

La France Lodge No. 93

The History of Its Formation



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La France Lodge No. 93

In May 1991, at a meeting between MWB Robert B. Heyat and MWB Jean-François Humbert, the Provincial Grand Master of Neuilly Bineau of National Grand Lodge of France (GLNF), on the sidelines of the Grand Communication of the Grand Lodge of New York, the subject of French lodges outside France and in particular in the United States of America was discussed. At the time there already existed two French speaking lodges in California: Lodge "La Parfaite Union" in San Francisco and Lodge "Vallée de France" in Los Angeles, and GLNF working for the creation of Lodge France in New York, through their Grand Representative RWB Jean Francois Gendrot, was confronted with some difficulties.

MWB Robert Heyat, Chairman of our International Committee and the Grand Representative near GLNF, proposed to create a new French speaking lodge in the name of "La France" in Washington D.C. as a special bridge between the two Grand Lodges. This proposal was met with great enthusiasm on both sides and following meetings of MWB Robert Heyat in Paris with the then Acting Grand Master MWB Claude Charboniaud and Grand Secretary, RWB Yves Trestournel, it was agreed that formal steps to organize La France Lodge with participation of members of GLNF and the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia (GLDC), would be taken.

Formal letters were exchanged between the two Grand Lodges and the list of participants drawn up, following which the request for dispensation to create the new lodge was submitted by MWB Robert Heyat to MWB Jerold J. Samet, Grand Master, on August 13, 1992. The founding members were as follows:

From Grand Lodge of Washington D.C.: MWB Jerold J. Samet, MWB George R. Adams, MWB Stewart W. Miner and MWB Robert B. Heyat.

From Grande Loge Nationale Francaise: MWB Claude Charboniaud, MWB Jean Francois Humbert, RWB Yves Trestournel and MWB Nat Granstein.

The dispensation was issued in October 1992 and the first organizational meeting and installation of the officers of the lodge was set for Saturday, October 31 in the Oasis Room of Almas Temple on K Street, followed by a banquet. This meeting was attended by the Grand Masters and many dignitaries and Brethren from Grand Lodge of Washington D.C. and Grande Loge Nationale Francaise. RWB Yves Trestournel led the installation of the officers in Emulation ritual.

At the invitation of GLNF, MWB Jerold J. Samet, MWB George R. Adams and MWB Robert B. Heyat and officers of La France Lodge UD traveled to Paris to participate in the Annual Communication of GLNF and to hold the second meeting of La France UD in the Grand Temple of GLNF in Paris on Sunday December 6, 1992, providing the lodge with the opportunity to confer the Fellowcraft degree on an Entered Apprentice. Back in Washington, the Lodge held its third communication, working in the Master Mason degree.

On December 16, 1992, Grand Lodge in its Annual Communication unanimously approved to grant La France Lodge No. 93 its charter. Consecration of the lodge and installation of its officers took place on February 26, 1993, in Washington D.C. The French delegation having participated at the Conference of Grand Masters in Hot Springs, Arkansas, arrived in Washington in time to visit the House of the Temple and George Washington Masonic National Memorial and attend a banquet in Belmont Mansion, the home of Eastern Star. The main event of Consecration and Installation was held in Almas Temple and was followed by a great table lodge. The following day, French brethren were treated to lunch at the



French Embassy, participated in the Annual Birthday Celebration of George Washington in the afternoon and attended a dinner party at MWB Robert Heyat's residence.

Another significant development during this visit was the initiation of discussions between Washington D.C. and GLNF to lay the foundation for cooperation to promote and establish Freemasonry in the new Europe. The subject matter was taken up at a meeting organized by MWB Heyat in which MWB Claude Charboniaud, MWB George R. Adams, MWB William T. Jenkins, RWB Yves Trestournel, MWB Nat Granstein, MWB Jean-Francois Humbert, MWB Richard E. Fletcher, Illustrious Admiral Gene Sizemore were in attendance.

La France and the Grand Lodge of Washington D.C. played a leading role in two events during the stewardship of Grand Master, William T. Jenkins, in 1994.

On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary celebration of Allied victory in Europe, and in response to the sacrifices by Americans in achieving this great victory, it was proposed that Grand Lodge of Washington D.C., together with GLNF establish a lodge by the name of Star Spangled Banner, to honor their memory. A large delegation, including the Grand Master MWB William Jenkins, several PGMs and many La France brethren, with assistance of the Grand Master MWB Jean Charles Foelner, Grand Lodge officers and brethren of GLNF, consecrated Star Spangled Banner Lodge No. 900 on June 10, 1994 in the Grand Temple of GLNF, in Paris.

The other event was the twinning between La France lodge No.93 and Bartoldi Lodge No. 500 of South of France. This was proposed by MWB Jean Charles Foelner, who was the Charter Master of Bartoldi Lodge and Assistant Grand Master at the time. The event was organized for September 23-25, 1994 in Washington D.C.. A delegation of 26 Brethren from GLNF, including many dignitaries, made the trip to Washington and the meeting took place on September 24 in Georgetown Masonic Hall. The twinning ceremony was conducted by MWB Robert B. Heyat and MWB Claude Charboniaud and RWB Yves Trestournel led the installation ceremony. La France Lodge 93 is currently twinned with 4 Lodges:

- La Bannière Etoilée # 900 and La France 1917 #7, both Lodges in Paris,
- Bartholdi Lodge of Research # 500, GLP of Provence, France,
- Lodge Tolérance # 2 in Libreville, Gabon.

