

THE VALLEY MILL

A Publication of Mill Valley Lodge, No. 356, F & AM

September - November 2016

Mason of the Year

Worshipful Master Raymond Schmalz has announced that Brother Colin Wong is our Mason of the Year from Mill Valley Lodge. The Award will be presented to Colin at the Santa Rosa Scottish Rite Mason of the Year program on Saturday, September 17th.



When contacted about this Award, Colin was in Inner Mongolia helping to restore smiles to 80 children. Colin has been a member of our Lodge for over 50 years, and was a practicing dentist in Mill Valley for 35 years. Since retiring, he has volunteered his time with Alliance for Smiles, an organization founded in San Francisco in 2004 that helps impoverished children around the world get surgery for cleft palates and lips. Cleft palates leaves fissures or holes on the roof of the mouth, the upper lip or nostrils which make it difficult for children to eat, speak and smile. The conditions occur in about 1 of 350 Asian births and 1 in 850 American births. Colin has been the director of the Alliance for Smiles' program in China for the past nine years. Colin organizes two-week missions to various cities in China. In the first week doctors on the mission examine several hundred children, and then the group selects around 100 children for treatment and intensive surgery during the second week. Colin and Alliance for Smiles to provide assistance beyond surgery through treatment centers for patients to receive ongoing care with the same treatment protocols used in the United States, and to train local health care providers in the treatment of cleft lips and palates. For his ongoing work with Alliance for Smiles, Mill Valley Lodge is pleased to make Colin our Mason of the Year.



Seating capacity in the dining hall (600 Acacia Lane, Santa Rosa 95409) is limited and dinner reservations (\$37.50 each) must be into Ray much before our September Stated...the presentation ceremony (following the dinner) is in the auditorium and is open to all at no cost.

*All Master Masons are cordially invited to attend and witness the
Raising to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason of
Brother Jacob Sanderson, F.C.M., Marin Lodge, No. 191
By the Past Masters of the 121st Masonic District
Comprised of Fairfax, Mill Valley and Marin Lodges*

*Wednesday, September 21st, 2016
At the Marin Masonic Center, 888 Fourth St., San Rafael
Dinner 6:30 p.m. Degree Conferral 7:30 p.m.*

On the Threshold

By Midnight Freemason Guest Contributor
Bro. Mike Hambrecht
Village Lodge #274 F & AM in Burton, Ohio

I, like many of you, began my journey into Freemasonry by filling out a petition. I started my petition request because I wanted to know all about those conspiracy secrets. It was last August, when I emailed in my request. I heard back from, what would become my lodge, on October 15, 2015. When I heard back, I was shocked. I had actually begun to believe that I was not going to be allowed to join. You see my lodge goes dark for July and August, then they work the county fair for early September. So you see, no one was actually around to read my request until their October meeting.

Well, I called the member of my lodge who had emailed me back about my interest and that phone call changed everything for me. We spoke at some length about what Freemasonry does, what this lodge does and what is required of a man to be a mason. What struck me first, was the requirement to believe in a God, even though discussions of religion and politics are not allowed in a lodge. Knowing that I had to swear to a belief in a God, a higher being, got me thinking. I won't go into all the details here but I had not really "believed" in anything Godlike for some time. I didn't really disbelieve either. I just gave up on all that around the time of my divorce and never went back, even though I am now happily married. Well, I began to ask myself "...can I lie to the Masons just to learn their secrets?" I honestly didn't know what I intended to do at that moment.

This eventually led me to really research Freemasonry. What I found excited me more than any conspiracy theory ever could. I found a brotherhood of good men trying to make themselves, their communities and their world better. I found centuries of history. I found connections to multiple religions and cultures. I found a place of learning.

The areas that my research had led me, had me thirsting for even more, and I found it. First, I found it on the Whence Came You podcast and from there, I got hooked on The Winding Stairs and then on to The Masonic Roundtable. Eventually I branched out to other podcasts, The Tyler's Place, After Lodge, In the Chair, X-Oriente and The Craftsman. What I got from all of these podcasts was a glut of different kinds of information. However, it wasn't just the information I got but the awakening of my mind.

More precisely, it was the opening of my mind. One example they opened my mind to for example; my sister-in-law does Reiki and even when she first showed it to me several years ago, I thought it was hokey. All of that mystical mumbo jumbo, touchy, feely, and life energies, magnetism and synergy healing arts were nothing but some con game magic act. However, after listening to these brothers talk about the esoterics of Freemasonry, my mind was opened and when my employer offered me an opportunity to be in a body energies and heartfelt living / healing experience, I went. I not only went but was ready to believe and not debunk it. I found things happening that I could not explain but I found myself learning about these different ideas and how they worked. I had already begun to change just from these little encounters with Freemasonry.

