

**A Dedication in Honor of Stewart Wilson Miner  
Grand Master of Masons in Virginia in 1974**

By

Marc A. Hone, PDDGM

**Presented to A. Douglas Smith, Jr. Lodge of Research, No. 1949**

**On**

**April 29, 2017**

The opinions presented in this paper are strictly those of the author and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Master and Wardens of the A. Douglas Smith Jr., Lodge of Research No. 1949 or the official views of the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Virginia.



## A Dedication in Honor of Stewart Wilson Miner

By

Marc A. Hone, PDDGM

Good Evening Brethren,

I am glad to join you tonight to honor one of our own: a Brother of Cherrydale, a Mason, an American, and a giant among men. I am also humbled and a bit apprehensive to address you tonight, and I think that after a while, you will understand why.

When Worshipful Rick asked me last year if I would be willing to speak at the dedication of our social hall in MW Miner's honor, I quickly agreed. What could be more appropriate than honoring a man of such distinction who came up off this floor and from within our own ranks? Of course, I was happy to have a chance to take part in recognizing Stewart Miner, especially since the high point of my year in the East was an evening in the George Washington Masonic Memorial to honor Stewart on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his year in the Grand East.

As last year drew to a close and I began to think seriously about tonight, I started to realize the weight of the task I had undertaken. You see, I had it easy in 2014. Stewart was willing to attend an evening in his honor. Many, many distinguished Masons from Virginia, Maryland,

the District of Columbia, and beyond would come. As Worshipful Master, I had only to raise the curtain on the grand stage and let the assembled luminaries lend their gravity to the evening. The anecdotes they could share from their long fellowship with Stewart in the quarries of Freemasonry would be enough to regal any crowd, and our presence together and the joy of shared fond memories would elevate that moment in time. I realized that something different would be required for tonight's dedication.

While it is customary to dedicate a place or location in honor of someone, I felt that Stewart would probably frown and be not at all satisfied. He would want more from us. Moreover, he would want us to want more from ourselves. I believe he would want our memories of him to lead us to a different form of dedication: perhaps a re-dedication, a re-dedication of ourselves to more, better, and greater things. You see, I am convinced that the greatest tribute we can offer to the memory of Stewart Miner would be that his example encouraged us to dedicate ourselves anew to those principles which bind us together as Freemasons today and which have

their roots in Freemasonry's inception. In his own words, we are called, "to live virtuously, in peace and harmony, to abide by both the moral and civic law, and to never forget that by his Masonic vows, he [a Mason] is committed to doing good, whenever and wherever he can."<sup>1</sup> You see, I think that Stewart would describe his life and journey in Freemasonry as a story about the need to strive for what is good, just, and kind. In short - I think that Stewart would say that our role as Freemasons is about striving to follow and be "Light."

Many here knew Stewart longer and better than I. They certainly know that the theme and symbolism of "Light" spanned an arc across his life as a Mason. He chose a torch as a symbol of his year in the Grand East. His portrait as Grand Master of Masons in Virginia shows him wearing it on his lapel. He selected "Hold High the Torch; Let There Be Light" as his theme. But the theme he announced as he spoke to the assembled dignitaries of Freemasonry in 1974 was nothing new. It was merely a reflection of the work to which he had already dedicated his life. Its unveiling in 1974 was only the symbolic expression of what must have been a well-known focus within a

disciplined life.

In trying to learn more about our Brother, I reviewed the Archives of Cherrydale Lodge from 1965, the year Stewart was Master. I wanted to see what I could learn of the man from his actions and choices. I thought, surely, Stewart's deeds would reflect his values and beliefs. I was not disappointed by what I found.

Stewart was installed as Master of Cherrydale Lodge in a ceremony held at Mt. Olivet Methodist Church due to a large number of attendees (recorded as 225 members and guests)<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps, not surprising for a man of Stewart's faith, he chose a Chaplain to be the principal speaker, the longest-serving Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, the Rev. Frederick Brown Harris. His year might be, perhaps, unremarkable in the context of Freemasonry in the 1960s - but true wisdom and perspective only emerge in the 'light' of history. As such, Masons today are better equipped to look back on the Cherrydale of 1965 and proclaim it for what it was: an exceptional year led by a gifted man and Mason. Let me take a minute to give you just a taste of what it meant for Stewart to be the Master of Cherrydale.

