

MASONIC RENEWAL AND LONG RANGE PLANNING--Page 1
2008 Southeastern Masonic Conference
Thomas Boduch, SGW F&AM of TN

This past March, the Grand Lodge of Tennessee formally established a LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE as a standing Grand Lodge Committee. The duties of the committee are:

- To formulate and implement 5, 10 and 20 year plans for Freemasonry in TN
- To act as a clearing house for new ideas and programs
- To facilitate coordination between other existing Grand Lodge committees
- To oversee long range programs both within and without the committee.

This committee actually got its roots in a Masonic renewal program our Grand Lodge began in 1994. As the renewal program evolved, we found we had the most successes with efforts that involved long range planning.

Today I'm going to talk about how we evolved from Masonic renewal to long range planning. I'll discuss why we need a Masonic renewal effort, what we accomplished and what we hope to accomplish through this new committee.

WHY IS MASONIC RENEWAL NECESSARY?

Membership in most, if not all U. S. Grand Jurisdictions, dramatically rose after the end of World War II, peaked in the 1960's and 1970's, began to decline and in most cases, continues to decline today. To make matters worse, once membership began to decline, fewer Masons attended their Lodges and took an active role in Lodge activities.

It took several years for us all to realize that membership declines and decreasing participation were a long term trend. To combat these trends, Masonic renewal efforts were initiated in the 1980's and 1990's. These efforts ranged from programs established by individual Grand Lodges to the MASONIC RENEWAL COMMITTEE OF NORTH AMERICA.

VISION 2013

In 1994, after studying several existing programs, the Grand Lodge of Tennessee established its own Masonic Renewal Program and named it VISION 2013. This name was chosen because our fine brethren from North Carolina chartered the Grand Lodge of Tennessee in 1813--hence in 2013 we will be celebrating our Masonic bicentennial. By naming the program VISION 2013, the intent was to emphasize that the program was not a quick fix to declining membership and decreasing participation, but rather, one that would need to be continued on a long term basis in order to be successful.

In formulating VISION 2013 we were open to any and all suggestions and ideas. The only areas we decided to NOT pursue were one day classes or changes to our existing ritual.

We had both successes and failures with VISION 2013. The most valuable and important lesson we learned, is that we had the greatest success with programs that were planned, overseen, implemented and revised over several years and not just a one year effort during the term of a particular Grand Master.

In Tennessee, our Grand Line is a 4 year progressive one, beginning at Junior Grand Warden. Since our Grand Master only serves one year, in looking back, we saw many instance where a Grand Master would implement a new program at the beginning of

MASONIC RENEWAL AND LONG RANGE PLANNING--Page 2
2008 Southeastern Masonic Conference
Thomas Boduch, SGW F&AM of TN

his year, only to have that program fall by the wayside once he left office. Some were picked up intermittently in future years. Other Grand Masters “reinvented the wheel,” in subsequent years. This occurred not only in Tennessee, but in other states as well. M. W. Brother James Graham of Arkansas addressed this last year in his talk entitled WHAT IS YOUR VISION?

In 2007, we realized that by calling our program VISION 2013, by default it would cease in 6 years. In order to build on the successes we achieved, the name of the effort was changed to THE LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE, and a major restructuring of the committee took place.

The original VISION 2013 committee consisted of a coordinator, brethren and appendant body members who were interested in working specific programs. There were no term limits. Despite this loose structure, the committee ended up with a good balance of stable leadership and new members and fresh ideas.

The LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE’s was structured to include the newly elected Junior Grand Warden and 6 steering committee members. The 6 represent all areas of our state, and are appointed for 6 year terms. The LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE also includes PROGRAM DIRECTORS (brethren who direct specific programs and serve with no term limits), CONSULTANTS and AD HOC members.

As I mentioned previously, the LONG RANGE PLANNING committee was charged to develop 5, 10 and 20 year plans for Tennessee Freemasonry. The existing VISION 2013 program became the cornerstone of the first 5 year plan. In 2006, our membership voted to assess ourselves \$10 per member per year for 20 years to pay for renovations to our Grand Lodge building and to set up an endowment fund to pay for future building maintenance. Monitoring progress on the playback of our loan and seeking additional donations to facilitate the process is the first 20 year plan.

WHAT VISION 2013 TAUGHT US

VISION 2013 initially explored why men don’t join Masonry and why they don’t remain active with their Lodge once they do join. In Tennessee, we found 3 main reasons--generational, time and the focus of Lodge activities. Our findings correlate well with those from a study conducted by the MASONIC RENEWAL COMMITTEE OF NORTH AMERICA in 1988--summary data from this study can be found at the end of this report.

