

Presentation given by Frater James A. Marples, VIII^o, at the Regular Meeting of Chapman Masonic Lodge #2, Las Vegas, NEW MEXICO on Thursday August 7, 2014. Chapman Lodge was established in 1862. It received its Charter in 1866. The cornerstone for the current building at 518 and 1/2 Douglas Ave, East Las Vegas, New Mexico on Nov. 26, 1894. The Lodge Hall was dedicated in 1895 and has met there ever since. The Lodge met on the third floor and is a fine example of grand architecture. It is spacious and it has an adjacent room down the hallway from the actual Lodge Room -- That other room is fondly called "the Court Room" and has 1800s-era chairs. That Room has been used for courtroom scenes in several Hollywood Movies. Chapman Lodge #2 is the OLDEST MASONIC BUILDING IN NEW MEXICO, still serving as such, at the present time.

Editor's note: Some of the Masonic burial service items mentioned in the article are not used in all Masonic Jurisdictions. The author is listing those he is familiar with from his home state, which is Kansas.

DIGNITY OF MILITARY & MASONIC GRAVE-SIDE RITES

by Frater James A. Marples, VIII^o
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Most people have witnessed Military Grave-side Honors for a family member or friend. Such honors are a way of "paying respects" to the Deceased. It is a way of "Honoring Those Who Served." By federal law, every eligible veteran, is entitled a Military funeral. Guidelines for eligibility are generally obtained from their DD-214 Form, which would reflect the decedent died while actively serving in the military; or an eligible former member of the Armed Services who served his or her tenure and was honorably discharged or met other favorable criteria to meet the guidelines. At the family's request, a Military Funeral will be provided at no-charge. In accordance with federal law, the Honor Guard detail shall consist of no less than two individuals currently serving in the United States Armed Forces, one of which shall represent that parent branch of the military in which the Decedent served. (*Editor's note*) If not on active duty at time of death, the honor guard may be obtained from a local veteran's post.)

The main portions of the cemetery shall consist of a Flag-draped coffin {if applicable} the folding of the United States Flag in a triangular-shape and presenting it to the next-of-kin. Lastly, the playing of "Taps" by a bugler. Sadly, due to so many veterans dying each day and the shortage of buglers, the Department of Defense has approved digital recordings of "Taps." However, a "live rendition" is by far, so much better.

The size and scope of Military Funeral Honors can depend on the "rank" of a deceased Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine or Coast Guard member. It can depend on whether the burial occurs at a small rural village or a large Military Cemetery such as Arlington National Cemetery. For especially rare cases: such as funerals of Presidents of former Presidents of The United States of America, a riderless-horse {also known as a caparisoned-horse with boots reversed in the stirrups} may follow the horse-drawn caisson bearing the casket holding the Deceased's remains. This is an ancient symbol of a fallen warrior.



In a similar context, the Masonic Lodge offers a deceased member in good-standing at time of death a Masonic Grave-side Service also at no-charge; gratis. The noted Masonic scholar, Dr. Albert G. Mackey, M.D., 33° and a Knight Templar notes that "The right to be buried with the set ceremonies of the Masonic Order is one that, under certain restrictions, belongs to every Master Mason." Today, some Grand Jurisdictions may allow Masonic Funeral Honors for Entered Apprentices or Fellow-Craft Masons; however, it is always best to check the guidelines of the particular Grand Lodge to determine their rules.

Again, **the family or the Deceased must make the request of the Masonic Lodge, first.** The Lodge will not ask or solicit. All Lodges obey the family's wishes. It is best that a Mason make his intentions known, preferably in-writing, while he is still alive. Furthermore, most Lodges will cheerfully perform the grave-side service or if the decedent dies in a distant locale, the family can contact a local Masonic Lodge which usually will be willing to do a courtesy Grave-side service if the burial, entombment or inurnment is at a cemetery at a distant locale.

Most Lodges will open a "Lodge of Sorrow" at the Lodge Hall and then the Master, as Presiding Officer will give particulars to the Brethren in attendance as to the time and place of the funeral; he will note any requests or wishes made by the Decedent's family or clergyman; and any other pertinent data. Generally, the Master Masons in attendance will wear white lambskin Masonic Aprons, and often deposit sprigs of Acacia at the grave.

For the sake of brevity in this Article, it should suffice to say that The Master of the Lodge {or his designate} will give "the Apron Lecture" noting that the white lambskin apron of a Master Mason is more ancient than the Golden Fleece, more honorable than any earthly title or rank bestowed by prince, potentate or king, and that above all it signifies the Purity of Life that we all strive for, from a morality standpoint.

The Chaplain of the Lodge usually gives the closing Benediction, which can vary from State-to-State. CHAPLAIN: "The Lord Bless us and keep us! The Lord make His face to shine upon us, and be gracious unto us! The Lord lift upon us the light of His countenance and give us peace! Amen!" BRETHREN respond: "So Mote It Be!"

