Masons to stand up and be proud of their membership in our ancient Fraternity. This year Rod will be encouraging individual Masons, Lodges, Districts and even Concordant Bodies to be more visible in their extraordinary contributions to our society.

Freemasonry in Alberta is 122 years old this year. It has a proud and honourable heritage which the Grand Master hopes to share with the citizens of the province.

## Editorial Off To A Good Start

Only a few hours after Grand Lodge was closed in ample form on Saturday, June 12, 2004, the world premiere of *Symphonia Masonica*, composed by and under the baton of **George Blondheim** was performed by the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, a unique event which took place in Edmonton's Winspear Centre for Music, known for its superb acoustics and named for our late **Brother Francis Winspear** of Ivanhoe Lodge No. 142. Aside from numerous Freemasons and their families and friends, the general public was well represented in the audience.

Many months had been spent devoted to creating this modern day Masonic musical gift to the world and if, of course, kudos goes to the imaginative composer, much credit is due to the untiring efforts, resourcefulness and organizational skill of **VWBro Cameron MacKay** (Empire Lodge No. 63). During the performance he was ably assisted by a number of local Brethren who took part in reciting the catechism of questions and answers of a mock "opening of a musical lodge" and gave Masonic introductions to the three parts of the symphony, the *Entered Apprentice*, *Fellowcraft* and *Master Mason* movements.

Unlike most symphonies of note, this was a multi-media production, adding to the aural delight the continual projection onto huge screens of aims taken at different instruments in the orchestra, the narrators and speakers, the painter and more. The painter? Yes, another aspect of "multi-media" consisted in well-known painter James Picard, high up on a scaffold, turning a large, white, triangular canvas into his artistic interpretation of the music, while it was performed, into a visual piece of *Ars Masonica*. What this writer saw in it was, quite in keeping with the new Grand Master's theme, "Lux e Tenebris — Light out of Darkness", quite fitting. Also adding to the various media were toy instruments distributed to the audience which, at one time, was invited to join in a (pardon) cacophony of sounds — the event was not without humour. This had been listed in the programme as *Steel Craft and Coast Music Interactive*. Being land-locked in Alberta it must be assumed that this one will be more expertly appreciated by our Brethren on the Pacific coast.

Prior to performing the actual symphonic work, Blondheim led the orchestra through a somewhat stunted version of the overture to our Masonic Brother Mozart's *Magic Flute*, curiously deemphasizing what in it is so meaningful to Freemasons, the three times three distinctive chords which represent the knocks of (in Europe) the first degree: ●●●. Pity! The first movement of the non-Mason Beethoven's *Fifth*, opus 67, came through somewhat better, and Blondheim's own composition, entitled *The March of the Shrine* was quite good,

Provided to Freemasons of Alberta and the Northwest Territories west of the 4<sup>th</sup> Meridian who are members of  
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Published each month except July and August by  
**The Grand Lodge of Alberta, A.F. & A.M.**

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#### The Committee on the Grand Lodge Bulletin

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WBro Loren Kline; Bro Trevor Morris; VWBro David Watkins — Ex Officio: Grand Master,  
Deputy Grand Master & Grand Secretary  
Annual subscription rate for non-members of the GLA is C\$10.00 plus mailing costs. Republication rights are granted to other Masonic Jurisdictions, but acknowledgement of the source is requested. The Editor reserves the right to accept, reject and re-write material submitted for publication. Deadline for copy is the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month, two months prior to the month of issue.



even though it would not be recognized by any of our Shriners as music of their own. (Maybe they should ask the composer for the music, and they would have more to show for than pipes and drums, horns and glocks, and Arabic instruments.)

It was after the intermission that the actual Masonic symphony, *Symphonia Masonica*, was heard for the first time. This writer must confess that he had not known what to expect and was, therefore, pleasantly surprised by the timbre and general musical quality of the symphony, not so unlike some of our best-known classical composers. It must be remembered that George Blondheim is not a Freemason, but he must certainly be a person of imaginative powers. The chorus, clad in a motley array of dress, remained elusive to this listener at least, as he could not make out any words — if there were such.

