



THE GAVEL

MONTEZUMA LODGE NO. 1 AF & AM

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Volume 23 Issue 12

"The Oldest Masonic Lodge in the Rockies" Organized May 8, 1851

December 2023

From the East...



Brethren:

Greetings Brethren! This month at our Stated Meeting we will be having our elections as well as a presentation on Leadership in our Masonic Family and Non-Profit Organizations by RWB Stephen Balke and RWB Harry Jenkins. This past Brotherhood Night we had a presentation by WB Chuck Hannaford to archaeology in New Mexico and more specifically Chaco Canyon. We discussed trying to put together a trip to Chaco Canyon for 1 or 2 nights at the campground there. I may even have to dust off the RV for that trip! This month for brotherhood night we will be continuing the discussion by WB Chuck Hannaford on Chaco Canyon.

Chaco Canyon is a World Heritage Site and National Historical Park. It is approximately 3 ½ hours from Santa Fe. It was a very large Puebloan site that was constructed around 850 AD. The people who constructed this site also built 400 miles of roads that led to the site. There were approximately 100,000 logs brought from areas that were 50 miles away used as support beams in the structures. There is evidence of visitors from the southernmost parts of Mexico and the remains of Macaws, a bird with 5 different colors of feathers that was capable of mimicking speech. There are many significant astrological alignments at the site. The remote location and the site's adherence to strict dark sky policies makes the night sky amazingly vivid. There are 4 main hiking trails that can also be accessed with mountain bikes, that range from 3 miles roundtrip to 7.5 miles roundtrip. The absence of sound in the form of road noise, and other noises associated with being close to a town also adds to the mystique of this sacred site. There is even an episode of Ancient Aliens about the various mysterious aspects of the site.



A view from the back of Pueblo Bonito at Chaco Canyon

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Regular Meetings

RECURRENCE

First Monday
 Fourth Wednesday
 Second Tuesday
 Third Tuesday
 Second Wednesday

EVENT

Regular Communication at 7:00 PM, Dinner at 6:00 PM
 Property Management Board at 6:00 PM
 Regular Communication at 7:30 PM
 Regular Communication at 5:30 PM
 Regular Communication at 7:30 PM, Dinner at 6:30 PM

ORGANIZATION

Montezuma Lodge No. 1
 Montezuma Lodge No. 1
 York Rite Bodies
 Santa Fez Shrine Club
 Cerrillos Lodge No. 19

We have been holding our Quest meetings every Saturday morning at 10:00 AM. Quest Club is a forum for everyone. Mason and non-Mason alike can voice ideas and discuss any topic.



Special Notices And Events

Property Management Board

The next monthly meetings of the Property Management Board will be held on **Wednesday, December 27th** at 6:00 PM in the library,

Election of Officers

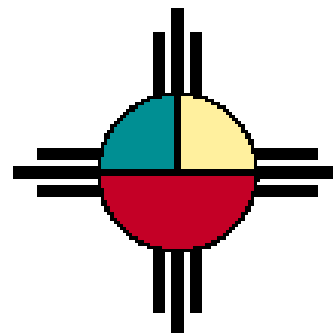
The annual election of officers is scheduled for the December stated meeting: December 4, 2023

Sickness & Distress

RWB Scott Jaquith's father passed away.

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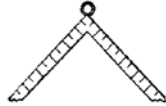
As my year draws to a close, I want to thank all the brethren whose hard work helped make this year a success. I appreciate most of all being a part of a lodge that is so rich in history and dedicated to the craft. Your ritual work in lodge is inspiring and serves as a beacon for our newest members. I look forward to sitting with you on the sidelines as our next Masonic year ensues. Thank you again for a wonderful year in the East!

Our next brotherhood night will be on Tuesday December 19 at 6pm.

Our Installation, which will be shared with Cerrillos No. 19, will be Saturday December 9 at 5:30pm with dinner around 6:30pm or 7pm.

Our next Stated Meeting will be on Monday December 4 at 7pm with dinner provided by Brother AJ at 6pm. I look forward to seeing you there!

