

The General Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons International



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Greetings, Companions:

Elsewhere in this Newsletter are reports of the very special events that took place for Royal Arch Masonry this month. These have been special and indeed even historic in many cases. They are certainly a reflection of the activity and growth that our Royal Craft is enjoying.

The Grand Lodge of New York annual communication, in addition to the presentation of the Distinguished Achievement Award to David Goodwin and myself, saw the election of ME Jeffrey M. Williamson to the office of Deputy Grand Master. Jeffrey served as Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of the State of New York Royal Arch Masons and is currently North East Regional Deputy General Grand High Priest for the General Grand Chapter and is chairman of the Triennial Committee. It was a truly rewarding experience to see his win on the first ballot over three other contenders! Congratulations, Jeff! The newly elected Grand Master, MW William Thomas serves also as High Priest of Ancient Chapter #1 in NYC. We wish these two new leaders of the Grand of Lodge of NY successful terms as they bring their leadership talents to our benefit in New York. The occasion was another example of York Rite unity as the leading officers of General Grand Chapter joined with the leading officers of Grand Encampment in this joint presentation to the GM of GE and the GGHP of GGCRAMI. We are grateful to the GL of NY and its immediate Past Grand Master, MW James E. Sullivan and PGM MW Gary A. Henningsen for their selection of David and myself to this high honor and for their warm welcome to all to the Empire State. Thank you!

In my visits to Italy and Romania, I was pleased to be accompanied by RE François Turcat, honorary Grand King of the Grand Chapter of France and soon to be Ambassador for GGCRAMI to France. He brings a wealth of business and Masonic experience to the office and I am honored to have been his friend for over 20 years. This is also an appropriate time to call attention to the Ambassadors of General Grand Chapter who have been extending themselves especially in helping prepare visits and assisting your General Grand High Priest on the occasion of those visits. This attention to detail and assistance make the travel and schedule work so much more smoothly. Those involved with me in recent visits include, George Biniaris in Greece, Luis de Castro in Portugal, Carlo de Rysky in Italy, Dr. Andrei Kosma in Romania, Steven Monrotus in Missouri, Gene Fricks in New Jersey. These are just the few who have worked so well in recent occasions and exemplify the support that I have received from so many of you over my term as your GGHP. THANK YOU ALL!

The convocation in Italy this year took place in Rimini which is near the cemetery where my father is buried. I am very grateful to the GHP Tiziano Busca for arranging a pilgrimage to the graveside and for their kindness in laying a wreath and flowers. My father served in the Canadian Army and was killed in 1944 in Italy. This was my third visit to this very beautiful location that is meticulously maintained in memory and tribute to those who gave their lives that we might enjoy the many benefits we enjoy in a free world – including the right to practice our Royal Craft.

My visit to the Grand Chapter of Missouri was very special because of the close ties that have developed between their immediate past GHP, Rev. Roy Gilkey, PGHP ; Ambassador Steve Monrotus and our mid country coordinator for Royal Arch Research Assistance, Dr. John Siscel. Roy did a fine job this year in leading Missouri to new heights and especially for coordinating with ME Alan Hubble, GHP of Illinois to present a joint degree ceremony. This event attracted much attention and set in motion contacts and ideas that will stimulate each of these jurisdictions to further benefit from the rewards of experiencing Royal Arch Masonry outside the confines of one's own chapter or jurisdiction.

Steve Monrotus, Ambassador and Past Grand High Priest, has provided marvelous support to the General Grand Chapter and to Royal Arch Research Assistance. It is he who developed and produced the "Gift for a Gift" program of CD's providing music specially tailored to Masonic ceremonial needs. Music always enhances ceremony and these make it possible for a lodge, chapter, Council or Commandery to enjoy music on these occasion even though an organ or organist may not be available. Contact Royal Arch Research Assistance to obtain these for your Masonic bodies for a contribution of \$150. Steve conceived this idea, prepared the program and personally produced the music and the recording. What a marvelous contribution to our charity program!

Dr. John Siscel, now Grand Scribe of the Grand Chapter of Missouri brings a lifetime of experience in not-for-profit executive activity. He is an endless source of enthusiasm and ideas and we are grateful to him for his service to us as mid-country coordinator for RARA activities. If you are located in the mid west, you do yourselves a disservice if you do not meet with John to solicit his support on fund raising for Royal Arch Research Assistance. Please contact him and get excited! John will be continuing on in this capacity into the next Triennium together with Bob Bean on the East Coast and Jerry Wohlfarth on the West Coast. Check out Royal Arch Research Assistance on our website for contact information and learn how you can become more involved in fund raising for CAPD research through our associations with Autism Speaks, Hearing Health Foundation and Dr. Frank Musiek at UCONN and soon transferring to the University of Arizona.