Bernard Zolner, the Executive Producer, paid tribute to the Minister who gave a sizeable monetary contribution to this event (expecting it to be repeated at least in Calgary, if not other places in Alberta), saying: “I would like to give special mention to Hon. Gene Zwozdesky, a great artist in his own right and a valuable contributor to our collective legacy through his own works. For an artist to make such a great contribution to our cultural legacy, then move on to public office and lead us towards a richer life by his own example is quite amazing.” We owe it to this individual and the Government of Alberta, which he represents, to put *Symphonia Masonica* on the musical calendar of communities throughout Alberta, and other Masonic jurisdictions (like Turkey and Washington already) are well advised to become interested too.

The Constituent Lodges of Alberta are to be congratulated on having purchased tickets to the event, and donated them to worthy persons of the public. One of these, a young aboriginal lady and great operatic soprano, **Mavis Callihoo**, of Spruce Grove, Alberta, three times winner of the prestigious *Johann Strauss Foundation Scholarship* for master class musical studies in Austria, has favoured us with her own very positive reflection on the symphony. Please read below.

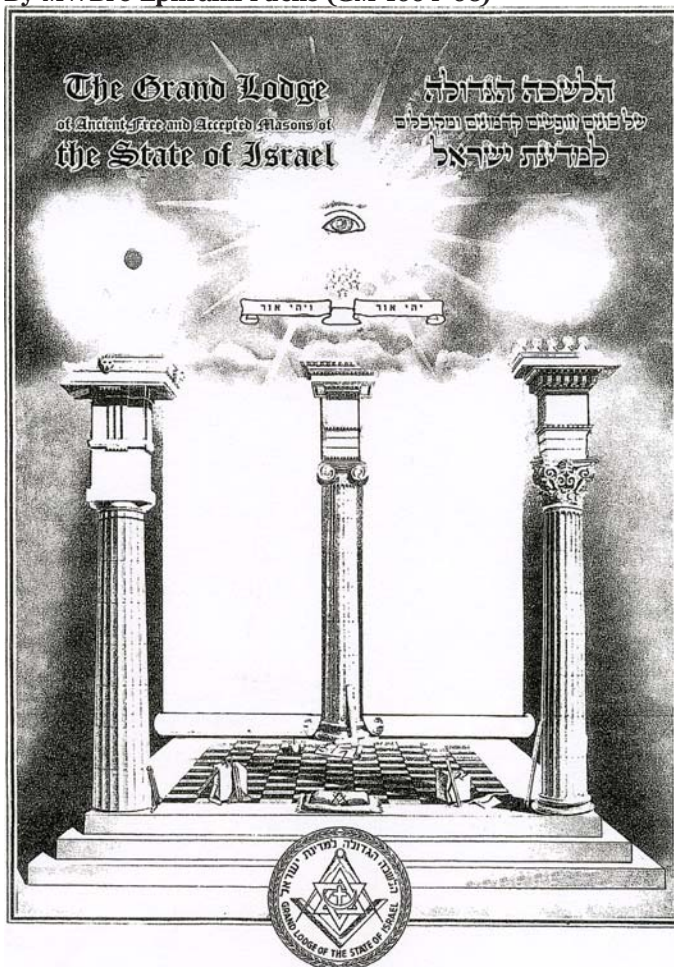
### Symphonia Masonica — a Review

It was wonderful to be amongst the many listeners at the world premiere of *Symphonia Masonica*, the symphonic work by George Blondheim and Bernard Zolner. As the first movement opened, I was immediately touched by the tender theme of the piece. The gentle blending of voices from each section often formed a kind of emotional swell. Often lovely solo voices would peek out from each section adding to the grace of the music. With the addition of the grand piano came a new experience: I wanted to sing, to cry, to dance. There were many “explosions” of colour, sound, rhythm and texture — even the horn section was included — not in a brash fashion, but gentle and rolling. Towards the end of the first movement a bell sounded as if to signal the entrance of the choir’s heavenly tones; the movement closed with gentle ring of a bell. Beautiful.