Fraternally,
Christopher J Williams
Worshipful Master



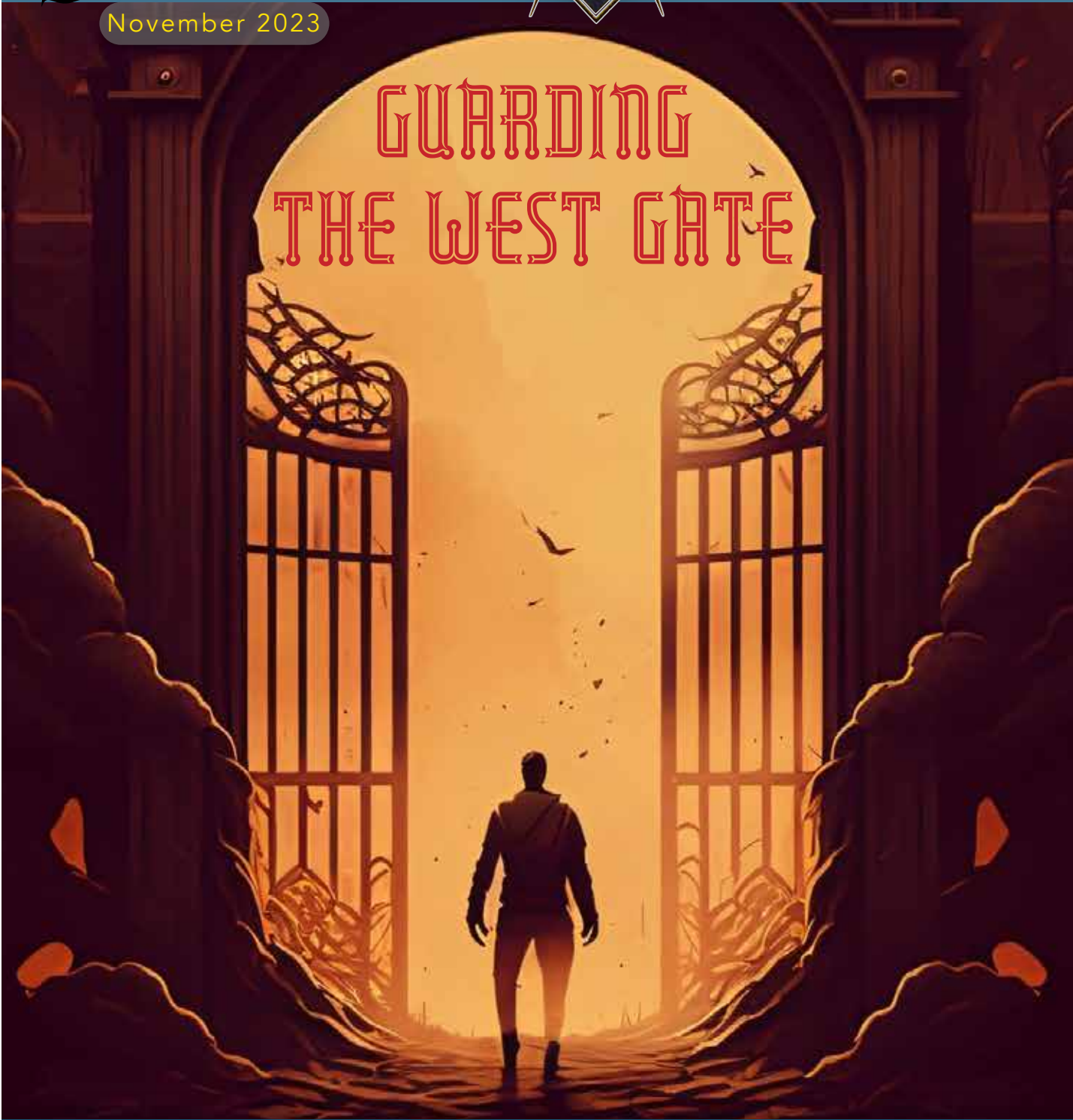
Southern California Research Lodge

Fraternal Review



November 2023

GUARDING THE WEST GATE



ONE THING BETWEEN US AND OUR GROWTH

COVER STORY

The Pursuit of Excellence

By Andrew Hammer



The pursuit of Excellence in every aspect of your life is what it means to observe the Craft. That means seeking more out of yourself, and consequently seeking more out of the Craft than you might have originally done. It means a continual effort at self-development and lifelong learning, at least one part of which is manifested in physical representations of things which are themselves considered to be exceptional. [...]

But how do we relate this demand for excellence, for that man who will agree to surpass himself, to the composition and identity of the Craft? We start by understanding that Freemasonry, unlike other social endeavors, is not for everyone, and should never be offered as such.

Masonry is and always has been intended to be an initiatory organization that an individual must *seek* to join. He does so not out of necessity or hope of material benefits, but out of an inner calling to greater wisdom, i.e., intellectual and spiritual light. Then after he makes that choice, he must in turn be chosen by others who agree to admit him into their assemblies. In such an environment. The nature of the individual far outweighs the number of men knocking at our doors, quality of character far outweighs quantity of candidates, and less is more. While the idea that fewer men should become Masons might be utterly baffling to some brothers, the idea is not so difficult to understand.

If a craftsman carefully selects ten exceptional men to whom he can teach the whole of his craft, each of those men can then teach ten others. By working with fewer dedicated men, the craftsman gains more; he gains the survival of his craft. If, however, he tries to shout his knowledge out to a crowd of ten thousand men who simply want to have what he has, the fullness of his knowledge will never be transferred, both because it is impossible to do so, and the crowd is indiscriminate.

Yet in some corners of the Craft it is thought that more men need to be convinced to become Masons in order to save dying lodges, or simply because some brothers are looking at the craft in the same way that they might look at any

