

IT JUST MIGHT BE A FIRST

Our brothers continuously brave the dark, dank passages beneath the hallowed spaces of Scheffelen Hall to delve into the archives looking for historic Masonic events, like the one where our first Worshipful Master Wells Spicer found the Earps and Doc Holliday innocent of wrongdoing in the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral, but the one that follows just might be a first and in a league of its own.

Our Senior Steward, Brother Rick Chmielewski (at right), knows Fort Huachuca inside and out and spent a good part of his military career there. But while there he knocked on the door and requested to become a Mason in King Solomon T.L. Lodge #5, and for all the right reasons; a burning desire to learn about Masonry, its brothers, its history, the lodge itself and just plain because it's Tombstone, Arizona. There is nothing more to say.

He recently left for a tour of duty in Washington DC, where all young officers go to spend quality time in order to make a good name for themselves in their career path. But Bro. Rick didn't leave Masonry behind, he took it with him and possibly went where no other brother in King Solomon #5 has gone before.

He received an opportunity to visit the Alexandria-Washington Lodge #22 for their Sept. 11th Stated Business Meeting. There are two auspicious historical events that have favored the existence and brothers of #22. The first is the right to claim the most prestigious American Freemason in history as its first Worshipful Master and the second is to be housed in the most important and highly recognized Masonic monument in the United States; the George Washington Masonic National Memorial.



The Memorial is located in Alexandria, Virginia and is dedicated to George Washington, the first President of the U.S. and a Mason. The tower was built to resemble the ancient lighthouse in Alexandria, Egypt. It's over 330 feet high and sits on top of Shuter's Hill. Construction started in 1922. It was dedicated in 1932 and finally completed in the inside in 1970.

"Driving up the hill to the Memorial is both intimidating and exciting, said Bro. Rick. This was the first time I ventured into a Masonic building outside Southeastern Arizona and the vision of it looming over me high into the sky was truly awe inspiring."

When the cornerstone was laid in 1923, about 14,000 Masons, government officials and dignitaries, U.S. Armed Forces personnel were present. Then President Calvin Coolidge laid the cornerstone utilizing the trowel George Washington used in 1783, to lay the cornerstone of the U.S. Capitol building.

Every U.S. state provided an object to be deposited into the cornerstone. Some other unique and valuable items put in were a Christian Bible; a lambskin apron; a portrait of George Washington in his Masonic ceremonial attire; books and pamphlets about his life of Washington and the history of Masonry in America. Also under the cornerstone were copies of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

There are nine floors in the memorial and every one has relevance to a Masonic period, organization or individual. The Grand Masonic Hall is located on the first floor. It has eight granite columns, four on each side of the hall (image at right). In an alcove, there is a bust of Washington and murals illustrating events in his life.

The second or main floor has eight columns of granite, each weighing 63 tons with a set of bronze doors leading into the memorial (image at right) and the Alexandria-Washington Lodge #22 Lodge Room, which is a replica of the lodge as it looked when Washington was the Worshipful Master.



"As I ascended the steps into the Memorial, I reached out for a heavy metal door handle kind of what I imagined was on the doors of King Solomon's Temple. With some effort I opened the door and listened to the echoes of my footsteps as I walked down a long shining hallway with stone and marble all around," said Bro. Rick. "I came to a stern-faced guard who after looking me over allowed me to pass. Out of the shadows the Senior Steward approached me and I knew my examination was about to begin."

The third through ninth floors. Masonic exhibits on the third floor contain historical, appendant bodies, charitable and social programs and events in which the Masons participate. The fourth floor encloses the George Washington Museum. The fifth floor features exhibits and symbols pertinent to Royal Arch Masonry. On this floor is a replica of the Ark of the Covenant. The Memorial Library is on the sixth floor and the seventh is dedicated to Cryptic Masonry -- York Rite -- and is a replica of the crypt beneath the Temple of Solomon. On the eighth floor is a chapel devoted to the Knights Templar. The ninth floor contains both the Tall Cedars Room -- a social group for Master Masons -- and the observation platform. Lastly, the tower is topped by a seven-step pyramid and a light in the shape of a double keystone.

"Passing my examination was not as intimidating as I imagined and after a firm handshake I entered the lodge," said Bro. Rick. "Being a former Senior Steward, I took a seat in the South and after the Pledge of Allegiance I grew comfortable in these majestic surroundings. Like most travelers, some of the ritual was familiar and some was different to me but it all flowed as if it had a soft melody that floated in the air; almost mesmerizing."

"After witnessing the Catechism of the Third Degree of the Perot Camp Senior Deacon, it was my turn to stand and be recognized. Worshipful Master Rob Weston invited me to the East where I rendered him greetings from Worshipful Master Art Montgomery and the brethren of King Solomon T.L. #5 and presented to him and the brethren a copy of our history, the notorious lodge pen and the western bolo tie that our Masons wear with pride."

"He in turn gave me their pin which their brethren wear and present to other Masons with pride. It was a great night and although I missed being away from the brethren of my lodge, I knew then that I had formed new fraternal relationships that are as strong as my brothers back home."



(Note: imagery of and about the Memorial along with the facts and history concerning the Memorial were obtained on Wikipedia.org. For more in depth historical information and facts go to www.wikipedia.org.)



ALEXANDRIA-WASHINGTON LODGE N° 22

ANCIENT FREE & ACCEPTED MASONS



Worshipful Master Rob Weston accepts from Brother Rick Chmielewski on behalf of Worshipful Master Art Montgomery the Western Masonic Bolo Tie – worn by the brethren of King Solomon T.L. #5 in Tombstone.