The second movement seemed darker than the first and evoked in this listener the feeling of levity. Again the beautiful solo voices from each section would gently ebb forth. Every note, every instrument called forth a prayer. This movement was filled with longing, love, joy and mystery. It

## The Grand Lodge of the State of Israel

By MWBro Ephraim Fuchs (GM 1994–98)



On the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2003, the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel, AF&AM, celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its founding.

**The Grand Lodge of the State of Israel** was consecrated on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 1953, in the YMCA building in Jerusalem. This was an historically important event in the existence of Freemasonry in Israel. Under its jurisdiction were then united all Freemasons throughout the country, Masons of seven faiths and differing religions.

**The Grand Lodge of Scotland** is one of the premier and distinguished Grand Lodges in the world. It was founded in 1736 and under its jurisdiction exist many Lodges in Scotland  
See **Israel**, page 4.

ended with a sigh and I could only close my eyes and breathe.

A gong sounds to open the third movement. The choir adds a voice of pathos and longing — very introspective. There is a quickening of voices and tempo and harmony. One is reminded of the beating of a heart. Next we hear the clashing of cymbals, as if to signal we are entering the presence of someone too beautiful for words. This symphonic masterpiece ends gently, peacefully.

This listener walked away feeling to have been embraced and touched by the Master’s hand. Thank you for the opportunity to experience this beautiful work.

Mavis Callihoo

## Israel, from page 3.

and all Four Corners of the globe. It was therefore a great honour to Masons in Israel that the Grand Lodge of Scotland agreed to consecrate our Grand Lodge and to install its Grand Master and his Officers. And thus, the **Earl of Elgin and Kincardine**, Past Grand Master [sic] of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, travelled to Israel at the head of a distinguished delegation. Occupying the Chair of King Solomon, he opened the Grand Lodge of Scotland meeting and duly consecrated the hall of the YMCA building, which overlooks Jerusalem, the Cradle of Freemasonry.

With all due pomp, ceremony and solemnity, Lord Elgin, the installing Grand Master, then rose and read out the following proclamation establishing the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel:

In the presence of Brethren here assembled, I hereby proclaim that there is now erected and consecrated a sovereign Grand Lodge, by the name and designation of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel. From henceforth it is fully empowered to exercise all its rights and privileges according to the terms of its Constitution and the ancient usages of Freemasonry.

He ended with the following benediction:

May the blessing of the Most High rest upon and abide forever with this Grand Lodge and sanctify all its labour.

Thereafter he installed Bro Shabetai

Levy as the first Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel.

It is worth recalling that the first Masonic Lodge consecrated in Israel during the last 135 years was the **Reclamation Lodge**, consecrated by MWBro Robert Morris, Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, USA. In his 1872 book on his travels in the Middle East, *Journey of Research into Masonic Life in the Near East*, he relates that he met many Masons here from various countries, but found no Lodge of Masons. With the aid of local Masons, he established that first Lodge in **1868**, in King Solomon's Quarries (The cave of Zedkiyahu), working by candlelight.

In 1891, Lodge **The Port of King Solomon's Temple** was consecrated. It later changed its name to **Barkai**. It is our oldest Lodge still in existence. It was also at one stage under the Jurisdiction of the Grand Orient of France. Since then, other Lodges were established under the Jurisdiction of France, Scotland, Turkey, England and Egypt.

On January 9<sup>th</sup>, 1933, The National Grand Lodge of Palestine was consecrated by the Grand Lodge of Egypt. Not all the Palestinian Lodges came under its jurisdiction. There remained those which were under that of Scotland and others. In addition, some Lodges were founded under the ægis of the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany in Exile.

The establishment of the Grand Lodge of the State of Israel constituted an important historic event for Israeli

Masons. Thus, some five and a half years after the euphoria of the creation of the State of Israel, all Lodges in Israel united under one jurisdiction, regardless of origin, race or creed of their members and ceased to be Daughter-Lodges of foreign Grand Lodges.