other commercial enterprise. They relate numerical decline—for whatever reason, even if it be the natural result of a decline in population growth—to failure, and then become panicked when the decline is not arrested. In that panic, these brethren are willing to reverse the direction of centuries of initiatory theory and praxis, sacrificing it all in the attempt to seek out new members, rather than having men seek us as they have always done.

The fundamental problem with such a viewpoint is that Freemasonry is not just another commodity to be bought and sold. To be fair, the selling of degrees to all comers was a practice that affected the Craft from the very beginning of speculative Masonry. At the turn of the 18th century, so-called ‘Masons’ could be made instantly, in dockyard pubs, merely by paying a nominal fee,

But what is significant to point out about that fact, is that it was perceived to be such an unacceptable situation that it was one of the motivations for the creation of the Grand Lodge in 1717. In that moment, which was the first codification of Freemasonry as we know it today, reputable brothers saw the indiscriminate mongering of Masonic initiation as a problem, and took steps to correct it. Imagine what those brethren might think of the billboards and television advertisements found in some places today, which openly solicit men to become Masons, to do what they have not yet arrived to do of their own free will and accord.

Are such efforts any different than the efforts of those who attempted to sell Masonry so long ago? What should the response of the observant Mason be to such forms of recruitment?

Preston’s response in 1772 was stern and uncompromising, and could just as well have been written today:

It is an obvious truth that the privileges of Masonry have long been prostituted for unworthy Considerations, and hence their good effects have been less conspicuous. Many have enrolled their name in

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our records for the mere purposes of conviviality, without inquiring into the Nature of the particular engagements to which they are subjected by becoming Masons. Several have been prompted by motives of interest, and many introduced to gratify an idle curiosity, or to please as jolly companions. A general odium, or at least a careless indifference, must be the result of such conduct. But the evil stops not here. Persons of this description, ignorant of the true nature of the institution, probably without any real defect in their own morals, are induced to recommend others of the same cast to join the society for the same purpose. Hence the true knowledge of the art decreases with the increase of its members [emphasis added] and the most valuable part of the institution is turned into ridicule...’

