



GFN CYBER MASON

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The Newsletter of the Global Fraternal Network -- VIRTUAL INTERNET LODGE NO. 1
Volume 1, Number 5, July 2006

Editorial

The Editorial this month will be given over to an Interview with our founders Ran and Rene

Interview with Brothers Ran and Rene



Editor



Ran



Rene

1. When did you join the Craft and where?

RAN - I joined in 1962 in NYCity

Rene - I joined in 1974, also in NYC

2. Can you give brief details of your Masonic Careers?

RAN - I joined in 1962, served on the line for 8 Years and became the Centennial Master in 1970, Tuscan Lodge #704. Member of Scottish Rite, Shrine and ROJ. Became District Deputy Grand Master, Kings County, in 1992-94 and served and chaired many committees.

Rene - I joined in 1974.

1990 - W. Master of Mariners Lodge No.67

1992-1994 District Deputy Grand Master, Manhattan. Grand Lodge of the State of New York

2002 – R.E. Grand Sentinel, Grand Chapter of the State of New York, Royal Arch Masons.

Member St. Paul's Conclave, Knights of the Red Cross of Constantine.

Member of Scottish Rite, Shrine, Royal Court of Jesters, most Concordant Masonic Bodies.

Personal interests: Richard's s hobby is Skeet shooting and Classic Automobiles.

Rene's hobby is visual art. Particularly, paintings from the Middle Ages and from the second half of the 19th Century. He has a Giclee Digital Fine Art business in Trinidad in the Caribbean where he goes to several times in a year.

3. What inspired you to start the GFN?

In 1992, both Richard A. Newman and Jean Rene van Geuns were appointed District Deputy Grand Masters of their respective Districts for two years. This position brought them in close working relationships with the Grand Master and the other District Deputy Grand Masters. The State of New York was divided in about 45 Masonic Districts and a District Deputy Grand Master headed each.

It became soon apparent that there was a need for a fast and efficient communication method between and among the different Districts and the Grand Master's Office. Different methods, such as combined Districts newsletters or regional periodic reports, were tried out. However, none was found to be satisfactory.

Several District Deputies then tried to communicate through the Internet. This was a new and interesting method. The problem encountered was that the majority of the District Deputies did not have a computer to participate in this effort. Thus, this method was abandoned.

R.W.. Richard A. Newman and R..W. Jean Rene van Geuns continued to experiment with the Internet. In addition to their many demanding duties as the Representatives of the Grand Master, they developed an Internet based Masonic Website. It was called "The Masonic Bulletin Board". This Site was accessible to anyone surfing the Internet. To their delight the Site was swamped by American Freemasons and by Masons from all over the world. But, also to their deep distress and frustration, many "anti-Masons" left offensive, insufferable and nasty messages on the Board. There was just no way to keep these hateful people off the Site since it was open to anyone. They discussed the problem with the Grand Master. In the mean time, another problem had come up in which the Grand Lodge of New York had been made legally responsible for an erroneous claim another Masonic Institution had made. Brothers Richard and Rene became very much aware that it was important not to give anyone a reason to legally associate the Grand Lodge of the State of New York with a Website of third party.

All during these difficult times, the New York Grand Lodge encouraged Richard and Rene to continue. They retained several computer programmers to continue with their experiments on the Internet. The odds were indeed overwhelming in spite of the support from the Grand Lodge. On the verge of giving up the idea of an exclusive Masonic Internet communication platform altogether, Brothers Richard and Rene met a computer programmer in 1993 who said that he could devise an Internet Site that would be individually-password controlled. In fact, only a person who had been issued his own password would be able to access the Site. Keep in mind, that thirteen years in Internet terms was a long, long time ago.