Our Grand Lodge is in amity with well over 100 other Grand Lodges worldwide. We recognize with gratitude and esteem the efforts of all Brethren, some of whom have passed to the Eternal East, who laboured to achieve this situation. Their efforts laid the foundation for the Order as it is today. — We test our past, present and future for next generations by the following phrase:

The **past** provides us with recall and experience.

The **present** offers us challenge and opportunity.

The **future** instills in us vision and hope.

[From: Israel, The Grand Lodge of the State of, *Jubilee Book 50*, Tel Aviv, 2003, pp. 7–8. Courtesy of VWBro Herschal Bookhalter, GRep of Israel near Alberta]

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## Yom Kippur

*The Alberta Freemason* extends to all who observe the holy day of atonement on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of Tishri (this year the 25<sup>th</sup> of September) that peace of mind and contrition for which they strive in piety. — So mote it be.

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## A Letter to the Masonic Foundation of Alberta

*I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me. —*

Matthew 25:40 (NIV)

On April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2004, the unconditional love and compassion for another human life blossomed at Agapé Hospice, thanks to the immediate response of the Masonic Foundation. Agapé is an 18-bed adult residential hospice nestled on the edge of beautiful Riley Park (Calgary). While major funding sources help financially support our life affirming ministry, we still rely on the generous hearts of individuals and service groups to help fill our special need gaps. So, on a dreary day in April a call went out to Jerry Kopp, Grand Secretary, Grand Lodge of Alberta, and to Brian Smith, Secretary-Treasurer, Masonic

Foundation of Alberta, and a human miracle resulted from their efforts. Their encouragement and prompt approval of our request allowed the clouds to part and the sun to shine into the life of a very ill and frail young woman.

Karrie is the young mother of a budding adolescent who came to Agapé to live out her final days. Her fervent wish was to see her only child and mother, both of whom live in Eastern Canada, one more time. The precarious nature of her health left her dealing with a great deal of sadness and nausea. In spite of this reality, her joy of being alive continued to shine through, no matter what life sent her way.

Upon hearing a flight for her son and mother was approved, a smile broader than one would think the face capable of achieving appeared and continued

throughout this cherished visit. The distressing symptoms of her illness ceased to plague her emaciated body. At every opportunity she expressed her undying gratitude for the compassion of strangers. Karrie relished eight days of face-to-face interaction with her beloved family. They used this gift of time wisely to express their love for each other and tend to each other's needs.

As a finale to this visit, we organized an early "birthday" celebration for Karrie's son on Mother's Day. Karrie joyously acted as hostess and invited anyone who came through Agapé's doors. Our dining room was abuzz with the sounds of delighted children (within a remarkably wide age range, by the way) as they celebrated the passage of years. Since the cost of their flight did not totally deplete the funds you gener-



## Alberta Miscellany

### Empire Lodge No. 63

What is an Obligation? The root of the word obligation is "lig". It means "bond", a tie or to be tied together. [From Latin *ligamentum* = bond, from *ligare* = to bind; Ed.] The same root is found in such words as Ligament and Religion. The prefix of the word is "ob" which means to move toward or to "act toward." Thus we can deduce that an obligation is something that moves or acts towards the binding of something together. Masonically, the obligation has a two-way method of tying things or people together. The obligation moves toward the joining of the Lodge to the candidate and the joining of the candidate to the Lodge. An obligation is a two-way action. If one of the partners fails to do his bit, then the obligation is not binding or valid.

WBro Ken Yost, WM

### Harmony Lodge No. 75 — "World-wide Association of Harmony Lodges"

Brother Stephen Scull of Harmony Lodge No. 156 EC of Plymouth, England, has mailed us the first *Harmony Association Newsletter*. At the time the newsletter was prepared, the Association had thirty-one Lodges, including six Lodges from the UK, nine Lodges from the USA, four Lodges from Canada, five Lodges from Ireland, and two Lodges from New Zealand. Other Lodges that have joined are from Kenya, Switzerland, Nigeria and Spain. There are

ously donated, we used the remainder to purchase a gold signet ring (at cost) for her son. The inscription it holds will carry this young lad throughout his life and act as a gentle reminder of his mother's love. From Karrie's heart came the message, "With You Always, Love Mom."