The introduction of the Ephraim Kirby Award is gaining momentum as Custodians for this award have been appointed in each jurisdiction. See the next edition of the RAM magazine for a history of Ephraim Kirby prepared by ME George L. Marshall, JR., PGHP of Alabama, and an explanation of the purposes of the award. This award is limited to Royal Arch Masons who have served as leaders in Grand offices of any York Rite body or Grand Lodge and continue to serve the craft long after they have gone out of office. Candidates must be recommended to us by the Custodian and cannot petition themselves. It has been my honor to make some very special presentations to James W. Hemstrought, PGHP in New York; Emilio Attina, PGHP in Italy; and just few days ago to Most Worshipful Ross Van Ness Bayer, PGM of the Grand Lodge of New Jersey. We are enjoying receiving many recommendations and look forward to frequent occasions to make presentations to these hard working stalwarts of our craft.

What a joy it was to be able to be in Indiana for the presentation of the Caleb W. Smith Award by the Grand Lodge of Indiana to our Past Most Excellent General Grand High Priest and current General Grand Secretary, ME Larry E. Gray. Since the name of the recipient was not known until the announcement at the Grand Lodge Grand Master's banquet, it took close coordination between the Grand Lodge Grand Secretary, MW Rick Elman and our General Grand Scribe, ME James H. Hodge to get the word to me in hope that I could be present. I had to do some quick airline reservation changes since I was scheduled to depart for Romania that evening. Larry was a little doubtful about my explanation that I just happened to have a business appointment in Indianapolis that day and was invited by Jim to attend the banquet, but he quickly figured it out when the Grand Master announced that he was the recipient. It was wonderful to be able to share this special recognition for a special

Royal Arch Mason and we are proud to see Larry recognized with this highest award of the Grand Lodge of Indiana.

Romania has surged into Masonic prominence this month with the election of Grand Master, MW Radu Balanescu as the new Executive Secretary of the World Conference of Regular Masonic Grand Lodges and their second annual Masonic Week celebration. These are the result of very strong programs and leadership and we wish them well in their continued Masonic activities. We cannot leave mention of the World Conference without paying tribute to its now retired Executive Secretary of many years, RW Thomas Jackson. Tom has always been available for information and counsel and I am sure that many will continue to count on him for his insight and perception in international freemasonry. My thanks to Tom for his ready answers to my frequent questions as General Grand Chapter advances into the foreign world. We wish him long life, good health and the opportunity to hunt and fish whenever and wherever he pleases.

To continue with inclusion of the message about the activities of General Grand Chapter, here follows the fourth of these articles for your enlightenment:

By courtesy of your Grand High Priest, I am privileged to offer you further information about General Grand Chapter. In the previous commentaries, we have reviewed the history and development of General Grand Chapter and have considered the merits and reasons for its international expansion. Let us now, then, review some of the substance and services that are provided to each member Chapter or Grand Chapter.

Commitments: General Grand Chapter has only two binding commitments required by each of its member subordinate Chapters (chapters operating in a jurisdiction where there is no Grand Chapter) or Grand Chapters. The first of these concerns the ritual. General Grand Chapter offers a ritual book which provides the words and ceremonies for the presentation of each of the four degrees of the Royal Arch Chapter. Slight variations of this work occurred in many jurisdictions as these new Grand Chapters developed since, in the early days, the work was frequently transmitted from mouth to ear and written transcriptions were either forbidden or not available; hence, we find differences in the work from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. This is acceptable as long as the essence and key points of the work are not modified or eliminated but, should such action occur, General Grand Chapter would be obliged to require the error to be corrected. Such a situation occurred in recent years when Austria developed a ritual which did not conform to our work and as a result, being unwilling to conform at that time, separated from General Grand Chapter. Fortunately earlier this year, ceremonies took place in Vienna acknowledging adjustments that were made in the ritual structure in Austria that now conform to our requirements and Austria has been welcomed back as a member of General Grand Chapter.

The second binding commitment is that each member Chapter or Grand Chapter must subscribe to the Constitutions of General Grand Chapter. These are very general and basic and do not interfere in any way with the operations of the member Chapter or Grand Chapter. The key point which must be observed is the annual report and payment of the per capita fee by the member to the General Grand Chapter. The complete Constitution is available for your viewing at www.yorkrite.org, click on the General Grand Chapter seal and then click on "Constitution".