Anyway, in 1994, after lengthy discussions, Richard and Rene decided to create a Website that resembled a Lodge. A virtual but not an actual Masonic Lodge. They discussed this with the Grand Lodge, received their total moral support, and engaged their friend's programming services to develop

such a Website. To make a long story short, two years later, in 1996, the Global Fraternal Network was born. We started in 1993 with the Masonic Bulletin Board with about 58 Members, almost all of who are still Members. At present, thirteen years later, the GFN has more than 17,000 registered Members from around the world, from Alaska to Zambia. It has Representatives in many countries. Its organizational structure is a mixture of an efficient business organization, a diplomatic corps pecking order and a Masonic lodge structure. There is no "hierarchy" as such as the Founders have allowed autonomous committees to be formed with their own independent sphere of interest and authority. In addition, there are Administrators, Regional Sector Leaders, Directors and Representatives and their respective Deputies, with broad administrative and executive powers of appointments, promotions and other activities. In spite of its spectacular growth, the Founders insist that the intimate, respectful and dignified Masonic Lodge atmosphere is maintained throughout the GFN. Overseeing this complex but surprisingly simplified organization is the six members GFN Policy Committee and the New York Grand Lodge that gives guidance or advice when needed or requested.

The GFN is unique in that it is a password-controlled Web Site exclusively for Master Masons. It is dedicated to every Grand Lodge in the world. In matters of protocol it is guided by the Constitution of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York because both Founders are Past District Deputy Grand Masters of the Grand Lodge of F&A Masons of the State of New York. It has different Trestle Boards catering to subjects in which the Membership has shown a strong interest. i.e. Masonic education; personal introductions; travel info and contacts in foreign lands; Masonic regalia exchange for collectors; It has, of course, a Sickness and Distress Board as well as a Glad Tidings Board. Master Masons - Non Members have access to one section of the Site that allows them to read about the goals and objectives of the GFN. If they like what they read and desire to join the GFN, there is a self-explanatory application and registration page for that purpose. Verification of a person's Masonic information may take up to ten days. Non-Masons can access a page where they learn more about Freemasonry. A considerable number of men became Freemasons after the initial contact with the GFN Site. Members of the GFN can passively communicate with one another via Bulletin Boards or "Trestle Boards", or meet in virtual Lodge rooms and actively "chat" with each other, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The GFN has always been free to all its Members and will remain so.

4. When was this?

(See Question No.3 and Answer) 1993

5. How many members do we have?

During the last 13 years, from 1993 until 2006, in excess of 17,000 Brethren have applied and registered as members. 1,500 Brethren have filled out their Masonic data on the Membership Roster. Of those 1,500 Members, about 500 are active.

It is the typical 10/90 ratio you recognize in many organizations, including in Masonic Lodges. That is: 10 percent of the members do 90 percent of the work, or are active.

6. I understand that the Grand Lodge of New York is an enthusiastic supporter of the GFN. Will this continue when you both retire?

From the very beginning, in 1993, M.W. Grand Master Sheldon Blank was very enthusiastic about the idea of Masonic inter-active communication via the Internet. He encouraged us both to explore the possibilities of the new media. Unfortunately he passed away before he could see the realization of his ideas.

7. It seems that some brethren are deterred from joining the GFN, as it is not officially recognized. Are there any plans to encourage recognition? Should we ask UG Lodge of New York to contact UGLofE regarding this?

England has an Internet Lodge, which is chartered. No actual Internet activity. They meet once a year. Internet virtual Lodges can't be recognized but can be endorsed as in keeping with Masonic Protocol. Many Grand Lodges link to the GFN as a site of Masonic Interest. Some have contacted the GL of New York to verify our association before the link was created. We encourage our Staff and Members to request that their respective Grand Lodges create a link to the GFN. We have been successful in this endeavor but there is still much more needed to be done.

8. There has been some talk of cutting down on the number of Boards. Would you care to comment on this!

If there seems to be little activity on a Board we should think about eliminating or merging it. If a new idea for a Board is brought to our attention...and sounds good.....we will put it up. However, we must be convinced that there will be participation on it. The general parameters here are that a least a dozen members petition for a new board for it to be considered. We also encourage password protected Square Club Boards where a specific interest of a group of Brothers is involved.

9. On 11th December 2005 we held an online meeting to discuss ways of improving the GFN. Suggestions made were: -

- a. How do we improve communications?
- b. To create a News Letter
- c. To start monthly meetings between Forum Leaders and local Representatives
- d. The need to have members fill in their registration details correctly
- e. The idea of an Audio Chat Room
- f. Reps to have a list of E Mail addresses of their local members to organize local meetings on line.
- g. A welcoming committee to help new members navigate the site.
- h. The creation of a Project Committee and to create a Project for all members to become involved with.

Apart from the News Letter has any progress been made with any of these suggestions?

All these ideas are good. However, we have to have the willing participation and cooperation of the Members.

