



Our Past to Our Future — Passing the Banner

RWBro Kim Greenizan, Carstairs Lodge No. 20, Airdrie Wild Rose Lodge No. 2001

First of a three-part series

There are several key components in the continued existence of any organization. We must consider a Lodge's adaptability to the changing environment, their traditions and what binds them to their community. Have they empowered the new generation to be able to carry on the intent and purpose of the organization through the coming decades? In this paper I will touch on these and other characteristics as they relate to Freemasonry and hopefully spark communication that will lead to a strengthening of the collaboration between the generations, the Lodges and with the Grand Lodge itself.

Adaptability—*That characteristic which identifies the ability to change (or be changed) to fit changed and/or changing circumstances.*

Adaptability is to be understood here as the ability of a system or organization to adapt itself efficiently and quickly to evolving circumstances. An adaptive system is therefore an open system that is able to refit its behaviour according to changes in its environment or in parts of the system itself. A Lodge needs to recognize the demand for change even without any other factors involved, and to express this to their members early. In this way major difficulties may be avoided and processes streamlined for the betterment of the Lodge. It also permits a means to bring up change on a regular basis so that the Lodge can react intelligently to any circumstance.

Let us look at what it means to be adaptable within our Fraternity and try to derive how we have managed to survive over the centuries as an organization that covers most countries on this planet. First is resilience to a changing world — one where technology again inspires the advancement of how we communicate.

Resilience is that characteristic that proves the survivability of anything over time and circumstance. It is the evolution of life, knowledge and under-

standing that one has to go through while retaining their faith in the Craft and poise to benefit the whole of their community. Although our numbers have been waning like the ebb tide, we have weathered the same over the centuries. We have witnessed extreme times of persecution, destruction and turmoil that would have had many lose their way and give up on themselves, their friends and even on life itself.

If we look at the guilds of medieval times we can understand the necessity for the care of the workers' families. Those workers who were building the fantastic structures of those times needed reassurances that their families were safe from persecution should something happen to them and needed to protect the women and children no matter what the circumstance. In many cases when casualties did happen, the families of the deceased were subjected to abuse of both the wife and child, so they adapted by creating protection within the guilds, which would uphold the welfare of the family so as to reassure the workers of that time.

So adaptation became the surviving factor, and as things got knocked down, processes changed, industrialization came and went. Several wars impacted advancement of the Craft and their communities, however the Fraternity survived. They picked themselves up, dusted themselves off and strove to continue to grow for the benefit of their families, their communities and themselves.

Masonry has seen this, experienced this, lived through this, and has come out stronger for it. They have become firm in their resolve to better themselves and their families, their neighbours, friends and communities. Now, again we are challenged to look to the future, to those walking in our footsteps, to those who retain the faith that has brought us so far already.

But growth and change seem best to happen during times of strife and dire

need. We in Canada have not had such an issue for many generations. Although we participated in several peacekeeping activities since the Korean conflict we have not been engaged in any armed battle until our actions in Afghanistan. We have not faced poverty, strife of family or work. We have programs in place for the unemployed and protection of the working force is not an issue today as it was then. So what is the issue in the Lodges today?

We seem to be totally silent on any issues outside of the Lodge. We tend not to develop newsletters, websites, twitter, facebook, and other sources of social media. These topics have met with significant resistance by the older generation, but without them will we dwindle to a vision of the past? Charles Dickens says it well in *A Christmas Carol* in that Fezziwig ceases to exist because he refuses to adapt to the modern machines of industrialization. So we must adapt in this the modern era of communication and information technology.



Mr. Fezziwig's Ball — 1843 hand-coloured etching by John Leech (1817–1864), frontispiece of the first edition of *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens.

We have seen that in some countries Masonry still has a strong hold in their communities, and there have been others where the community resistance is determined to break this bond of harmony. This is mostly due to a misunderstanding of what Freemasonry is and the perception of the privileged denying the rest of them. Members of the Craft in places of senior management, offices of the government and or places of trust have been targeted for currying favour amongst themselves where indeed the integrity of the Fraternity would not see that done. To this too we have survived with the resilience of youth. Or at least the following generation did.

What do we need to do? Well, we have to develop the ability to recognize what it is that we truly need — the ability to communicate and associate with a generation that asks questions; that

understands history but wants to leave it there in the past; that is born on the information highway and sees technology as commonplace.

