

Reagan Lodge No. 1037 A.F. & A.M.

1606 Heights Boulevard



Houston, Texas 77008

In the Heart of Historic Houston Heights

BETWEEN FRIENDS

YESTERDAY • TODAY • TOMORROW



THE CORNERSTONE

Issue #108

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF REAGAN LODGE NO.1037

GM THOMAS F. GRIFFIN PRESENTS GRAND LODGE SERVICE AWARDS AT 97th ANNIVERSARY DINNER

This year's Anniversary Dinner at Reagan Lodge was an extravaganza that not many of us will forget, least of all the recipients of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Texas' 50, 60 and 65 Year Masonic Service Awards. Grand Master Thomas F. Griffin, himself, presented the awards during his official visit!

Thanks to Worshipful Master G.W. "Bill" Fortney's foresight in renting additional seating, the 160+ in attendance were all comfortably accommodated. Thanks to the seemingly tireless labors of Senior Steward Lawrence Thurman and Junior Steward Sid Jones, that same 160+ went home lip-smackingly full that evening after enjoying a magnificent holiday meal!

The annual year-end festivities at Reagan Lodge took on an especially heightened atmosphere as the capacity crowd filled the dining room and anticipated the arrival of the Most Worshipful Grand Master. Once the program got underway, the mood was further enlivened by each speaker and presenter contributing their own, individual brands of humor and joviality to the proceedings. Bro. Secretary Kenneth E. Sparks even introduced a bit of improve or, rather, *impromptu* comedy into the awards presentation!

Leonard O. Pierce, Past Grand Commander, Grand Commandery of Texas and Past Master of Reagan Lodge presented 4 scholarships with the recipients' families in proud attendance. Afterwards, Bertie Ebert, W.M. and Don Donnenwerth, W.P. of Houston Heights Chapter #258 Order of the Eastern Star presented First Lady Vi Griffin with a 14-karat gold replica of her kite pin, symbolic of the First Lady's devotion to her philanthropic focus, the Scottish Rite Hospital for Children. W.M. Bill Fortney and Mrs. Leah Fortney presented the Grand Master with a 14-karat gold replica of his 2007-2008 Grand Lodge of Texas logo as well as with a rare replica of the famous George Washington Bible signed, numbered and complete with personal well-wishes to the Grand Master directly from Grand Lodge of New York.

The stars of the event were, undoubtedly, Bro. Jack L. Wright (PM 1958-59) and Bro. John M. Skelton (PM 1959-60), both recipients of awards for 60 years of service. Bro. Wright was specifically honored for his long-time work with the York Rite, while Bro. Skelton's years of dedication to Blue Lodge work and ritual were highlighted as a few of the many areas where these men have made contributions to masonry. Each addressed the crowd in lively and genuinely moving fashion.



Bro. Jack L. Wright



Bro. John M. Skelton

Bro. Marion Devore (PM 1981-82) spoke for the Past Masters in attendance who were on hand to receive a special commemorative pin from the Grand Lodge of Texas as well.

Most Worshipful Thomas F. Griffin was especially gracious in taking time to thank and commend the Worshipful Master, his

Those honored this year were:

Fifty (50) Years of Service:

**Bro. Irving B. Rose
Bro. Harold Dean Jones**

**Bro. John Roy Jenkins
Bro. Fred E. Huebner, Sr.**

Sixty (60) Years of Service:

Bro. Jack L. Wright

Bro. John M. Skelton

Sixty-five (65) Years of Service:

Bro. Joe A. Newsome, Jr.

officers and the brethren of the Lodge...taking that same spirit with him as he took a detour into the kitchen to personally thank the Stewards, servers, wives and volunteers who worked so hard to make the event a special one.

Worshipful Master Bill Fortney extended his sincere appreciation to his officers, the Stewards and his decoration team with a special thanks to Mrs. Patsy Duke and Mrs. Chloe Schultea for providing the opening and closing musical entertainment. As we now begin looking ahead and working toward our 100th anniversary, both the Lodge and the year 2007 are duly closed in grand fashion, with 2008 beginning promptly with our stated meeting on New Year's Day!