Our response, therefore, must be that not only should not every man be a Mason, but not even every *good* man should be a Mason, any more than he should be an airplane pilot, doctor or mechanic. Only the man who knocks in earnest, in full knowledge of both the risk that he may be rejected, and yet proceeds anyway because the search for light is that important to him—only such a man is one who should become a Mason. Why? Because such a man will understand that as with all things worth doing or having, the ‘true knowledge of the art’ takes time, and cannot be achieved in a day. It requires a sincere pledge of time and effort.

Excerpted from Andrew Hammer, “The Pursuit of Excellence,” *Observing the Craft* (Mindhive Books, Classis Edition, 2012). pp. 98, 100-104.

The Obligations of Signing a Petition

by Jeriel Smith

A Master Mason's duty to Guard the West Gate extends to the essential act of signing a man's petition to join your lodge, which imposes significant obligations that are all too often ignored. First among these is a duty to act as his mentor and support the applicant's progress through his degrees if elected. How many of you who belong to California lodges have signed an applicant's petitions to join your lodge have read the paragraph that appears immediately above the signature lines? It reads:

"I understand that recommending a man to be made a Mason is my personal pledge of Masonic honor that the applicant possesses the character necessary to become a member of our fraternity. In recommending him to participate in our privileges, I vouch for the applicant's intentions and character. I believe that, if elected, he will reflect honor on our ancient institution. I will be involved in his studies and degree progress, and will support his regular attendance at lodge."

It is my premise that this most vital responsibility is taken far too lightly by the majority of Freemasons and their lodges—especially the promise to mentor that candidate, as expressed in the last sentence: "I will be involved in his studies and degree progress, and will support his regular attendance at lodge." How well understood and regularly practiced is that in your lodge?

In response to the decline in lodge membership, Masonic lodges in jurisdictions across the country have become so intent on adding members to their rolls that it is not uncommon for a man to be offered a petition on the occasion of his first visit to a lodge. In spite of a universal prohibition against "recruiting" men to become Masons, lodge members often engage in informal "competitions" to sign the most petitions to receive the Masonic degrees in their lodge. I have witnessed Lodge Masters competing with one another to confer the most degrees—especially to raise the most Master Masons during "their year." I have often sat in lodge rooms where a petitioner who is barely known to those who signed his petition, and completely unknown to a majority present, has been unanimously voted upon to receive the degrees of Freemasonry. What I have *never* seen in lodge is for anyone present who *does* know the petitioner well—let alone those who actually signed his petition—to share his knowledge of that man for the benefit of those present who do not know him.

For this reason, I believe lodges should adopt the following as a regular practice: At the time a petition is read in lodge, and/or before the petition is voted on, the two signers of that petition should each rise to share with brothers present the basis of their "strong reasons to believe" that the candidate has good character and intentions and will reflect honor on Freemasonry; and also to affirm his promise to be involved in his studies and degree process, and to support his regular attendance at lodge. The floor should then be open to others who feel they know the candidate well enough, to state their reasons for recommending him.

This simple act should not lead to a rebuttal, let alone debate, before the vote; which would disturb the harmony of the meeting. But this does raise another important issue related to Guarding the West Gate; namely, the responsibility of any Mason who has good reason to *doubt* that the candidate is worthy. Prior to the meeting when the balloting is scheduled, such a brother does everyone a disfavor by keeping his opinion to himself and simply casting a "black ball"—which, incidentally, can neither be asked about nor explained after the act. Thus, the proper thing to be done is to try to resolve the issue informally prior to a

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vote; which should start by the doubting brother approaching the Lodge Master with his concerns. This might be followed by involving one or both of the petition signers for further discussion if needed. In any event, if the doubt cannot be resolved in favor of the candidate, the Master should counsel the petitioner to withdraw his application and cancel the vote. Unless the reason is such that it would disqualify an individual from belonging to *any* Masonic lodge, it should be kept in mind that a single negative vote not only rejects that application, it disqualifies that person from petitioning any lodge for a full year.