We need to realize that they are our future and thereby encourage them to embrace tradition. We must strengthen our moral standing while we pass the banner of Leadership to them. We need to do this while we are still around to provide them with mentorship and guidance on the intent of the Fraternity, so that tradition is understood; to ensure that tradition does not become an anchor around our or their necks, dragging us into oblivion.

While we have to adapt to circumstances we still need to retain the Landmarks that Masonry has been built on. "What are these Landmarks?" you may ask. There have been a myriad of potential Landmarks over the existence

of time. These range from Mackey's twenty-five to a simple few adapted by most others. Some deem all to be inviolate. However, not all have an irrefutable need in today's society. Some we ourselves have set aside for that very reason: the written documentation of our existence is a good example.

But even with that, we need to maintain those critical points brought out at the Installation of every Lodge every year: in essence to maintain the integrity of our Fraternity; to maintain loyalty to our country; to uphold the principles of Honour, Morality and Brotherly Love; but, most importantly, to live within due bounds of all mankind, especially those of our Brethren.

That means to be adaptable to the changing times, such that all Brethren are considered and no one is ostracized out of ignorance or petty pride.

Fiat Lux Lodge of Research in Darkness

VWBro Garth Cochran

Fiat Lux Lodge of Research No. 1980 has gone dark. In a letter to members and subscribers as Lodge Secretary I wrote:

...The truth is that the Lodge got too small to be sustainable. In recent years, many of our long-time members have either died, moved away or are no longer mobile. Many of our busy and involved younger members have conflicts with our meetings. As a result, commitments to attend many of our meetings in recent years have been below the requisite seven members to legally conduct business. Without a minimum of seven members guaranteeing to attend two consecutive meetings, we could not bring new people into the Lodge. So, despite the plans of our recent Masters, renewal of our Lodge has faltered.

Further, it is impossible to ask any Lodge to expend their resources to host our meetings when we cannot be assured that at least seven of our own members will attend to make it

more than just a workshop.

The experience of Alberta's first Lodge of Research highlights the perils of inadvertently allowing a Lodge to simply get too small. With most Lodges having an average attendance rate between 20 and 25 per cent, it becomes obvious that a total of about 25–30 members is getting a bit on the small side. That size becomes even more important when a large proportion of the members are seniors with attendant health and/or mobility issues. That was the case with Fiat Lux — a travelling Lodge — where members in their 70s, 80s and 90s found it more difficult to drive the distances needed to attend or could no longer comfortably drive at night.

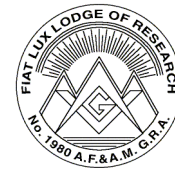
But even in community-based Lodges, mobility can quickly become an issue for senior members and may be addressed by having them picked up and brought to Lodge. Meanwhile, the Lodge needs to constantly renew itself with new members. This gives older members the opportunity to mentor new

members who, in turn, will now have men whose experiences will help them navigate in the Craft and the community.

But in the Fiat Lux case it was not so simple. The Lodge was originally designed as a formal research lodge with well-documented, academic papers published annually in proceedings. But in today's electronic age, it seems people are not as interested in the "old-fashioned" way, in expending the time needed to do all that. Perhaps they never learned how.

On the other hand, many Brethren today put together very interesting, electronic presentations using PowerPoint, etc. — just not so formal or, dare one say, stuffy. Brethren may see excellent examples of this research at Internet Lodge of Research in Calgary.

The times, they are a-changing!
ILoR's next meeting is at Bowmont Hall, 17 February 2018, tyling at 0900 h.



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In Memoriam

MWBro Donald Ryan Millar

20 November 1928 – 31 December 2017

Donald Ryan Millar commenced his Masonic journey in Temple Lodge No. 167. He received his Entered Apprentice degree on 28 January 1955, followed with his Fellowcraft degree on 25 February, and completed his Master Mason Degree on 25 March. Don went on to serve in many offices and in 1966 occupied the chair of King Solomon for Temple Lodge as Worshipful Master. In 1972 Don was elected to the position of District Deputy Grand Master for District No. 3 (now the Yellowhead district), which required a lot of travelling, as he was responsible for overseeing 10 Lodges ranging from Edmonton to Jasper. In 1987 Don was elected to serve the Craft as the Junior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Alberta, and followed the “cursus honorum” to serve the Craft as the Grand Master in 1990/91. Don was elected to the Administration Board of the Grand Lodge and served on the Finance and Jurisprudence Committees, and since 1973 was the Grand Representative for the Grand Lodge of Nevada, a position he took extreme pride in until his health began to fail.