---

<sup>1</sup> Stewart Wilson Miner, "GS Retirement Address: Making a Difference" (Address, Almas Temple Shrine in Washington D.C., October 16, 2004), 2.

<sup>2</sup> History of the Cherrydale Masonic Lodge (Arlington, VA: Publisher Unknown, 1972), 136-7.

In 1965, Stewart opened the Lodge for its Stated Communication 22 times (they had only one stated in July and August, and two in all other months). He opened his Lodge an additional 26 times for called communications - for a total of 48 meetings that year. The first time when 14 days elapsed between Lodge openings was April (an occurrence that would happen only 4 times that year). Over the course of 1965, Cherrydale would have a total of 2191 Masons attend Lodge meetings, including 529 visitors, in fact, we know because it was customary at the time to record in the minutes all members of Cherrydale by name, as well as giving a total for the number of guests.<sup>3</sup> When you add the seven performances of *A Rose Upon the Altar* that Stewart also took part in as one of The Cherrydale Players, you can begin to appreciate the crushing weight that this Mason bore. The magnitude of this accomplishment is magnified by the fact that, across 48 meetings, Stewart missed opening his Lodge only once - a called communication to confer the EA degree in August 1965. Surely, no Cherrydale Master here tonight has withstood such a tempering fire as Stewart did that year!

The men he attracted to present at meetings were luminaries in their own right: The Deputy Grand Master of the District of Columbia (Thomas Dodge), two Members of the U.S. House of Representatives, the four-star Commanding General of US and NATO Army Forces in Europe, heads of National organizations (Senior Citizens of America and later a Vice-President of the AFL-CIO). In many cases across his year,

Cherrydale's minutes show that his speakers discussed topics of weight - patriotism, tolerance, living by the rules laid down in religion and amplified in Masonry, having high standards and holding them dearly.<sup>4</sup>

In a year with so many duties so well executed, the many successes achieved, and the laurels of higher office soon to come to him, it would be natural for a man to sit back, admire his handiwork and savor his successes. It would be understandable for him to claim the honors which his performance so richly deserved. But as with so many things in his life's work, Stewart was already focused on the next job; already he had heard a trumpet sounding his next call to duty. With a fortnight remaining in his tenure as Master, he spoke to 53 Cherrydale Brothers about the work ahead. In his closing remarks on 2 December 1965, he said:

I would not want to leave you with the impression that all is well in Cherrydale, in District 54, or in this Grand Jurisdiction. Certainly, it is not. All lodges at all levels, ours included, share a number of mutual problems. We all need to work ... on bringing Freemasonry up to date, to the hour in which we live. I once remarked that while we are wedded to the past, we are dedicated to the future. I am also of the belief that too many of us spend too much time reflecting on someone else's [sic] past achievements. We are now at the brink. Unless we take the problems in hand and get about the work of the day, there will be no tomorrows for us as Freemasons to worry about.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Communications of Cherrydale Masonic Lodge (Arlington, VA), Minutes of Lodge Meetings for Masonic Year 1965, 19 December 1964 - 16 December 1965: Ibid.

You see, Stewart was a light-bearer. Even after bearing the burden of leadership of this Lodge through a year that would test the endurance of the stoutest heart, the light he perceived had already illumined his path forward. His gaze was set on the future - and what good might be done by men who had the "zeal to dare."<sup>6</sup>

One could spend a fair amount of time discussing Stewart's efforts on the way to and during his time as Grand Master of Masons in Virginia in 1974, but I will focus elsewhere. In reviewing Stewart's numerous speeches and written works, I was struck by a recurring theme: that the eye of the Great Architect held all Brothers as equals, and yet, in our beloved fraternity, we failed to extend

It is clear that he perceived a deficiency in how we *chose* to practice Freemasonry in Virginia; that our intolerance blinded us to the light provided by the Great Architect. He knew the foundational truth embedded in the DNA of every religion; that we are to love and care for one another. This truth demands that we work for the benefit of all and show respect to all our Brothers, those like us, and those not so. Because of his convictions, I surmise that his heart found its home in the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia. If the torch of tolerance and justice that he held could not bum uncovered among his Brothers in Virginia, it would serve as a lighthouse from the North bank of the Potomac.

Time and again he would address the foundational principles of justice and tolerance over the remainder of his time on Earth. It was close to his heart and being. More than speak or write about it - he would work for the change he knew to be well and long overdue.