I also believe the obligations attending to guarding the west gate are less about preventing someone from becoming a Mason—though that may be necessary in the case of a truly bad man—than it is about matching good men with the lodge that is right for them; where their interests match the lodge’s culture and practices, and the chances are best for forming lasting friendships.

Thus, we should take our time reaching the decision to extend a petition to a prospect. At my home lodge, which is registered with the Masonic Restoration Foundation as an observant lodge, it is expected that he will have regularly attended stated meeting dinners for several months, usually 4 to 6, depending on how regular; while also attending other open lodge functions, events, lectures, etc. We also expect prospects to help serve and clean up at multiple events; we explain that service to the lodge is expected, and willingness to be helpful is a reliable sign of potential for developing Masonic virtues.

Even if you do think a “prospect” may be right for your lodge, it is often a good idea for him to visit a couple of other lodges, for comparison. It is always a good idea to encourage a prospect to visit other lodges; even offer to go with him if you know brothers there you can introduce him to. I myself have done this; with good results in helping find the right lodge. Don’t *require* anyone to visit other lodges, which might be mistaken as a signal of rejection; but discouraging such visits should be avoided, so his lodge will be chosen of his own free will and accord. In my experience, giving a man a petition too soon often results in a hasty decision and later regrets.

This article is excerpted from a much longer talk on *Guarding the West Gate* that Brother Jeriel Smith has given several times to lodges in Southern California. Specific wording of Petitions in other Jurisdictions may vary. That talk can also be viewed on the website of The Rubicon Masonic Society, of which he is an Honorary Member. It is Episode 49 of their lecture series, *21st Century Conversations on Freemasonry*, available for viewing at: <https://rubiconmasonicsociety.com> Also, see Pop Culture, p. 11 in this issue.



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*December Dinner
 Menu*



Join us on December 4th for dinner at 6:00 PM before the stated meeting. The entire family is invited. Our chefs have planned an excellent menu. If you have any dietary restrictions please contact the secretary so that we may arrange suitable alternatives.

- Spaghetti and Meatballs
- Mashed Potatoes
- Vegetables
- Tossed Salad and Dressings
- Watermelon, Pies, Ice Cream
- Coffee, tea, and sodas



2022-2023 Officers

- Worshipful Master:** - Christopher J. Williams
(C): (208) 995-6922
- Senior Warden** - Jose M. Montano
(C): (505) 692-9183
- Junior Warden** - Jee W. Hwang
(C): (704) 654-1270
- Treasurer** - Patrick J. Varela
(H): (505) 471-2555
- Secretary** - Don L. Helberg, PDDGM
(H): (505) 471-0168
Lodge Office: (505) 982-0971
Email: hiram@montezumalodge.org
- Chaplain** - Robert H. Sherman, PDDGM
(H): (505) 983-9508
- Senior Deacon** - Nathan W. Metheny
(C): 505-930-9390
- Junior Deacon** - Gregory O Pringle
(C): 505-920-7012
- Senior Steward** - Timothy R. Gilmore
(C): (505) 660-5919
- Junior Steward** - Open
- Marshal:** - Alfonso J. Rodriguez
(C): 505-501-0078
- Tyler:** - Jerry Noedel, PM

What is the purpose of Freemasonry?

“To admit, make and pass Freemasons according to the Constitution and By-Laws of the Grand Lodge. To advance the moral and social interests of its membership; to foster good citizenship, honest industry and upright living; to cultivate the exercise of charity in its best and broadest sense; to assist the widows and orphans of its deceased members; to stimulate friendship, harmony and Brotherly love and generally to promote, in its own way, the happiness of mankind — it is a fraternity of good men, linked together by honorable and indissoluble bonds, to accomplish these noble purposes, eschewing all interests in factional politics and sectarian religion and free from the dictation of both.”

For more information about Masonry:

- Call the Lodge at 982-0971
- Stop by the Lodge
- Visit our website @ www.montezumalodge.org
- Ask any Mason