In 1958, the Fourth to Thirty-Second Degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry were conferred on illustrious Brother Don Millar in the Edmonton Valley of Scottish Rite. In 1978 Don served as Thrice Puissant of the Edmonton Lodge of Perfection and was Most Wise Sovereign of Mizpah Chapter of the Rose Croix in 1969. Don was coroneted an Honorary Inspector

General 33rd Degree in 1984. He was made a member of the Royal Order of Scotland in 1986. In 1970 Don crossed the hot sands of the desert to become a Noble of the Mystic Shrine under Al Azhar Shrine Temple in Calgary. In 1978 Don was elected as the Captain of the Guard of the Edmonton Shrine Club Arab Patrol. Noble Millar was a founding and charter member of Al Shamal Shrine Temple and served as Chaplain in 1987. Don served in the Hospital Patient Transportation Office with Noble Darwin Harrison for over 10 years, organising flights, hotels and transportation for patients travelling the various Shriners hospitals.

As Grand Master he was invited to attend the Imperial Council Shrine session in Chicago.

Don was a member of many Lodges in Alberta: Bassano No. 55, Forestburg No. 128, Ivanhoe No. 142, Jasper Park No. 143, Eastgate No. 192, Redwood No. 193 and Avon Glen No. 170. Don received his 50-year jewel in 2005, I was privileged as the Grand Master in 2015 to attend Avon Glen Lodge to present Don with his 60-year bar.

Don could at times be very intimidating, particularly to a young Freemason, and I was one of those. But when you really got to know Don he was a wonderful mentor and a teacher in his own way. In the words of Darwin Harrison, the exterior was rugged but internally, Don really was a “Cream Puff.”

A Lodge, a Board, or any function



Grand Master of Alberta 1990/1991

could always rely on Don to provide an appropriate grace at Festive Board or other such occasions. Indeed I still have a small clip of prayers that Don gave me many years ago when told me “to always be prepared”, as he was during his Masonic career.

MWBro John Slade

Don was also a lifetime active member of the Holy Trinity Anglican Church community and dearly valued the fellowship and deep faith he had there.

He will be lovingly remembered by Evelyn, his devoted wife of 67 years and their children, Gary (Marion), Scott (Diane), Glen (Lydia), Marilyn (Dave), and by grandchildren, great grand-children, and his brothers Ken and Al.

The Mentor's Gavel

The Short Talk Bulletin, Volume 95 (11), November 2017, The Masonic Service Association of North America. This article first appeared in the Spring 2017 edition of the *Kansas Freemason*. Its author is RW Michael Johnson II, ADGM.

In the First Degree of Masonry, the Common Gavel is used by the operative Mason “to break off the corners of rough stones,” or by the speculative Mason, to divest “our minds and consciences of all the vices and superfluities of life.” In this degree, we are taught that the “rough ashlar” symbolically alludes to ourselves, as imperfect stones to be shaped into that perfect ashlar we hope to become.

This would make ourselves better suited for the plan the Grand Architect has written down in our Book of Life. These metaphors are outstanding concepts we should all hold dear to

our heart, as we will not travel very far on our Masonic journey without them.

However, there is an additional perspective on the Gavel not often considered that is equally important. We will never traverse the road of life, and find joy in doing so, without the helping hand and guidance of those around us. Our Brothers are specifically suited for this purpose, as they have obligated themselves to a lifetime endeavour to do so. Deep consideration of this concept reveals the Gavel we each hold has a dual purpose. The first is to our own “rough ashlar,” but the second is to all those around us whom we call

family, friends, and Brothers.

For Brothers, who take our obligations seriously and live in the manner our Fraternity teaches through its several lectures and ceremonies, it is important to understand that we have a profound effect on those around us: intentional and unintentional. The latter will result if proper thought is not invested into relationships, and the results will be unknown. That is not the goal.

Instead, the prize is the positive, successful relationships that witness the personal and fraternal success of Brothers that occur because of insightful, intentional interactions which place

others first. We accomplish this by using that Gavel we have come to know so well through the introspection and improvement of ourselves.

Remember, to be a mentor we must be intimately familiar with our own positive and negative attributes, and only the experience this process affords will enable us to effectively mentor those around us. A slight tap here and a calculated strike there with that Gavel begins the work that will form a stone into a square, in ourselves, as well as others. It is no accident that this working tool is introduced in the Entered Apprentice degree, since that is the beginning of our Masonic journey that will offer spiritual and moral growth.