Of a special note, many years ago, I had an elderly Masonic friend (now himself deceased) who adapted a passage from The Holy Bible-- the last paragraph of Hebrews 13:20, which he would paraphrase to give added comfort to a family with devout Christian beliefs. While Freemasonry is a universal Fraternity and welcomes men of all religions to meet in unity and equality within a Lodge Room; there is nothing in Masonic Law against consoling a family by reassuring them that the Lodge Members are respectful of their strong Christian convictions.

At a Grave-side Ceremony special accommodations may be done, especially if the family made its wishes known to have something added of comfort to them (as the bereaved survivors).

To comply with such requests: my Masonic Chaplain-friend would instead do the Closing Benediction by paraphrasing Hebrews 13:20 to fit the setting. He would close his Benediction



by saying, "Now, may the God of Peace, who brought up from the dead, the great shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the eternal covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing, to do His will, working in us to do that which is pleasing in HIS sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory, dominion, and majesty --forever and ever!" ALL RESPOND: "Amen" and BRETHREN follow that with the phrase: "So Mote It Be!"

Thus, while Masonry is universally a champion of Freedom of Religion: it does not distance itself from extending caring compassionate sentiments toward a grieving family as in a private means of communicating condolences to the family in such a quasi private/ public setting as a funeral...or another time of Sorrow. A bereaved family's wishes can be accommodated without our Fraternity losing its integrity of being religiously impartial. All members of our Fraternity believing in a God, consoling a grieving family in a means they understand is fulfilling our Obligation as Masons "to do good, to practice charity and kindness, etc." Freemasonry extends the hand of help, aid and assistance to widows and orphans of our worthy members, and our members, while out in public have the same "Freedom of Speech" as anyone else. If no one's rights are infringed or stepped-on: All is well. Peace and Harmony prevails; and every moral and social virtue cements us as friends and Brothers. Our gentle Fraternity strives to make all members "welcome" at Masonic Funeral Ceremonies. I, myself, have worn the white Masonic Apron while sitting in pews at several Christian Churches and inside two Jewish Synagogues during funeral services and later at the graves of the Deceased.

It is a shame that an honorable Fraternal Order such as Masonry has its detractors. Further, it is equally a shame that in the 21st Century some Military Funerals have been beset by picketers who seek to disturb the proceedings. The actions of extremists (of any sort) should not frighten us. Yet, we are all mindful that a good reputation that took many years to BUILD-UP, can be TORN-DOWN {or, at least bruised} by some hecklers in a few minutes.

Some of Masonry's detractors get obsessed by false propaganda they hear or see in books, magazines or on radio, television or internet. The best remedy for this is: EDUCATION and governing yourself accordingly.

In the realm of "educating ourselves" -- Recently, I came across an old Masonic "Calling Card" that is a prime example that "**CONTEXT MATTERS.**" (See *bottom of article.*)

It is the Masonic Knight Templar "Calling-Card" of the late Masonic Brother and Sir Knight Thomas Leonidas Bond of Salina, Kansas. He was a member of Askelon Commandery #6 of Salina, Kansas and he was given the Scottish Rite degrees "by Communication" in the year 1887 via Sovereign Grand Inspector General of Kansas, Illustrious Brother Erasmus T. Carr, 33° {who was also the Grand Recorder of Knights Templar in Kansas York Rite Masonry}.

Brother, Companion and Sir Knight Thomas L. Bond was born December 22, 1849 in Shreveport, Louisiana. His residence in the year 1887 was Salina, Kansas. His occupation was that of an Attorney-at-Law. He received the K.C.C.H. designation on October 19, 1899. He was elected a 33° Mason on October 22, 1901, and actually received the 33° on March 4, 1902. Sir Knight Bond's "Masonic Calling Card" features an image of a wise old owl atop a human skull atop a Holy Bible with Sprigs of Acacia nearby.



It also has "banners" depicting: A + 6 {obviously denoting his Askelon Templar Commandery #6 }, his name "T.L. Bond." Alongside the graphics on the card are additional banners / streamers with the Latin words:

SAPENTIA = Latin for "Wisdom"
MORTALITAS = Latin for "Mortality";
and "DIVINITAS" = Latin for "Divinity"

While I have seen the word "SAPENTIA" used in reference to the 33^o of Scottish Rite Masonry, I found it unique that it was used in a York Rite {Templar} context, too. The image of the skull in the 1800s was not meant to be morbid...but a reminder to use our time wisely....and that we all have a mortal-lifespan. "DIVINITAS" more or less speaks for itself, that we, as Masons being in Almighty God, a Creator and Redeemer. To better comprehend why these words are meaningful, we must eliminate confusion due to semantics {often employed by critics of Freemasonry}: The word 'Knowledge' is entirely different from 'Wisdom.' A person may be aware, acquainted and 'know' how to do a task; however, they may not be 'wise' to know the soundness, sophistication or prudence or even the appropriate timing of making such a decision. Students attend schools, colleges, and universities to gain training to foster knowledge. Yet, "Wisdom" is something gained by 'experience.' The old metaphor of a "wise, old owl" is useful in describing the slow evolution of earthly wisdom. There is an old nursery-rhyme which goes:

"A wise old owl lived in an oak,
The more he saw the less he spoke,
The less he spoke the more he heard.
Why can't we all be like that wise old bird?"