During the 1980’s and 1990’s we had a generation of men who didn’t know about Masonry and simply were not joiners. R.W. Brother Teddy Grogan of Alabama made an excellent presentation at last year’s conference concerning generational differences entitled THE HISTORY OF OUR FUTURE.

With regard to time, the 1970’s saw a marked increase in the number of 2 wage earner families. Today’s young men, simply do not have the amount of free time to devote to Lodge activities that their fathers and grandfathers did. R. W. Brother Ed Jennings of Georgia addressed this last year in his talk THEN AND NOW.

Past Grand Master John Palmer of Tennessee was elected Junior Grand Warden in

MASONIC RENEWAL AND LONG RANGE PLANNING--Page 3
2008 Southeastern Masonic Conference
Thomas Boduch, SGW F&AM of TN

1994 when VISION 2013 was begun and did many of the presentations to local lodges when the program was rolled out. He pointed out that from the end of World War II to the mid 1990's, there has been a subtle and unintentional change in the focus of Blue Lodge activities. We've gradually changed from focusing on the SUBSTANCE of our Fraternity to the FORM of our Fraternity.

To elaborate further, looking at the big picture, there are 3 main things you can do at a Lodge meeting or function.

- 1--Conduct business
- 2--Teach someone about Masonry
(this can be conferring a degree, providing Masonic education to existing Masons or leadership training)
- 3--Put Masonry into action either inside or outside the Lodge walls

In the early 1900's, Lodges typically had a good balance of all 3 activities. At last year's conference, M. W. Brother Jimmie Windham of Mississippi discussed this in his talk entitled VISIBLE MASONS.

We conducted our business, conferred a small number of degrees on worthy interested and excited men. We taught them how to be Lodge leaders. We encouraged them to seek more light and education in Masonry. We were active in our communities practicing those lessons of Charity we taught in our ritual. As a result, we not only helped others in need, but we were active, visible and known in our communities. We thus attracted good men wanted to become active Masons. We were focusing on the SUBSTANCE of Masonry.

We were so visible and successful, that after the end of World War II, large numbers of men wanted to become Masons. We eventually got to the point that all Lodges had time and energy to do was degree work and business meetings. Our efforts outside the Lodge gradually diminished and in many instances ceased entirely. Masons who wanted to be active outside their Lodges typically joined appendant bodies or worked with other non-masonic organizations pursuing charitable activities that interested them. As PGM Palmer is fond of saying, we would "meet, eat and make more Masons." Thus, we gradually began to focus on the FORM of our fraternity rather than its SUBSTANCE. If you were not a ritualist or Lodge officer, there wasn't much for a brother to do in his Lodge. Hence many newly made Master Masons never came back.

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

Based on these observations, our early VISION 2013 efforts consisted of establishing several community service programs. We also found many inactive brethren were already participating in similar activities through Churches, employers or other groups and once a Lodge began a program, they too would often return to their Lodges and help develop and expand programs and become active members once again.

Our successful community service programs include:
Building houses with HABITAT FOR HUMANITY affiliates
Promoting Organ Donor awareness
Sponsoring Hospital Hospitality Houses
Assisting Domestic Violence Shelters

MASONIC RENEWAL AND LONG RANGE PLANNING--Page 4
2008 Southeastern Masonic Conference
Thomas Boduch, SGW F&AM of TN

Awarding Academic Scholarships
Sponsoring Youth sports teams
Supporting Masonic Service Association programs

In recent years, other Grand Lodges have come to similar conclusions about the value of Lodge community service programs. Reflective of this, 2 programs adopted by a majority of Grand Lodges are C.H.I.P. and the Masonic Model Student Assistance Program.

At the Conference of Grand Masters of North America held in Louisville this past February, several break out sessions were held. One was dedicated to Lodge community involvement. All the participants in the breakout groups agreed on the value of being active outside our Lodge walls. After the breakouts, M. W. Brother Edmund Cohen of Virginia reported for the group--his summary will be published in the proceedings later this year.

OTHER VISION 2013 AREAS

VISION 2013 was also expanded to include Awards, Masonic Education and improving Communication.

AWARDS

Awards serve 2 functions. They praise and hence positively motivate Lodges and brethren for their work and efforts. They also provide data useful to an oversight committee if an appropriate award submission process is used.