Through it all I found myself asking do I still believe in a God as I knew I once did. I picked up my bible and read several different passages out of both the old and the new testament, including those read for each of the three degrees and found myself saying yes I still believe. So, I decided to go ahead with filling out a petition.

During my investigation, I did tell them of my original intentions for joining. Then I explained how I had begun researching Freemasonry and found something far more exciting than the National Treasure or pentagrams on the road map of Washington DC or a plan to rule the world from behind the scenes. I told them that I found a way to make a change in who I was, in who I had become and who I wanted to be. The lodge soon voted on my petition and I was accepted. When I found out, I was so excited.

I was initiated on January 13, 2016. What happened, within me, that night is enough for another article but what I have gained so far has given me so much more than I could have imagined while lying in bed one night watching TV show about Freemasonry's conspiracies.

RE-INVIGORATION COMMITTEE

Brothers, at a recent Stated Meeting, WM Ray Schmalz suggested that the Lodge consider consolidation with the other Lodges in our District or other options.

In response, a new committee to Re-invigorate the Lodge was formed, and your input is needed.

Chaired by Brother Junior Warden Anderson Silveira, the committee includes the Senior and Junior Deacon's, Cort Crosby and Benjamin Berk, respectively, the Stewards, James McCullough and Randy Lavasseur and Entered Apprentice Tom Benoit. For their contact info see the Officer listing on the back page of the Valley Mill [for Tom Benoit: (415-381-4906; tom.benoit@comcast.net)].

The principal goals of the committee are to increase the participation of current members and improve the engagement of newly-raised brothers, as well as to attract new candidates.

Following this year's theme of "Membership" set forth by Grand Lodge, the group is focused on these key areas:

- Masonic education for active members
- creating meaningful experiences and lasting friendships
- and attracting new members.

We need to hear how you think we can best achieve these goals, and continue to improve the value and quality of our fellowship.

Please come with your ideas and suggestions to the September Stated Meeting, an upcoming committee meeting (Tuesday Fellowship Nights) or e-mail, snail-mail or otherwise to:

The Re-invigoration Committee
c/o Mill Valley Lodge
P.O. Box 2011
Mill Valley, CA 94942-2011

News From the Quarries

Congratulations to **Wor. Blake Davis** on being promoted to Vice President - Tax of Williams-Sonoma Company, being elected to the position of Rear Commodore of the Corinthian Yacht Club and a director of the Marin Humane Society...Masons in Marin are invited to witness Prince Hall Ritual at **Monarch Lodge #73**, PHGLCAH, Inc., 925 30th St. Oakland, CA 94608. They will be conferring the Fellowcraft Degree on Friday, September 16, 2016 @ 7:00 PM. The Raising to the Degree of Master Mason, put on by Past Masters will be Friday, November 18, 2016 @ 7:00 PM. Please contact Barry Young (415-798-0324; barry949@comcast.net) if interested in attending so appropriate arrangements can be made...Congratulations to **Bro. Colin Wong** on being selected to be Mill Valley Lodge's Mason of the Year! Presentation details are listed elsewhere in this bulletin...**Eric Azinger** is in Portland, Oregon for several weeks to assist his father through some physical setbacks...Much congratulations and wishes to **Ms. Mygam Nugyen** and **Bro. Anderson Silveira**, JW, on their upcoming wedding in late September!

Lodge Contact Information

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Tuesday, September 6th	6:30 PM 8:00 PM	Pot Luck supper Stated Meeting. Last meeting of the summer - business casual/Hawaiian
Saturday, September 17th	6:00 PM	Mason of the Year program at Scottish Rite, 600 Acacia Lane, Santa Rosa. Colin Wong is being honored as Mill Valley's Mason of the Year. Dinner reservations needed asap. \$37.50 per person
Tuesday, September 20th	7:30 PM	School of Instruction including practice for the PM Third Degree @ Mill Valley Lodge
Wednes., September 21st	6:30 PM 7:30 PM	Dinner Third degree at Marin Lodge by the District's Past Masters
Tuesday, September 27th	6:30 PM	Hall Association Meeting
Wednes., September 28th	5:30 PM	Masons4Mitts Program followed by Giants game. Anderson Silveira might have tickets
Tuesday, October 4th	6:30 PM 8:00 PM	Pot Luck supper Stated Meeting. First meeting of the Fall - Coat and tie
Tuesday, October 18th	7:30 PM	Second degree for Tom Benoit at Mill Valley Lodge
Saturday, October 22nd	12:00 - 2:00	Mill Valley Lodge Volunteer event at Marin Food Pantry, Novato
Friday, October 28 - Sunday, October 30		Annual Communications at Grand Lodge; Master Masons only
Tuesday, November 1st		Golden Veterans Awards immediately after our Pot Luck supper