SCHOOL IS IN!

Whether it be due to degree teams rehearsing in the Lodge room, brothers brushing-up on certificate requirements in the library or E.A. instruction in a back office, attendance at School of Instruction has been on the upswing at Reagan Lodge in recent months. A steady increase in the number of petitions and new and affiliating members coming to the Lodge have bolstered the roster and invigorated the brothers who gather on Tuesday nights to both learn and teach "Masonic Work". Need to brush up for a certificate? Or better yet, know your work well enough to help instruct newer brothers eager to learn? Tuesday night at Reagan Lodge is the time and place! Come lend a hand or even just an ear and support and take part in this important program.

REAGAN LODGE TO HOST CERTIFICATE EXAMS IN JANUARY

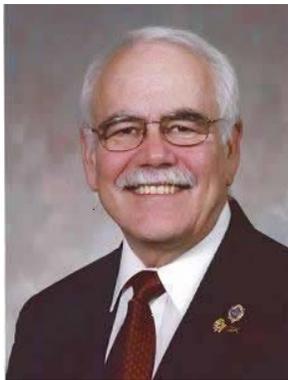
The third Friday evening in January is a longstanding date for Masons from all across Houston to journey to Reagan Lodge to test their skills and memory in their "Masonic Work". If you think you've become proficient enough to "stand the test" or if you just want to come "listen and learn" from the pros, mark your calendar for **Friday, January 18th, 2008 @ 6:00pm**. Refreshments will be served alongside a heaping portion of Masonic Fellowship.

Reagan Lodge Moves Into The Technological Age...

After much work and collaboration between the members of the revamped Website and Technology committee, Reagan Lodge has made a place for itself on the Internet. Within the past few months, the lodge has created a Yahoo! Group, which allows for communication between the members, a Forum, where members can discuss anything related to Masonry, as well as the Lodge website itself, which underwent a massive overhaul in both outlook and design. Since the implementation of these aspects of our lodge into the web community, visitation to our website and forum has gone up from ten unique hits in November, to over one thousand hits in January! The amount of traffic viewing our website is continuously on the rise, and we have received communication from several people in regards to Masonry in the Heights.

Also on the website is the newly created Photos section. We ask that you send a copy of any and all photographs of Lodge events from the past to our web team, so that it may be scanned-in and put online. If you have any comments on the website or have something you feel you would like to contribute, please contact one of the committee members. Thanks, and see you online at <http://www.reaganlodge1037.org/>

FROM THE EAST...



Worshipful Master G.W. "Bill" Fortney

Information from the Worshipful Master

Worshipful Master G.W. "Bill" Fortney would like to remind all of the brethren and their families that on Saturday, February 23rd @ 10:00am Reagan Lodge will hold it's annual ***Wives, Widows and Sweethearts Breakfast***. This event is yet another of our open meetings where attendance by friends, relatives and neighbors is welcomed and whole-heartedly encouraged! All are invited to come out and enjoy the music, food, fun and fellowship with us as we celebrate in the spirit of St. Valentine's Day.

AND NOW A FEW WORDS FROM JOHN H. REAGAN (??)

Not just a few...but 351 pages worth! Back in 1906 the Neale Publishing Company released the hardbound volume, "*Memoirs, with Special Reference to Secession and the Civil War*" by John Henninger Reagan. Historian Ben H. Procter included Reagan in his list of the "four greatest Texans of the 19th century," along with Sam Houston, Stephen F. Austin, and James Stephen Hogg. It's not surprising, then, that this book is widely considered to be one of the most important volumes of personal memoirs from the late 1800's.

Having been called from labor just a year before, Bro. Reagan's journal covers topics

ranging from the Republic of Texas, the Civil War, and working as a surveyor in Texas in the 1830's and 1840's to Reconstruction, being a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1861 to 1887 and serving as U.S. Senator from Texas, 1887 to 1891.

Today the rare first edition of this first-hand account commands about \$275.00 (in good condition).