The very nature of miracles means their benefits are multi-layered. They tend to ripple outward, thereby embracing even those not directly affected. This miracle was true to form. Certainly Karrie and her family were directly blessed with a homecoming, but we who work at Agapé also basked in the beneficence of its glow. On behalf of Karrie and her family, we wish to express our gratitude for your gesture of love and compassion towards a stranger.

Jackie Lemke-Clow, MSW RSW  
Social Worker, Salvation Army,  
Agapé Hospice

twenty-five Harmony Lodges that have not yet confirmed membership. Most of these Lodges are in the UK, but others are from Russia, Australia, France, the USA, Ireland and Guadeloupe.

### Wetaskiwin Lodge No. 15 — "Family"

Are you aware that if we died tomorrow, the company that we are working for could easily replace us in a matter of days? But the family we left behind will feel the loss for the rest of their lives. And to come to think of it, we pour ourselves more into work than into our own family, an unwise investment indeed, don't you think? Do you know what the word Family means?

FAMILY = **F**ather **A**nd **M**other **I**Love **Y**ou  
WBro Keith Peters, WM

### Lake Saskatoon Lodge No. 106 — An insight

Two experienced Master Masons were enjoying a flight in a hot air balloon when suddenly a thick cloud formed between them and the ground. Being without instruments, after half an hour they realized that they were well and truly lost.

A short time later they came across a large hole in the cloud and espied a gentleman below walking his dog across a field. They had time to exchange pleasantries and found that he too was a member of the Craft. The chaps in the balloon inquired of him as to their location and received the reply, "about 200 feet up in a balloon." Just then the cloud

closed the hole and they were alone again.

One turned to the other and said, "I bet he's the Secretary of his Lodge!" "Why do you say that?" the other asked. "Well, what he has told us is absolutely true — but in our present predicament it's totally useless!"

### Cascade Lodge No. 5

In the March 18, 2004, edition of the *Rocky Mountain Outlook* there was an article on the Lodge seeking official heritage status. It also contained a photograph of our WM in the Lodge room. In our application there is a statement of significance which reads:

"The building is a two storey stucco building with red brick trim, on a large triangular lot bounded by Bear, Caribou and Lynx Streets. The Architect was James A. MacDonald of Calgary, designed in 1924. It was built by S.J. Unwin Contracting. (S.J. Unwin had been WM of the Lodge in 1913, but died in WWI in 1917, but in 1924 the company still carried his name.) The Lodge has a commanding presence in downtown Banff. It is a purpose designed building, housing the Masonic Lodge room and accompanying furnishings. The entranceway is imposing, with a concrete stairway leading to a large foyer. Masonic lettering and insignia are present on the building exterior and entry sidewalk. The original furnishings are significant to the continuous use as a Masonic Lodge since 1925 or even earlier. The building is unique in Canada."

## A New Home for the Working Tools



Recently, Bro Ivan Getson, a gifted worker in wood, constructed a solid cabinet for the Working Tools of **Mayerthorpe Lodge No. 148**. The picture shows him with the grateful recipients in Lodge, l-r: Bro Ivan Adams, WBro Clarence Wilkins, Bro Ivan Getson, WBro Frank Wilkinson, WBro Wesley Henning, RWBro Peter Griston, WBro George Lawton and WBro Ken Clark.

## Cowans

In the days of operative masons...

In most localities there would also be men who had learned to build walls or dikes without being apprenticed to the trade or being admitted to a lodge. In Scotland a "dry-diker" was known as a "cowan", which is defined as "a mason without the word." William Schaw was the King's Master Mason and Warden General to the craft. He drew up a code of trade regulations, customs and a code of conduct that the Scottish masons must follow. These were known as the Schaw Statutes. The Schaw Statutes of 1598 ordered "that no Master nor Fellow of the Craft receive any Cowans to work in his society or company, nor send none of his servants to work with cowans." Cowans could be employed by Master Masons for any kind of work, provided that no regular craftsman could be found within fifteen miles.