We used to have a "Welcoming Committee" to greet and guide the new Members. This was an excellent plan and it was indeed very helpful to put the new Members at ease and feel welcome. Somehow the Committee died a quiet death. We should have one. Volunteers?

About "Members filling out their Masonic details on the Membership Roster", we are now in the midst of asking our new Programmer to create software that will automatically transfer the details from the application form to the Membership Roster.

Also, GFN Representatives ought to have the Email addresses of their local members in order to be able to better organize the local membership. We have always wanted to expand the responsibilities of the Representatives to include being in regular contact with the Brethren in their Jurisdiction. A letter concerning this suggestion will be soon forthcoming. We agree, all these plans and ideas are very, very good. However, to implement them, we need members who want to participate and be active. Frankly, we do not need MORE members. What we need are ACTIVE Members, every thing else will then fall in place.

10. Some time back you changed the server, was this to facilitate new items on the Web Site?

We lost our server and we are in the midst of discussions of revamping the site. We are going to ask for suggestions from the Members on their ideas for making the Site more user-friendly, efficient and interesting. Any ideas and suggestions from the Brethren will be considered.

11. It has been suggested we have a meeting at least every quarter with you present and a quorum of Directors present to discuss ways of improving the GFN. How do you feel about this?

We like the idea. It's the Members' site. We want the Staff to run it. We will do anything we can do to assist.

If you don't have any other questions, to end this interview, we'd like to print a letter from M.W. Carl J. Fitje, Past Grand Master of F&A Masons of the State of New York.

On May 22, 2004, he wrote the following to the Members of the GFN:

To the Members of the Global Fraternal Network and to all my Masonic Brethren World-Wide:

Greetings!

I am honored to have an opportunity to address you all at this time.

The objectives of the Global Fraternal Network reflect the spirit, principles and ideals of both our Mission and Vision Statements. Its two Founders, Past District Deputy Grand Masters of this Jurisdiction, with astute foresight and without asking for personal recognition and awards, created in 1996 this exclusive, password-controlled platform on the Internet especially for Free Masons. Here, Master Masons from all around the world get together, interact, develop closer fraternal ties, voice their opinions, contribute ideas, foster a Masonic exchange and enlighten interested men about the Fraternity. It has proven a big success.

I have known the Founders of this Organization for many years and speak regularly of the GFN in my travels. We particularly note the number of new members that have originated from initial contact on the GFN web site. Since the attraction of new members is so important to our future, the GFN also proves to be a wonderful new way to reach potential candidates.

My Brothers, there is such a wealth of talent throughout the Fraternity where ideas can come from to assist in helping reach potential candidates and spread the good works of Masonry throughout the world. I welcome those ideas and hope that the sharing of information through this medium, the GFN will continue to bring forth new ways to re-vitalize and grow our beloved Fraternity.

Please accept my heartiest congratulations and thanks for the wonderful work that you, Members of the Global Fraternal Network, are doing to bring our beloved Craft forward into the next generation.

I heartily endorse the GFN and wish the Founders, Staff and all its Members continued great success.

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

**Carl J. Fitje, Grand Master,
Grand Lodge, State of New York
Free and Accepted Masons**

Pins, Caps and Car Stickers may be viewed and ordered from the GFN Site

AP Forum

Every day at 7.00 pm Perth Time. 11.00 am BST



Australia

My Lodge

My Lodge is Services Memorial No 393 of the United Grand Lodge of Queensland, which is located in Toowoomba, Queensland, and we meet in the Neil Street Masonic Centre. Toowoomba is 90 minutes west of Brisbane. Services Memorial Masonic Lodge No 393 was founded in 1947 from the support of Freemasons who were ex-serviceman. My Lodge was a daughter lodge of Melrose Lodge, which was a strong Lodge at the time and has since handed its charter in. As my lodge was started by ex-serviceman we do lay the wreath at the Alter at each meeting and we do that before closing the Lodge. Every Anzac day we do have a the Anzac Day service which is conducted in the evening where we open the lodge to everybody and it is well attended and it is a good chance for Freemasonry to be on show to the public. We have a ceremony that we use for Anzac day and we have a guest speaker who comes along and talks about Anzac day and we have used School children in the past and that has been a great success as well and what it does mean to them which is quite interesting as well. We also perform the vacant chair ceremony that ends the evening we also have the last post and reveille and the lament, which is generally played, by one of our long-standing members. We have very active Masonic Council here and you read about it activities on the web site that is for my district, <http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Rhodes/8325/> I do hope that many of you log on and read about where I live and the lodges in my area.