Now, Celestial wisdom is quite different. It is solely within the province of the particular Religious Faith that one holds in their heart. For many, it is contained in Holy Books such as The Holy Bible. To be clear, our Fraternity of Freemasonry is just that - a fraternity. Freemasonry leaves it to each man to judge the dictates of his own conscience. Freemasonry requires all of its members to be a believer in Almighty God, as a Creator, Deity, Supreme Being and Preserver. We look forward to that place referred to in the Bible as "that House not made with hands, eternal in The Heavens."

Freemasonry is simply a fraternal organization whereby good men can associate with other men of good character. When a member dies: he is "mourned." Masonic Grave-side Honors are our way of paying our last "goodbyes." Similarly, Military Grave-side Honors are another public way of showing respect and admiration for the Service that deceased person performed during life. Neither Service replaces a religious committal-Service. Again, such matters are solely within the province of Clergy, in accordance with the wishes of the surviving family.

Years ago, I heard a saying: "Funerals are not for the Dead, but for the Living." At first, I felt that odd: since the "tributes" go to the Deceased. However, as I grew older: I realized that

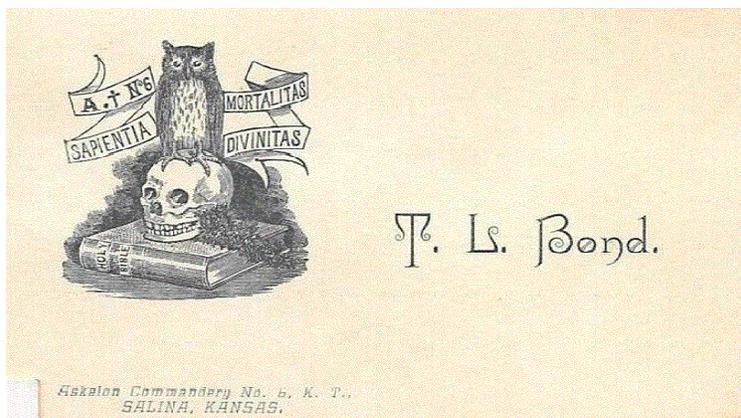


Funerals are indeed a means by which the surviving family and friends can come-together to cope with their loss and to "Celebrate a Life" of someone they knew. Once dead, the Deceased person cannot see or hear the proceedings, but his (or her) survivors can see and hear facts and artifacts that they may have seldom seen (or talked about) during the Decedent's lifetime. Many veterans are reluctant to speak of their Military tenure. Many Masons are reluctant to speak of their Masonic tenure. Of course, some do reminisce. However, some friends and family-members only learn of their loved-one's Services {Military and / or Masonic} only when they pass-away.

Whether it is the solemn Military ceremony of folding of the American Flag, or the solemn rendering of the Masonic Apron Lecture, the prevailing sentiment is that it be done with **DIGNITY**.

The Appendant, Concordant, and Allied Masonic Bodies each have their own similar, yet unique funeral rites. However, they are rarely seen. In the 19th Century, there would be rare cases of Brethren of The Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite performing a "Kadosh Funeral Service" {composed of those 30° Masons of that Rite} at a "Low Twelve Ceremony held at 12-Midnight. "Low Twelve" was symbolic of darkness of Death and Sorrow. Quite opposite from "High Twelve" which symbolized the Sun at its Meridian height ...emblematic of the peak-periods of our lives in which we enjoyed our work and recreation times during our best years. In other words: at our prime of our Lives. "Low Twelve" was akin to one's day coming to an end...or, rather, that their life had come to a close...an end. There were no morbid overtones, despite what our critics claim.

Military Funeral Honors and Masonic Funeral Honors with Grave-side Rites are very meaningful. They are rich in tradition and they follow ancient customs. It is up to each of us, and the generations after us, to preserve the DIGNITY and decorum of such meaningful tributes to those who have passed-on.



Calling Card using skull to indicate mortality of the body

Sources / References / Recommended Readings:

- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Re: Military Funeral guidelines.
- Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry by Dr. Albert G. Mackey, M.D., 33° and a Knight Templar.



- Archives of The Masonic Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon, Canada.
- Archives of The Supreme Council, 33° Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite Southern Jurisdiction, Washington, D.C. ---on membership of Illustrious Brother Thomas Leonidas Bond, 33° and a Knight Templar.
- Macoy's Masonic Manual by Robert Macoy, 33° and a Knight Templar. Fifteenth Edition. New York. Published in New York, Year 1861 by Clark, Austin, Maynard & Company located at 3 Park Row & 3 Ann Street, New York, New York. "A Pocket Companion for the Initiated".

About the Author:

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