Originally, the word was not derogatory, however, the Masonic Order degraded it to mean an impostor or eavesdropper or one who has not been regularly admitted into a Lodge.

Bro Barry D. Thom, PM  
Lodge Mackay No. 1129 SC  
Bay Roberts, NF

## Lost & Found

Found: a gold Masonic Ring with onyx stone and worn S&C. There are also two designs on the side of the ring. Lost about one year ago at the Crowfoot YWCA in Calgary. After a year in their lost and found, it has been turned in to Grand Lodge Office.

## Grand Master's Itinerary

### September

- 9 Public Relations Committee Meeting
- Board of Benevolence Meeting
- Masonic Higher Education Bursary Fund Committee Meeting
- Acacia Lodge, Edmonton
- 10 International Order of Demolay, Edmonton
- 11 Edson Lodge
- 14-18 Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite, Supreme Council Session, Edmonton
- 20 Griesbach Lodge, Edmonton
- 25 Carstairs and King Hiram Lodges

## Coming in October:

- Highlights of the Grand Master's address.
- Our Medal of Merit Recipients.
- Far North Lodge No. 199 Consecration.
- Masonic Higher Education Bursary Fund.
- and more.

## St. John's Lodge Donation

Recently, Daryl Calder, Secretary-Treasurer of St. John's Lodge No. 25 in Vegreville, donated a \$400 cheque, on behalf of the Lodge, to John Sawiak, Knights of Columbus Canada Day event chair. The cheque was to go toward Canada Day festivities such as fireworks.



## Spring Workshop Hits New Heights

"One of the best Masonic Spring Workshops in my 39 years of attendance," according to one of our long time attendees. Opinions of many other Brethren were along the same lines: "great keynote speaker"; "timely theme"; "very fine presentations on interesting subjects"; "well organized"; and "overall a very enjoyable experience."

The 2004 theme was "Tolerance — Towards a Pluralistic Society." Bro Karim-Aly Kassam, our keynote speaker, is a Professor and head of the Theme School in Northern Planning and Development Studies at the University of Calgary. He took time off from his Doctoral studies at Cornell University to be with us this year and everyone in attendance was extremely impressed with his contribution.

On Friday night, MWBro Norm Thomas opened this 39<sup>th</sup> Session with a challenge to our speakers and members present, and a call to action. From that point on, Masonic ranks and titles disappeared and everyone became a Brother.

Brother John Alexander launched the evening with a recitation of the Charge from the 29<sup>o</sup> of the Scottish Rite on Tolerance. Bro Kassam then proceeded to explain that the Charge is really about love and is itself a call to action. In his next session, he explained how our biological, cultural and spiritual diversity is absolutely necessary for the continued survival of our pluralistic society, and indeed our life on this planet.

Saturday found the Brethren attending their choice of nine sessions in one

of the Officer Training, General Interest or Controversial Streams, or one of three discussion groups in the Masonic Theatre. The Bookstore, raffle, silent auction and jewelry shop were busy from the moment they opened.

Bro Karim-Aly Kassam provided the wrap-up at the final session on Saturday leaving us with a challenge to get involved, and several ideas on how we could make changes when we get back to the Lodge.

Saturday evening's fantastic meal was followed by a presentation of the 1765 Degree by the Cornerstone Players. They kept the audience in rapt attention every minute they were on the stage.

Sunday morning a great number of the Brethren attended the Devotional Service under the sure hand of Bro Jim Roberts with Bro Jamie Beckstead at the piano.

This year saw an attendance of over 200 including day users, about the same as last year. Being the premier Masonic Event in North America, one wonders why more Brethren don't take advantage of the opportunity to be stimulated, challenged and entertained in this beautiful Rocky Mountain setting. Those of us who did got more than great value. Those who did not missed a chance of a lifetime.

Next year, Bro Dick Fletcher of the Masonic Service Association will take on the Theme of "Education, the Road to Enlightenment" and it promises to be another fine event not to be missed. Hope to see you there.

David Roth  
MSW Chairman 2004