



Letters from Whatcom Lodge No.

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December 2002

The Master's Trestle-board

Brethren, my first year as Worshipful Master has indeed been an adventure. There were a few rocky moments but our ship has arrived safely in port. I wish to take this opportunity to thank some of you brothers who helped keep us on course. I will start with our Tyler, Virgil Olund, who took care of setting up and taking down the lodge room; next is our Treasurer, Frank Myers, who kept our financial records straight; our Senior Steward, John Browne, for keeping us well fed - in word as well as meat, and lastly; I can't say enough about our Secretary, Glenn Hutchings - his enthusiasm inspires us all. A huge thank you goes to WB Glenn & WB John Burley who teamed up and put together a fine Masters Dinner.

Hope to see each of you at our stated meeting and Installation of Officers.

Sincerely,
WM Buck Strickland

Brethren, I recently received the following e-mail which I am happy to share with you.

Mr. Browne please except my apology for sending this so late. I would appreciate it if you could let your lodge members know how much I appreciate the opportunity to receive the scholarship.
Chris Johnston.

Dear; Masonic Lodge

Thank you very much for the opportunity to receive the Harold M. Terpening Scholarship. It will be extremely helpful as I am currently enrolled in school at Whatcom Community College. I am trying to obtain associates degree from Whatcom and then transfer to a state university. I would like to thank Whatcom Lodge 151 for all the support.

Sincerely,
Chris Johnston

A Great Dinner!

If you weren't there, sorry you missed it but the Master's Dinner was lots of fun. The food was very good and so was the entertainment. The *Show-Stoppers* from Bellingham High School put on lively musical performance. They will be representing Washington State at a Music Festival this Spring in Branson Missouri.

Our current Secretary, WB Glenn Hutchings served as the Master of Ceremony.
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Installation of Officers

Thursday December 19th, 2002.

Whatcom Lodge No. 151 will be installing its officers for 2003 in a tiled lodge. We will have some finger-food on hand at 6:30 PM and desert after lodge & installation.

Lodge will open at 7:30 PM.

The Wisdom of Rome

The month of December is: **THE MONTH TO HOPE.** "Winter nourishes the seed sown in the ploughed earth each year; all is wet with the rains sent by Jupiter. Now, let December bring again the golden festival of Saturn." (Calendar of Filocalus, Degrassi 245)

We owe much of our Christmas celebration to the old Roman winter solstice festival of Saturnalia, December 17-23. The long march into darkness turns at the conclusion of December 21st and begins its trek back toward the longest day in June. The Roman god Saturn is the focus because he is the father of Jupiter, who became the most powerful god and he is the one who taught man how to plant and nurture seeds into crops. The Saturnalia was a multi-day festival in which folks ate, drank made merry and exchanged gifts with family and friends. The observance of this festival lasted into the fifth century CE.

The Christian religion became the official religion of Rome early in the fourth century CE and over time the Church fathers became increasingly dismayed at the gluttonous and drunkenness associated with Saturnalia. The early Christian Church decided to make-over this festival by associating it with the birth of Jesus. The cult of the sun played a part in this process because many early Roman-Christians took to heart the belief that Jesus was the "Light of the world." This was supported by passages from the Old Testament such as this one from the Prophet Malachi: "the Sun of righteousness [shall] arise with healing in his wings." There was a certain attractiveness to placing the birth of Jesus into context with the rebirth of the Sun. In other parts of Christendom there was a desire to associate his birth with an Egyptian festival which was celebrated on January 6th. After some haggling took place

To contribute to this newsletter please send your letter, comment, historical fact, poem or calendar announcement, by the 2nd Monday of each month, to:

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To Santa Close

How did good old St. Nicholas come to be Santa Claus? Well, it turns out there really was a St. Nicholas who lived in what is now Turkey, in the 4th Century CE (or AD, in older books). St. Nicholas was a Bishop in the city of Myra. He is known as the patron saint of several groups of people, but it is as the patron saint of children by which we know him best.

The most famous story about St. Nicholas and gift-giving is about some gold coins he gave to a man with three daughters. The man had lost his business and no longer had money for dowries, so his daughters were considered unmarriageable. When the eldest daughter came of age to marry the man decided he would sell her into servitude.