The website is a useful guide into the many additional services that General Grand Chapter offers to its members. Entry is through www.yorkrite.org and then click on the General Grand Chapter seal. This will lead you to a system of links that will provide useful information on many topics. Here are a few:

-Emerging Leaders – this is a dynamic education program available to candidates recommended by the Grand High Priest. Classes are given annually at the Regional Conference and there are four graduated courses. This program is provided in concert with Grand Encampment and General Grand Council and provides high level leadership training presented by experienced motivational instructors who are York Rite officers. This is an incredible value, which in the commercial world would cost many dollars and which is offered at no cost other than the requirement to attend the Conference and pay a small registration fee and such accommodations or meals as are necessary. Books supporting the program are provided at no cost. Any Companion seeking to advance in the line of their Chapter or seeking position in their Grand Chapter is encouraged to approach your Grand High Priest and seek his recommendation. Graduation from these courses is no assurance of appointment to any office but will certainly be a factor in consideration of your credentials.

-Vision Statement – a current triennium statement of the goals of General Grand Chapter

-Newsletter – published on line monthly, this offers an opportunity for General Grand Chapter to report to you and to give you a schedule of each officer for the month as well as to receive photos and stories from you to publish for the world to view. This can only be as effective as your contributions allow. Please provide stories and photos of events in your chapter. For further information or assistance, contact our General Grand Scribe, James Hodge at jhhsnow@aol.com.

-Membership Development Programs – several programs are available that can enhance your meetings and help you to recruit new members. It is not necessary to reinvent the wheel – the programs listed here can be adapted and modified to your needs. Our General Grand King, Louis Bartrand, has scoured our membership for this information and has compiled a very useful assortment of information. Contact him at lbartrand@comcast.net. Also check out the Education Bureau for listings of pertinent books, brochures, forms and ceremonies.

-Awards – General Grand Chapter provides certain awards for service. These include recognition of the service of the Grand High Priest with appropriate engraved presentation at the end of his term. The Bronze Medal is awarded for outstanding service to a worthy recipient selected by each Grand Chapter/Grand High Priest annually. The Silver Medal is awarded each Triennium to a worthy recipient in each region recommended to the Regional Deputy General Grand High Priest and forwarded to the General Grand High Priest for decision and presentation at the Triennial. The Gold Medal is reserved for presentation at the Triennial by the General Grand High Priest. There can be as many as three Gold Medals presented at each Triennial. The Ritual Award reflects extraordinary commitment to the presentation of ritual and details of qualification are listed. The Sweetheart Award is available for any Royal Arch Mason to obtain for his lady. This is a beautiful jewel and is much coveted. Check out the Sweetheart Award tab for pictures and ordering details. Information will soon be published announcing the new Ephraim Kirby Award in honor of our first General Grand High Priest.

-Website – The website offers much more for the exploring and inquiring Royal Arch Mason under the categories of: Grand Chapters on line; Grand Secretary contacts; links or tabs to an assortment of topics. There are links or tabs to sites for Grand Lodges, Grand Councils, Grand Commanderies, invitational and honorary orders; General Grand Council; Grand Encampment. On the opening page, you will find excellent membership videos, references, papers and important information on the degrees. The Events tab will provide a listing of all York Rite activities internationally and usually provides registration and program information for most events.

-General Grand Secretary – The office of the General Grand Secretary is the veritable administrative heart of the General Grand Chapter. This officer has extraordinary responsibility to maintain contact information with all the Chapters, Grand Chapters, Committees and General Grand Officers. His

office maintains the website, prepares and send the appropriate awards to each jurisdiction in time for the annual convocation, maintains all records, receives all funds and supervises reports and receipt of per capita payments from all members, as well as fielding a wide array of questions and requests from around the world. This office is here to serve you but we urge you to check out the website first for the answer to your question. If unable to find the information you need, the General Grand Secretary, Most Excellent Larry Gray, PGGHP, can be contacted at ramintl@sbcglobal.net.

We hope you have found this information to be useful to you and that this gives you a greater insight into the service General Grand Chapter provides to its members. In our next column, we will explore the Royal Arch Mason magazine and Royal Arch Research Assistance as our charity. Meanwhile, do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

This concludes another of our efforts to share with you some of the many activities of your General Grand Chapter and its officers. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we be of any service to you. We hope June proves to be a very pleasant and rewarding month for you and look forward to our opportunity to meet again next month. Best fraternal regards.

With fervency and zeal,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Edmund D. Harrison". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Your General Grand High Priest