VISION 2013 awards consist of:

- annual awards presented in graduated levels to Lodges for their efforts
- awards to individuals for participating in Lodge sponsored community service activities
- awards to brethren for making an educational talk at a stated meeting
- Awards for ritual proficiency were also expanded

MASONIC EDUCATION

Masonic education is necessary for any masonic renewal or long range effort to be successful. R. W. Brother Jay Pearson of South Carolina discussed this at last year's conference in his talk entitled EDUCATION, A NECESSARY COMPONENT IN FREEMASONRY.

The Grand Lodge of Tennessee established a Masonic Education Committee in the early 1990's--just prior to the establishment of VISION 2013. The two committees have worked closely together. The current Education Committee chairman sits on the LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE as a program director.

One observation made by both committees, is that due to declining membership, many inexperienced Master Masons were being prematurely thrust into Lodge leadership roles. Accordingly, our Education Committee, working with VISION 2013 began conducting annual Lodge officer leadership training sessions. These sessions include strategic planning and budgeting.

To further help Lodge officers become more effective, a correspondence course

MASONIC RENEWAL AND LONG RANGE PLANNING--Page 5
2008 Southeastern Masonic Conference
Thomas Boduch, SGW F&AM of TN

concerning our Masonic code has been developed. It is an open book test which presents many situations--both common and unusual--that come up in Lodges. It forces a brother to look through most of the code to complete the exercise.

Recently, the two committees have developed a brochure detailing how an individual Mason can become involved with his Lodge. It contains a concise summary of information most of us gray heads take for granted, but sadly, often times do not communicate to new Masons. At present, each newly made Master Mason receives a letter from the Grand Master with his permanent dues card. We're including a copy of the brochure with the letter and card. It can be found at: www.gmwp.org/involvement1.pdf and www.gmwp.org/involvement2.pdf.

COMMUNICATION

Frustratingly, despite ubiquitous cell phones, email and the internet, many brethren still do not know about VISION 2013, LONG RANGE PLANNING and for that matter, many other excellent Grand Lodge programs that they should know about. We do not have a good answer or a quick fix for this problem but have several innovations in the works.

One effective means of communication we've had success with, is hosting regional meetings across the state.

In 2004 and 2005 regional meetings were held to educate brethren about Grand Lodge budget problems and our building which was in need of major renovations and repairs.

In 2006, we began QUARRY MEETINGS (named after our ancient brethren who labored in the quarries). They are tiled open forum meetings hosted by an elected Grand Line officer where brethren can ask questions and suggest ideas concerning the Grand Lodge management, finances, building--anything but ritual. Brethren were given the option of submitting questions to the Grand Secretary's office prior to the meetings--questions were also taken from the floor.

Brethren report that as a result of attending a quarry meeting, they felt better able to make decisions at Grand Lodge and felt that their voices and ideas were being heard by their elected officers. (A schedule of upcoming meetings can be found at www.gmwp.org/quarry2008)

At Last year's conference, M. W. Brother Keith Dreiber of Kentucky reported that the Grand Lodge of Kentucky was able to obtain a needed per capita tax increase by similarly holding regional meetings to educate the brethren as to the need for it. His talk is entitled GRAND LODGE BUDGET ASSESSMENT.

The internet also is proving to be a very valuable tool for facilitating Masonic communication and education. R. W. Woody Bilyeu of Louisiana gave a presentation at last year's conference THE WEB ENABLED GRAND LODGE.

FINANCIAL STABILITY

One other area LONG RANGE PLANING committee is exploring, is helping our

MASONIC RENEWAL AND LONG RANGE PLANNING--Page 6
2008 Southeastern Masonic Conference
Thomas Boduch, SGW F&AM of TN

Grand Lodge achieve long term financial stability. This was one of the original VISION 2013 goals--not much had been done in this area in VISION 2013.

At the CONFERENCE OF GRAND MASTERS OF NORTH AMERICA this past February, a breakout session INCREASING GRAND LODGE INCOME was held. Several good ideas came out the 2 groups devoted to this topic. M.W. Brother David Cash of North Carolina and I each attended a session and reported for our respective groups--our reports will be published in the proceedings.