Tiger Tim



USA Forum

Every day at 9.00pm 3.00 am BST

Subject: New Masonic Lodge opening in Iraq

I am Charles Martin, member of Bowling Green Lodge #73 (Bowling Green KY).

Here at Al Asad Iraq, we will soon re-open the first operating Masonic lodge in Iraq since 1958. Land, Sea, and Air lodge #1, Under Dispensation of the Grand Lodge of New York (F&AM), will be chartered on or about May 2, 2006, at the annual Communication of the GL of NY. Here at Al Asad Air Base, we have a Masonic Square and Compasses Club, where we have informal fellowship, and plan for our lodge. LSA#1 is a traveling military lodge. It was first set up in 1917, in World War I, and then re-activated for WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. It was active for a short while in Iraq in 2005, and then inactive.

We are a fully functioning lodge, authorized to make new masons and perform all Masonic labor, just like any New York lodge. Our Worshipful Master is resident in Buffalo, New York. We are supporting a couple of welfare/morale projects for the troops here. If you would like to participate in these projects, or learn more about our club and lodge, then please visit our website:

<http://www.dcmetronet.com/landseaandairlodge1iraq> and/or email me:
charles.martin20@us.army.mil

Masonically,

Charles E. Martin
President Al Asad Masonic Square and Compasses Club



UK Forum every Sunday at 9.0pm BST

4th UK Getogether

The forth get together of GFN UK members will be held at Tarbolton Lodge, Prestwick, Scotland. On Friday October 20th 2006.

Tarbolton Lodge was the Mother Lodge of Robert Burns.

All are welcome both UK and International members.

Further details to follow.



New and old Master at Installation meeting of Crayford Lodge during May

The new is W.Bro Stan Dunham the IPM is W.Bro Rick Smale



Italy



New Camelot Lodge. Italy

THE LODGE'S BANNER

The Lodge's Banner has a deep symbolic meaning, which all brethren strictly need to know in order to propose and put into practice Masonic principles. These principles must be the main point of reference to achieve a life of freedom and dignity for all those who live in suffering and pain.

THE NAME NEW CAMELOT LODGE N. 149

The choice of an English name is a tribute to the ancient roots of the Arthurian myth, besides which it is also a tribute to the English language, the most widely spoken in the world. The name New Camelot is written on a roll of parchment because it symbolizes the tradition of writing. The date written beside the roll of parchment indicates "New Camelot n° 149" as the first lodge founded in the zero year of the third millennium. Camelot, King Arthur's mythological town, recalls the people's intention to elevate their spirit in order to bring help and relief to their neighbours. This is the reason why Camelot is the right place where laymen can become New Camelot knights, meet outsiders and act at their best in the interest of all. According to the Arthurian legend, there were 150 Round Table knights. The 150th knight was known as the "perfect knight" and used to sit on King Arthur's right. However, this seat was always empty since all men are imperfect. Our lodge number is 149. It was assigned by chance and yet it is the last of the real knight's seats and completes the Round Table. The adjective "New" is intended to show the ancient mythological Camelot structure in contemporary terms, and to face up to all the new social problems of our times. It is a new consciousness ready to give its contribution to modern society.

THE MERLONED WALL

This symbolizes a defence from the chaos of the profane world. Inside the wall a man can elevate his soul and learn how to act like a New Camelot knight. The wall's battlements are just like a cogwheel, which moves the spiritual side of men to improve their lives. The round wall assures maximum safety from every attack by the profane world. But above all this, the round wall reminds us that the circle is the perfect shape.

THE SMALL DOOR

This Door is surmounted by an arrow-shaped architrave. The door is the only way to enter New Camelot and a man is supposed to crawl through it as a gesture of humility because humility is the first step towards the noble purpose of New Camelot chivalry. Only those who are humble and sincerely wish to act in the common interest are allowed to enter the Small Door. Beyond the Door there is New Camelot's large, round inner courtyard which is a meeting point and spiritual focus between the knights and the profane world.