He would raise the theme again - as one of just a few substantive points he addressed

that same hand of friendship and dignity to each other.

In an undated speech, contextually placed in early 1986, Stewart wrote, "Mason, today, appear to be more concerned with the perpetuation of the imagined past that they are with adaptation to a present that is real. And that is a damning indictment of our cause. Moreover, it is one that can hardly be denied. We have done little to encourage the promotion outside of our Masonic bodies of those duties that are inculcated in them ... The hour is long past since we should have placed ourselves in the vanguard of the movement to secure equality for everyone in this nation, regardless of sex or color."<sup>7</sup>

He would be invited to speak at the signing of a protocol between The Grand Lodge of Virginia and the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Virginia, A. F. & A.M., Inc., in 2004. Stewart was instrumental in bringing this protocol to fruition, to start the process of normalizing visitation between the Brothers of our two Grand Lodges. It was clear in his short remarks that the 'light' he perceived illumined the gravity of that moment. In speaking of his admiration for his counterpart from the Prince Hall Grand Lodge, Most Worshipful Past Grand Master Robert E. Harris, Sr., Stewart remarked:

He ... entered into our negotiations with an admirable attitude of cooperation and a spirit of mind that spoke volumes of their collective desire to do not only what was timely and necessary but also what was spiritually right. Memories of our labors together in this cause are a blessing that I will cherish forever.<sup>8</sup>

in a speech delivered in October 2004, during the celebration of his retirement as

the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia. On that proud occasion, perhaps for the first time, he perceived that his labors as a Noachida, a son of the light<sup>9</sup>, might at long last, be winding to a close. He remarked:

I am proud of my association with those men in this Grand Lodge who have consistently confronted, rather than condoned, the insidious and persistent enemies of civilization – injustice and intolerance. By our conscious efforts to promote principle and to reject prejudice, we have strengthened the Craft. I deem it a privilege to have taken part in this great work...

. . . but there comes a time in the life of every man to say, "it is done." And that time is almost here. Thus, paraphrasing the words of a favorite soldier - poet, I now declare that with failing hands I throw the torch (of light and reason and as I do so, I pray that those of you who catch it will strive to hold it high.)<sup>10</sup>

I want to skip forward here to share a

personal observation -- one borne of a discussion I was privileged to have with Stewart in 2014. As I was finishing preparations for the hallmark event of my year as Cherrydale's Master, a celebration of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Most Worshipful Miner's year in the GrandEast, I had a few occasions to sit with him in his apartment in Greenspring and discuss the event. Among the discussions of logistics, invitation lists, friends and Masons who should have a chance to come to the dinner following the event, and other essential but mundane details, we had an opportunity to chat about what Stewart was proudest of for the time that he had been given in Freemasonry.

With the clarity that still echoes with me today, he stated that he was the proudest of Worshipful Travis Sanch z Hilliard. He felt proud that he had been privileged to be a part of bringing Travis into our fraternity, to help him find a home in Cherrydale, and his joy that Travis had stayed true to the course to rise to lead our beloved Lodge. He was proud of all Travis was, of all that he had become, and all he might yet be, and he was proud of all that Virginia Freemasonry might become.

<sup>4</sup> Stewart Wilson Miner, "The Song is Ended" (Address, Cherrydale Masonic Lodge in Arlington, VA, December 2, 1965).

<sup>5</sup> S.E. Kiser, "Spirit of Culver" (Commencement Address of Culver Military Academy Graduation, Culver, IN, June 5, 1913), accessed April 5, 2017, <http://digitalvauitculver.org/cdm/singleitem/col!ectlon/Footbail/id/484/rec/13>.

<sup>6</sup> Stewart Wilson Miner, "Progress Through Change" in Selected Talks and Thoughts on Freemasonry, (Cherrydale, Assumed 1986), Section C.7.

<sup>7</sup> Stewart Wilson Miner, "Visitation Compact Signing" (Address, Grand Lodge of Virginia in Richmond, VA, January 11, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Stewart Wilson Miner, "Hold High The Torch" (Address, Installation of M.W. Stewart W. Miner Grand Master of Virginia in Richmond, VA, February, 1974), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Stewart Wilson Miner, "GS Retirement Address: Making a Difference" (Almas Temple Shrine in Washington D.C., October 16, 2004), 3.