One major conclusion both breakout groups agreed on is that brethren need to be educated that most Grand Lodge's current per capita and dues structure has not kept pace with inflation and is unrealistically low. This has occurred largely because of the great influx of members after World War II. Per capita tax generally remained flat during these years, but membership increases still resulted in Grand Lodges having cash surpluses. In FREEMASONS FOR DUMMIES, the author Christopher Hodapp (page 181) points out that this era also saw a proliferation of Appendant and Concordant bodies. Grand Lodges were under pressure to keep dues and per capita tax low so brethren and their families could join and be active in other bodies.

At last year's conference, W. Brother James Medlin of North Carolina made a presentation entitled DOLLARS TODAY, LEGACIES TOMORROW, which has some excellent long range financial ideas.

OTHER LONG RANGE PLANNING ACTIVITIES

Anticipating that in the future, Lodge consolidations will occur, the LONG RANGE PLANNING committee is setting up a task force to help facilitate consolidations. In addition to helping lodges go through the mechanics of a consolidation, the task force will help Lodges optimize uses of real property abandoned for Lodge purposes as consolidations occur.

Another task force of the LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE is planning bicentennial celebration events to be held in 2013. They will culminate with a major event which will be held in Knoxville on St. John's Day, December 27, 2013.

Finally, the LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE is exploring MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS--benefits a brother can tap into simply by being a member of our Grand Lodge. This is similar to the successful SHRINE SAVERS program. At present, our Grand Lodge has established a Credit Card Program, and substantial discounts with Jos. A. Banks clothiers and STAPLES office supply stores. Other programs are being explored.

SUMMARY

Masonic renewal efforts are necessary to combat declining membership and decreasing participation by our members.

In order to be successful, Masonic Renewal efforts must:

- continue beyond the term of any one Grand Master
- be planned, implemented, monitored, evaluated and adjusted
- should involve the progressive Grand Line as soon as a brother is elected to it

MASONIC RENEWAL AND LONG RANGE PLANNING--Page 7
2008 Southeastern Masonic Conference
Thomas Boduch, SGW F&AM of TN

- include multiple means of communication and feedback from the brethren
- have a variety of programs--what works in a rural area may or may not work in an urban area
- should include Masonic Education, Awards and deal with Grand Lodge financial stability

Successful Lodges have a good balance of conducting business, teaching other about Masonry and putting the lessons Masonry teaches into action outside the walls of the Lodge.

Community service projects, in addition to practicing Masonic lessons outside the Lodge, make Masonry visible in our communities and get inactive brethren interested in becoming active with their lodges once again.

In making this presentation, I have referred to most of the talks made at last year's conference and to some made at the 2008 Conference of Grand Masters of North America.

Each talk represents a symbolic building block. Our LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE will use all these blocks to attempt to build a stable and bright future for Freemasonry in our Grand Jurisdiction. Each of us has access to these building materials. We can use them to make a pile of rubble or a magnificent structure of Freemasonry that future generations will be proud of. Formulating and following a long range plan and reevaluating and adjusting it along the way will make all the difference.

Information on our Long Range Planning Committee's activities and all the topics I discussed can be found at www.gmwp.org.

MASONIC RENEWAL COMMITTEE OF NORTH AMERICA 1988 DATA

The following data was abstracted from the MASONIC RENEWAL TASK FORCE REPORTS, a study done in 1988 to study the attitudes of Masons and Non-Masons toward the fraternity. The data was published by The Masonic Service Association, 8120 Fenton Street, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-4785:

MASONS WERE ASKED WHAT CHANGES COULD BE MADE THAT WOULD MAKE THEM MORE LIKELY TO ATTEND LODGE:

- Reduce ritual at meetings
- Spend less time on business and formality
- More lodge-sponsored community service
- Adopt specific charity
- Involve family members more
- Make meetings more interesting/exciting
- Planned programs at meetings
- Have educational or other programs
- Develop effective leadership skills

REASONS GIVEN BY MASONS FOR POOR LODGE ATTENDANCE:

- Not enough time--too busy at work/home

MASONIC RENEWAL AND LONG RANGE PLANNING--Page 8
2008 Southeastern Masonic Conference
Thomas Boduch, SGW F&AM of TN

Little happens or accomplished at meetings
Leadership ineffective at meetings
Can obtain benefits without attending
Too much emphasis on memorization
Do not recall entrance ritual
Too much emphasis on ritual
Meetings too long
Spouse/family not in favor of attending

POTENTIAL BENEFITS PERCEIVED IN MASONIC MEMBERSHIP (BY non-Masons):

Meet New Friends
Community Services
Recreational/social activities
Activities with current friends
Do things as a family
Professional contacts
Develop leadership skills
Take Leadership Role