If we don't consider the consequences of our actions, a wrong word or an unintentional action will cause that stone to fracture and break, thereby losing a potentially contributing member of our great Fraternity.

This is indeed a weighty responsibility, as the skill required to make those calculated strikes is considerable. To do so, it is important to understand the Gavel's use and how it is wielded by the Craftsman's hand.

Depending on the task, our Brethren have utilized a few different types of Gavels. We have seen the type of Gavels used in our Lodges that resemble those used by judges. This type of Gavel has two flat surfaces and represents authority. There is also the maul, which is flat on its top and is used to strike the chisel that forms the rough ashlar into a perfect ashlar. Then, there is the Gavel

that has one flat surface, with the other side being a pyramid-shaped cone used to strike and form a stone. That is the Gavel we use to hone men who want to enter our Lodge into that rough ashlar that will eventually support our Fraternity.

While a Mentor is not restricted to the exclusive use of this Gavel, it is the working tool used on candidates at the beginning of their Masonic journey. After all, it is not even known yet if they are a good fit or are willing to invest the time necessary to gain proficiency in our degrees. This determination should have occurred through the investigation process, yet it is not always clear until the degree work.

To exemplify this in the analogous perspective of our ancient Brethren, the operative Mason had to know the type of stone he was working with to determine the proper skills, techniques, and processes to shape that ashlar into the necessary building block. To accomplish this, the Mason must understand how the different types of igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic stones are formed and the unique consideration each requires to determine how hard to strike that stone and at what angle.

The same can be said of the present day speculative Mason who mentors candidates; he does not know what type of person he is dealing with until he begins the mentoring process. As that relationship grows, the Mentor will grasp the

proper techniques and skills required to successfully mentor.

This perspective is not readily visible in the everyday consideration of our lectures. In fact, one must look specifically at the types of Gavels employed in antiquity, as mentioned previously.

The Common Gavel is not designed for the precision necessary to make those stones perfect. It has a conical shape at one end that is unable to make perfect strikes that flake off rough areas and make them smooth. It is unwieldy and is the first tool used by the operative Mason to begin the formation of a rough ashlar. After which, the craftsman will use the chisel and maul to smooth that stone.

The Common Gavel of the Entered Apprentice degree is no different. It is introduced at a time when we are rough, and young in our Masonic journey. We are just not simply rough ashlar ready to be molded. The rough ashlar must be formed, just as that perfect ashlar is worked over a lifetime. The Mentor is there to help the candidate understand this process — to help him understand what type of stone he is and how to best to mentor him to learn and utilize the proper skills and techniques to grow spiritually and morally. That is how the Mentor's Gavel is employed.

The next time you look at that gavel and consider its use, please take a moment to ponder what your action, or inaction, does to others.

Book Review

McConnell, Martin G. *Successful Masonic Lodges and Grand Lodges, Learning To Thrive*

Create Space Independent Publishing Platform: North Charlestown, SC, 2017, 204 pp, paper. ISBN-13: 978-1545529812
Bro Dr. John Graham, Saint George Lodge No. 41, BC&Y and Bow River No. 1, GLA.

McConnell has written an excellent book, providing fresh, yet proven insight into what constitutes a well-run Lodge. The book is divided into an introduction and four parts plus appendices.

The introduction overviews the Craft, and provides context for how it is that Lodges and Grand Lodges could, and should, improve their overall operations.

Part One provides a unique and yet concise description of the most important features of Freemasonry, forming an introduction to the Order for the non-Mason while reintroducing the Craft's

major tenets to thoughtful Brethren.

Part Two tackles the thorny issue of what to do within Craft Lodges to improve things operationally — leading, in a direct line, to improving the various hazards outlined in chapter one. The key is to focus on those things of true value, and to fine-tune much of how Lodges operate. A sample set of best practices is provided which is deserving of serious attention.

A similar narrative is found in Part Three on Grand Lodges. But here, leadership needs to be more organic. Innovations across grand jurisdictions

should be able to spread more readily. The very best of the Craft should be retained; the deviations and distractions changed or abandoned.

Part Four contains some of McConnell's articles on the philosophical and esoteric origins and aspects of the Craft. The book concludes with some very helpful appendices comprising suggestions for further reading, and a powerful leadership assessment tool that could be easily deployed at any Craft Lodge or Grand Lodge level.

[Bro Graham's review has been edited for length. Ed.]