The daughter's plight came to be known to St. Nicholas, who had been born to wealthy parents. On the night before the man's daughter was to be sold St. Nicholas tossed a bag of gold coins into an open window of the man's home. In the morning the man found the money and decided it had been sent to him from heaven. Now there was enough money for his eldest daughter's dowry and extra for the family to live on. However, the next year the man found himself in the same predicament and decided he had no choice but to sell the 2nd daughter. St. Nicholas repeated his generosity with a dowry for the 2nd daughter, and the following year for the 3rd daughter.

In one version of this story, St. Nicholas tosses all three bags of coins into the window and they land in the stockings the daughters had hung by the fire to dry. By the way, it's believed this same story is the reason why we hang stockings from the mantle above the fire place. Despite his goodness, eventually, like all of us will, St. Nicholas passed away. Because of his kind and generous heart he went to *Heaven*. At the gates to heaven, legend tells us, arrivals meet with St. Peter, who makes sure each arriving soul is on the list of those who are allowed to enter. St. Peter greeted St. Nicholas and told him that he was expected and that God wished to meet with him as soon as he arrived. St. Nicholas was given directions and he proceeded to see the Heavenly Father straight away. When he was admitted into God's presence he said to God, "I am here Father as your humble servant."

God responded, "Yes, Bishop Nicholas, you have been my humble and loyal servant and that is why I have summoned you directly upon your arrival. I have a mission

for you, one for which you are highly qualified. You will, in time, be made a saint by the earthly church and become a figure of legend and myth. And this will be good, so I am going to send you forth as my agent of good will and peace."

St. Nicholas was stunned at first but then he quietly thought about what God had said and he replied, "I accept this mission with all my heart but please, tell me just what am I to do?"

God smiled and said, "You are going to influence humankind where they are most receptive, with open hearts and minds; while they are children. But I will lay the groundwork for you. I will send forth inspiration to those receptive adults who will make you a saint and tell the first stories that will bloom into legends and myths. You will operate in the realm of dreams; fantasy and imagination will be the tools of your trade.

"Don't make the mistake of thinking this will be easy," God warned. "Remember what you experienced in life: while many humans can be kind and good, others can be willful and cruel. Many of them will only believe what their eyes and ears can detect for them. Others will only believe what they can calculate with mathematical certainty. The seven sins are still at work in the earthly world and they will be your foes, because humans are unsteady masters of their own needs and desires.

"However, humans also have the capacity to love and a desire to be loved in return. It is this capacity, which you are going to help them nurture, by planting the seeds of love: care, devotion and charity, while humans are still children."

St. Nicholas then spoke, "But Father, people often become jaded and callused-over as adults."

"Yes, I know," God said, "but that's where you come in. You will be among them and when the flower of love wilts in a person you will seek a way to get water back on the seeds we sowed in them as children, and maybe the flower of love will grow again." St. Nicholas saw the wisdom of our Heavenly Father and asked if he could be excused to go and prepare himself for this mission.

St. Nicholas was a very smart soul. God had chosen wisely, but then God had done well in St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas realized that his best approach would be to inspire people, over time, through their own cultural experiences. This is why the mystery of Santa Claus took centuries to unfold and why St. Nicholas has different names, appearance, and helpers in different countries. But, despite the changes, he remains a universal symbol of love and generosity.

by: John F. Browne

Remember, In the words
of Judy the Elf:
"Seeing is not believing,"
rather, "believing is seeing."
(From the movie: **The Santa Claus**)



Jan. 2nd No Special Com.—The WM wishes you a Happy New Year!!

Jan. 16th - stated meeting - 7:30 PM

Feb. 8th (Sat.) is our special, we're having Hoedown Night—this will be fun so don't miss it. Food, Square-dancing and costume prizes. Begins at **5:45** PM Dancing at 6:15 PM (approx)

Feb. 20th - stated meeting. This will be Past Master's Night. Lodge at 7:30 PM

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mony. [by the way, Glenn's daughter Kelly is a member of The Show-Stoppers—they were just great] He handed out awards to some of the winners at our November 7th Games Night Bunco contest. WB Glenn also made two presentations to brothers for their dedicated service: Br. Frank Myers who has been our Treasurer and WB John Browne - in part for this newsletter. A richly deserved acknowledgement was accorded to WB John Burley and his helpers at the Elks Club, they did a marvelous job.

The highlight of this evening was the issuance of three Fifty-year pins to: Karl Kern, Ellis Massey and Don Leatherwood. Congratulations go to all three of these fine Masons.

Happy Holidays & New Year

SS John F. Browne