A later edition, published in 1968 by Pemberton Publishing (Austin, TX) included a full index and photos. Even this more recent volume is rare enough to carry a \$175.00 price

tag. However, a diligent web search and anywhere from \$40.00 to \$85.00 can get you a copy of the same from a number of internet-based, used book bins. John Henninger Reagan's many achievements and contributions to the history of Texas are memorialized in monuments and landmarks all over the state. John H. Reagan

High School, in the Heights area of Houston, being one of many.

This U.S. Representative, Senator, Post Master General, author, farmer, Freemason and Past Master of Palestine Lodge #31 is also the Brother for whom Reagan Lodge #1037 was named.

THE SNOWBALL VISITATION TEAM

(The following comes courtesy of Bro. Brad Reel of Holland Lodge #1. The Snowball Visitation Team were recent visitors to Reagan Lodge and collected a few of the brethren for their upcoming visits to the lodges of District 30.)

If you haven't attended a Snowball Visitation yet, I encourage you to come on one of the monthly visitations. So far, the Snowball Visitation Team has grown nicely. The team now includes brothers from **Garden Oaks Lodge #1306, Houston Lodge #1189, Gray Lodge #329, Park Place Lodge #1172** and, as of this writing, **Reagan Lodge #1037** (where we watched their brethren confer a Master Masons degree). We have made a lot of new friends and have even been given quite a few lapel pins from the lodges we have visited.

The purpose of the Snowball Visitations are to extend fraternal greetings to other lodges in District 30, strengthen fraternal bonds, form new friendships with brothers we've never met, and gather knowledge from other lodges about what they are doing for Masonry in Texas. Everyone benefits from the visits. It is truly a win-win situation for all involved. So, come on out and enjoy the fun and fellowship and be a part of the Snowball Visitation Team this month! Bro. Brad Reel has organized monthly "snowball" visitations. Each month the group members are visiting another lodge.

While visiting each month's lodge, they will recruit two members from that lodge to join them on upcoming months lodge visits.

The "snowball" will grow until June, 2008 when they will have their final visit at Holland Lodge. Join in the fun, contact Bro. Brad Reel at bradreel@gmail.com for information.

BOOK REVIEW: *FREEMASONS FOR DUMMIES*

Bro. S: After reading this book from beginning to end, I truly believe that every new Mason should own a copy. Not only does Bro. Hodapp explain the basics in everyday language, but he does a fine job of demystifying some of the more commonly asserted tales and conspiracy theories.

I highly recommend it and have found it to be a rather handy resource when family members, co-workers or friends have questions sparked by either natural curiosity or a History Channel encounter with masonry.

The book is divided into six major sections:

1. What Is Freemasonry?

2. The Mechanics Of Freemasonry
3. Knights, Swords, Fezzes, And Dresses
4. Freemasons Today And Tomorrow
5. The Part Of Ten
6. Appendix

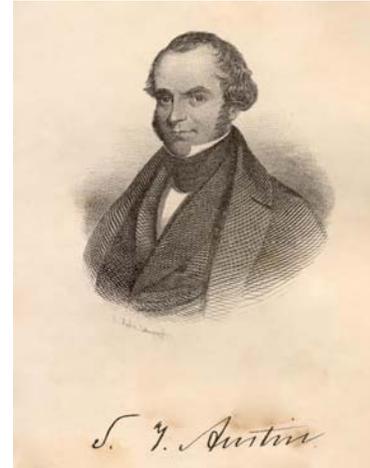
Bro. M: As Bro. S pointed out, every Mason should own a copy of this book. I'd go as far as to say that it would be beneficial for the lodge to present to a newly raised Master Mason a copy.