The following brethren have wielded the gavel of authority in La France Lodge No. 93 since its inception in 1993: Yves Ghiai Charter Master, Emil Joseph, Bijan Lak, Jean-Paul Dupinay, Akram R. Elias, Eric Jourdanet, Séraphin Omanda, André Salmon, Eloi Kpamegan, Pierre G. Gaujard, Sassan Soheili, Pierre Verroye, and Maximilian G. Ullmann, the current Master.

Presently the Lodge has about 86 members who hail from twelve different countries around the world, the majority of them French-speaking.

The Spirit of La France Lodge No. 93

La France Lodge 93 in Washington, D.C. is part of the Free and Accepted Masons of Washington, D.C., believing that Freemasonry is first and foremost a Fraternity and also a way of life; a life designed and dedicated to promotion of friendship, morality and brotherly love, and the oldest and largest fraternity in America; one that continues to be an important part of many men's personal lives and growth; an organization of men bound together with a philosophy of moral standards, mutual understanding and brotherhood in which all men are on the level and equal.

La France Lodge 93 focuses on "**freeing and broadening the mind**", in helping Masons in their search for Truth, leading to enlightenment through higher levels of knowledge and consciousness. This search is about the essential reality and meaning of our lives, when we "travel along the path" of human existence in the Universe, and when we work for the building of a Society where justice, freedom and love prevail.

The First Objective and theme of La France Lodge 93, is "**Building the Inner Temple**", conducive to self-realization. This requires: (a) Calming of the mind by making the Lodge a sacred space through an inspirational environment of harmony and beauty, freeing the mind from the stress and agitation of the profane life, and elevating consciousness in its search for the Truth; and (b) Providing Masonic education through Knowledge of the various Masonic traditions throughout the world, their symbols and rituals, and the perennial human quest for the Truth across cultures and throughout ages, with a view to finding the common core of Mankind's wisdom and compassion.

The Second Objective and theme is a universal human communion by asking ourselves: "**How can we be useful to Society?**" This involves, in particular, establishing close bonds with sister lodges, Masonic organizations and societies, locally and internationally, with a view to shaping a better world.



The Masonic Foundation of D.C: Past and Present

continued from page 12

for two years in a row, Masons of the District of Columbia, with the financial assistance of the Masonic Foundation, supported the **Special Olympics of D.C.**, by providing a barbeque for the athletes, their families and coaches, before the Summer Games Opening Ceremonies, at a cost of nearly \$15,000.000, at each event.

As the Masonic Foundation of D.C. moves into the future, we are looking forward to expanding our charitable projects. We also are looking for ways to increase our public support. In the past year, we have qualified to participate in the **Combined Federal Campaign (48808)**, so that our members, their families and friends, who work for the federal government, may designate their contributions for the Masonic Foundation of D.C.

The constituent lodges of the Grand Lodge of D.C. and our brethren have been extremely generous in supporting the Masonic Foundation of D.C. We ask you to keep this, your own Masonic charity, in mind when considering your charitable gifts. Contributions can be sent to the Grand Lodge in care of the Grand Secretary and made payable to the Masonic Foundation of D.C.

La France Lodge

continued from page 25

The first goal of La France Lodge in this respect is bridging American and French-speaking Masonry. This is accomplished by facilitating mutual knowledge of the specific features and merits of American and French Masonic traditions, and establishing a meeting point in the nation's capital to introduce visiting French-speaking Brothers to local Masonic resources.

Another target is to sensitize Masonic society to the direct human distress. In this respect, La France Lodge supports a Non-Government-Organization ("Amour sans Frontières") assisting abandoned children and mothers in the Republic of Benin in Western Africa. It is the first charitable activity for Africa within the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia.

To accomplish all of this, La France Lodge works in French and in English through three major avenues:

- 1) Study of rituals, symbolism and meditation
- 2) Organization of "forums" and major presentations in English, some of them open to non-masons, with question & answer sessions

It is true that owing to successful investments on behalf of the Foundation the organization is on sound grounds, but the growth and implementation of the benevolence programs of the Grand Lodge depends, in the last analysis, on the generosity of individual Masons. Remember, brethren, that caring and sharing, within and without the household of the faithful, speaks not only to Masonic duty, but also to Masonic privilege and purpose.

The Foundation meets annually, shortly before the Semi-Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge in May, to elect officers and discuss disbursement of funds. The Trustees of the Masonic Foundation invite you to attend the annual meeting of the Foundation (April 30th this year), and participate in the proceedings and by doing so help achieve the goals of the Foundation. We especially encourage the Lodge Representatives to participate in the Annual Meeting. It is important that each Lodge be represented by at least one brother at these meetings. The Report of the Masonic Foundation will be presented at the Semi-Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge. ■

- 3) Twinning with specific foreign lodges to share mutual Masonic experiences.

La France Lodge 93 does most of its Ritual in the French language (or in English, when candidates are English speaking), but all the business and presentations are done in English. The Lodge meets on the 2nd Monday of each month (except July & August) at 7:00pm at Georgetown Masonic Hall.

Usually, the Lodge gives 6 major presentations per year along the lines mentioned above, and 2 to 4 per year are "open" to non-masons.

The Lodge has introduced several new subjects over the years, like the "meditation" at the beginning of each communication, to allow everyone to leave the "profane" world, and enter the "sacred" world of the Temple. This allows the Brethren to focus on their work: "Freeing and broadening the mind" through a peaceful, inspiring and pleasurable lodge atmosphere with significant Masonic substance. ■