THE BLACK AND WHITE MOSAIC PAVEMENT

This is the castle's pavement. It symbolizes our lives hovering between good and evil. Every knight is supposed to think about the endless corruptibility of human nature, which everyone can overcome by following the Rule with the aid of God. A green snake slithers along the pavement and the wall. It slithers through a world of opposites moving safely between good and evil.

THE GREEN SNAKE

The Green Snake originates from both culture and nature: from the noble Rule of New Camelot knights and from the human failings which are marks of the human being's strength, vitality and survival instinct.

The snake is New Camelot's mighty guard. It watches the castle from chaos and oversees the Round Table knights' Rule.

THE RULE

"Sine deo incassum conficiet Arturus tabulam": "Arthur will vainly create the Round Table without the aid of God". It is God who enhances every man's good nature and, thanks to God, every man can become a brand new being who can help others. This is the New Camelot knights' first Rule.

THE RING OF REFLECTION

The heart of New Camelot castle is a perfect circle, a ring that represents the winding path of reflection, which leads to wisdom and farsightedness. This path is linked to the Small Door. It means that the one who enters the Door is free to go back to chaos or remain inside the castle by choice to be born again and come to the aid of the needy world outside. Therefore the Ring of Reflection symbolizes the endless route of perseverance towards wisdom through the search of one's self.

THE LAKE'S LOOKING GLASS

Inside New Camelot castle and inside the Ring of Reflection stands the round lake. It reflects the Round Table image but also mirrors all the colours and the symbols of the vault of heaven. The Ring of Reflection stands between the profane world's contradictions (symbolized by the black and white pavement) and the glory of heaven (the sun and the moon), which recalls all men's souls, fears and hopes. These are the three main points: earth (the lake), heaven (the Sun), infinity, (the stars and the Moon). They represent all the contradictions of human nature (the lake), hope (the Sun) and spirituality arising from the infinite (the stars and the Moon). The Round Table's image is reflected in the lake. The Table is divided into 12 slices, which are the elements of human nature. The round lake is Mother Nature, Mother of our hopes, our qualities, and our weaknesses.

THE ROUND TABLE

The number 12 represents a Whole. King Arthur's knights were 149, including him. But the Round Table had a free seat for the unknown knight, the perfect and purest one. As they were all waiting for him to arrive, the real number of knights (149) was different from the symbolic number (150). This is why the Round Table is divided into 12 parts: we divide the symbolic number and not the actual number of knights. The number 12 is composed of 1 (the Whole, the Absolute, the Unity) and 2 (the Multiplicity). The number 1 multiplies itself and becomes 2, which is the beginning of the infinitive multiplicity. When number 1 (the Unity) and number 2 (the Multiplicity) join, they become 12: the Wholeness. So the number 12 is a kind of magic symbol where good and evil, human qualities and weaknesses, values and trivia, coexist in equilibrium. The Round Table symbolizes the physical and spiritual potential of all New Camelot knights. They always tend to be helpful to each other so that they can be helpful, strong and supportive to less strong people.

SYMBOLS IN THE CENTRE

The explanation of the first and the second steps concerned New Camelot knights' principal qualities and actions. The explanation of the third step focuses on the single knight. The shield, the three swords and the helmet are the symbolic weapons that every knight is supposed to use to face his future severe trial.

THE SHIELD

Set on an emerald green background, this is the sealed door, which leads into the inner part of New Camelot castle.

THE THREE SWORDS

The black, white and red swords laid against the shield are the keys to open the Door. Only a pure-hearted knight who has the right knowledge can create the key. Once the knight has entered the Door, he starts upon his way to perfection.

THE HELMET

The Helmet is every knight's goal. If he has been able to make progress along his road to knowledge the Helmet will come into sight. There he will meet the Drake of Light, which only a noble knight can see. The Drake will put the knight to the test of fire. If he is successful, the Drake's breath will make his soul mighty so that he can let himself go in contemplation; the Helmet is the Infinite's finite home. The interpretation of our Lodge's Banner has come to an end, so too has our route through the symbols and images leading to the chivalry of New Camelot.

FINAL REMARKS

The New Camelot Lodge N. 149 Banner puts special emphasis on the values of King Arthur and the Round Table, to project them into the present and future profane world in order to act in accordance with our principles - principles such as freedom, justice, solidarity and the defense of all human rights.

Fabius

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