

Join A Masonic Lodge?

NEVER!

Larry B. Thompson, Jr., 32°

114 Orchard Ridge Road, Locust, North Carolina 28097-8748

larry@thompsonenv.com

Though first put off by anti-Masonic allegations, the author tells how he learned through family and friends to value Freemasonry.

Bro. Larry B. Thompson, Jr., 32°

I will never forget the day, during my freshman year at college, when one of my classmates recommended a book for my reading pleasure. He began to tell me about some of the conspiracy theories the book touched on, especially those relevant to Masons, since they pretty much ruled the world! Intrigued, I accepted his offer to loan me the book (titled withheld for soon-to-be-obvious reasons). I read the book and promptly decided I would never seek to join this allegedly occult and insidious organization. After all, it was the antithesis of everything I stood for!



Years later, after a Thanksgiving dinner at my mom's house, I asked my Uncle Frank¹ what he knew about this "secret society called Freemasonry." My question was prompted by my concern for an elderly gentleman in our church, Mr. Bunn McRae,² who was a Mason. I could not believe that he, a fine Christian man by all accounts, could be a member of so evil a group as the Masons.

I thought that my Uncle Frank would know at least a little something about this organization given the fact that he had been around the block once or twice and had served his country in three wars. Well, you could have knocked me over with a straw when Uncle Frank smiled and told me that he was a Mason!

I proceeded to tell him everything I knew about Freemasonry based

upon the book I had read. Uncle Frank listened intently as I shared with him the sinister workings that only the "higher up" Masons could possibly know anything about. When I finally gave him the chance to speak, he simply told me that nothing I told him could be farther from the truth, that I should take the time to learn more about Masonry, and then see where my heart led.

Not long after, I changed jobs and met Bro. Terry Lee Harris, 32°, a man I instantly liked because of his positive attitude and the way he made me feel at home in my new surroundings. One day I noticed a gold band on Terry's right hand. The band had a triangle on it and some kind of strange character or symbol inside the triangle. I asked Terry what kind of ring it was, and he told me that it was his 14th Degree ring. I guess I had a confused look on my face, so he explained that it was a Degree within the Scottish Rite of Masonry and that the symbol within the triangle was actually the initial letter of the word *Jehovah* in Hebrew. I was instantly intrigued!

Less than eight weeks later, I found myself working a Scottish Highland Games at Stone Mountain, Georgia, in my capacity as the High Commissioner for Clan MacTavish. While at Stone Mountain, I ran into Thomas Allen Bruce, the High Commissioner of the Family of Bruce, and noticed that Allen wore the same ring I had seen on Terry. Allen and his lovely wife had been guests at our clan dinner the year before in Charleston, South Carolina, and I had liked the guy since we first met.

Having noticed the ring, I began to talk to him about Freemasonry, sharing my concerns and expressing my fascination, but noting that I did not want to enter into anything that would conflict with my religious convictions. Allen offered up a smile and began to tell me that he had been in the same situation himself not too many years prior. He went on to tell me that if it made any difference to me, it was a Southern Baptist minister that had presented him with his petition to the Lodge and coached him through the first three Degrees. Before we departed, Allen told me to feel free to call on him with any questions I may have about Masonry, and we exchanged phone numbers and e-mail addresses. For the first time, I actually felt like Freemasonry might be for me!



**Lt. Colonel Frank F. Cannon,
U.S. Air Force, near the
completion of his flight training**

Within the next two weeks, I contacted Allen and told him that after careful consideration, and in no small part due to the respect that I had every Mason that I had met thus far in my life, I was now convinced Masonry was something I wanted to learn more about. Allen promptly told me to go to Terry and tell him the exact same thing. The rest, he assured me, would be taken care of. He also asked me to keep in touch with him as to how everything progressed.

Well, Terry got my petition, and was I surprised to see how many old friends (men I had known all my life) showed up for my first Degree! I was somewhat disappointed that my Uncle Frank was not strong enough to drive up from Florida, but his battle with cancer was draining his strength. Nonetheless, he was constantly sending me e-mails saying how proud he was of me as a new Mason.

A Brother, who it turned out was my life-long neighbor and whose son was also a good friend of mine, was assigned as my Coach, and he began to work wonders on me. As my third Degree drew near, I was shocked to learn Allen wanted to come up for it despite the fact that it was a long drive from North Carolina to Atlanta. Unfortunately, Uncle Frank was growing weaker, and I could tell that he really hated the fact that he would not be at my raising, but I assured him I knew he would be there in spirit.

When the big night finally arrived, Allen and Terry were there, and Uncle Frank had sent a note of encouragement to me. The evening progressed without a hitch, and I soon proudly earned the title of Master Mason. Brother Allen really added the "icing to the cake" when he presented me with my first Masonic book and lapel pin!

Sadly, not too many months after that big night, Uncle Frank passed away. After his memorial service, my Aunt Nita called me to the side and presented me with my uncle's Scottish Rite ring, saying that he had wanted me to have it once I became a Master of the Royal Secret. I had recently joined the Valley of Greensboro, Scottish Rite. I was deeply moved given the fact that all five of my cousins would have probably cherished that ring, but Uncle Frank had chosen to leave it to me. I gave Aunt Nita a kiss, fought back tears, and told her I had never received a gift so meaningful and so appreciated.

Whether Uncle Frank knew it or not, he certainly left an indelible impression upon me, as both a child and as an adult, and I can only hope that I can live up to his expectations.

1. Lt. Colonel Frank F. Cannon, U.S. Air Force, Ret. (see photo above), age 78, of Fort Walton Beach, passed away on Friday, April 5, 2002. He was a 31-year Air Force veteran, having served in World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam War. Uncle Frank received numerous decorations throughout his career as a pilot, including the Distinguished Flying Cross, Bronze Star for Valor, Distinguished Service Medal, and six Air Medals. He was a member of the American Legion and Air Force Officer's Club, and a Freemason.

2. Bunn McRae will turn 94 years old this year. The day I discovered that Brother McRae was a Freemason, he told me that the three most important things in his life were his family, the church (Stony Fork Baptist), and Freemasonry.

Larry B. Thompson, Jr., is currently Junior Warden of Blackmer Lodge No. 127, Mount Gilead, North Carolina, the Assistant Secretary of Wilkerson College Lodge No. 760, a 32° member of the Valley of Greensboro, the Greensboro York Rite Bodies, and several other Masonic Bodies and societies. He is employed as an Environmental Supervisor with the North Carolina Department of Transportation.