At first, I approached this book hesitantly, due to the mere fact that I considered the title to be targeted towards such an audience. However, after reading it in its entirety, I myself came across countless situations which I was either incorrect on knowing about, or had not known about it prior to reading it. The book covers every aspect of Masonry; while it may not delve upon the mysticism, symbols, or other intellectual aspects of Freemasonry, it certainly

serves its purpose in explaining Masonry from its past to its present. A person who doesn't even know the term Freemason could pick up the book, read it, and be as knowledgeable as many members who have proceeded through the degrees. I certainly give a thumbs up to Bro. Hodapp, and recommend his other published works for those interested in furthering their Masonic knowledge

Stephen Fuller Austin, Freemason and Father of Texas

Stephen Fuller Austin (November 3, 1793 – December 27, 1836), known as the "Father of Texas", led the second and ultimately successful colonization of the region of northern Mexico known as Bexar in the state of Coahuila y Tejas. Austin was made a Master Mason in Louisiana Lodge No. 109 in St. Genevieve, Louisiana, in June of 1815. From the time he first entered Mexico City in 1822 to renew his father's land grant in order to bring families to Texas, until his death in 1836, his efforts and adventures are constantly mingled with the efforts and adventures of fellow Master Masons in Texas.



Austin's plan for a colony in Texas was halted when Mexico gained independence from Spain in 1821. Austin was informed that the *junta instituyente*, the new congress of the government of Agustín I of Mexico, refused to recognize the land grant made to his father by the Spanish government. Austin traveled to Mexico City and managed to persuade the *junta instituyente* to authorize the grant that had been given to his father, which would, in turn, permit immigration plans by Emprario Austin to continue.

By late 1825, Austin had brought the first 300 families, now known in Texas history as the Old Three Hundred, to the land grant originally given to his father. Of the original 300 families, 39 of them are known to have been headed by Master Masons.

In contrast to the many ruffians who later came to Texas, Austin made every effort to accept only colonists who were law abiding, and of sterling character. In the same manner that a lodge requires background information on members, Austin required the colonists to bring with them documents that attested to their good character. Although he had effective civil and military authority over the settlers, he was quick to introduce a semblance of American law, and the Constitution of Coahuila y Tejas was agreed upon in November 1827. To uphold law and order and protect the colonists, Austin organized small armed groups that came to be known as the Texas Rangers.

Despite his hopes, Austin was making little money from his endeavors. The colonists were unwilling to pay for his services as emprario, and most of the money gained was spent on the processes of government and public services.

It was during these years that Austin sought to establish Freemasonry in Texas. Freemasonry was well established and accepted among the educated classes of Mexican society, and many of the men coming into Texas were Masons. It should be noted that the (American) Anti-Masonic political party was formed in 1826, and skepticism about Masonry was widespread in the United States at that time. It is the author's belief that this led to the immigration of many Masons into Texas.

On February 11, 1828, Austin called a meeting of Freemasons at San Felipe for the purpose of electing officers and petitioning the Masonic Grand Lodge in Mexico City for a charter to form a lodge. Austin was elected Worshipful Master of the new lodge. Although the petition reached Matamoros, and was to be forwarded to Mexico City, nothing more was heard of it.

By 1828, the ruling faction in Mexico was afraid that the liberal elements in Texas might try to gain their independence. Fully aware of the political philosophies of American Freemasons, the Mexican government outlawed Freemasonry on October 25, 1828. In 1829, Austin called another meeting where it was decided that it was "impolitic and imprudent, at this time, to form Masonic lodges in Texas."

In December of 1836, Austin was in the new capital of Columbia (now known as West Columbia) where he caught a severe cold, and his condition worsened. Doctors were called in, but could not help him. Austin died of pneumonia at noon on December 27, 1836, at the home of George B. McKinstry right outside of what is now West Columbia, Texas. Austin's last words were "The independence of Texas is recognized! Don't you see it in the papers?..." Upon hearing of Austin's death, Houston ordered an official statement proclaiming: "The Father of Texas is no more; the first pioneer of the wilderness has departed."

Compiled by the 2008 Grand Lodge of Texas History Committee, from articles published by the Grand Lodge of Texas; Wikipedia; The Handbook of Texas Online; *The Texas Masons: The Fraternity of Ancient Free & Accepted Masons in the History of Texas* by Pete Normand; and *Masonry in Texas: Background, History, and Influence to 1846*. by the Committee on Masonic Education and Service, Grand Lodge of Texas, A.F. & A.M.