

2003
ANNUAL REPORT
of the
***COMMISSION ON INFORMATION
FOR RECOGNITION***
of the
**CONFERENCE OF
THE GRAND MASTERS OF
MASONS IN NORTH AMERICA**



A.D. 2003 / A.L. 6003

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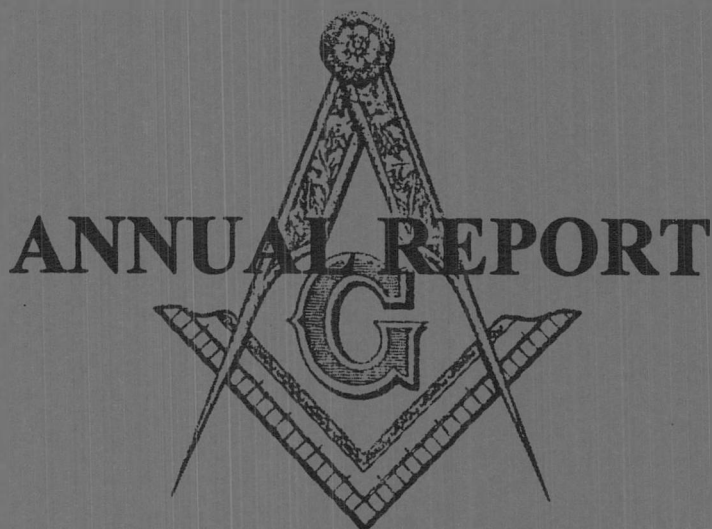
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**COMMISSION ON INFORMATION
FOR RECOGNITION
of the
CONFERENCE OF
THE GRAND MASTERS OF MASONS
IN NORTH AMERICA**



given at
Minneapolis, Minnesota
February 18, 2003

PREFACE

The Commission on Information for Recognition was organized in 1951 as a facility to gather, collate and, from time to time, revise information on Grand Lodges in other lands, as a service to the Grand Lodges of this Conference.

The Commission neither advises nor recommends that recognition be given to any Grand Lodges, but merely indicates whether or not it considers that a Grand Lodge in question satisfies the conditions of regularity.

Until 2003, the Commission had consisted of six members selected from a wide geographical distribution. One new member, usually a Deputy Grand Master, was elected each year and served for six years. This year, the Conference of Grand Masters expanded the Commission to seven members, with each to serve a term of seven years. This will eventually assure that each of the seven Regional Masonic Conferences will be represented on the Commission.

After each Annual Meeting of the Conference of Grand Masters, the report, given to and adopted by the Conference, is printed and copies mailed to the Grand Secretaries and to the Chairmen of the Committees on Fraternal Relations of the Grand Lodges of the Conference. Copies are mailed to many interested Grand Lodges who are not members of the Conference. This report is based upon the most recent information available, and, in some cases, after a presentation by representatives of the Grand Lodges mentioned in the report.

All comments on this report and all inquiries on other matters of information on Grand Lodges throughout the world may be addressed to the Secretary-Treasurer of the Commission, M.: W.: Curtis N. Lancaster, 555 West 2525 South, Syracuse, Utah 84075-8570. Telephone Number: 801-525-0589; Fax Number: 801-525-0590. E-Mail: sgig4ut@aol.com



Back Row, L. to R. – Joe C. Harrison, Aaron W. Harvey, Roger J. Taylor.
Front Row, L. to R. – James E. Durbin, Curtis N. Lancaster, Ross Van Ness Bayer, Robert J. McKibbon.

**REPORT OF THE
COMMISSION ON INFORMATION
FOR RECOGNITION**

February 18, 2003

TO THE CONFERENCE OF GRAND MASTERS OF
MASONS IN NORTH AMERICA:

MOST WORSHIPFUL BROTHER CHAIRMAN:

MOST WORSHIPFUL AND RIGHT WORSHIPFUL
BRETHREN:

It is my honor and privilege as Chairman of this Commission to present the 50th annual report of the Commission on Information for Recognition. I am pleased to present the other members of this Commission in the order of length of service:

M.:W.: Robert J. McKibbin, P.G.M. of the Province of Ontario, Canada, Vice-Chairman;

M.:W.: Aaron W. Harvey, P.G.M. of Oregon;

M.:W.: Roger J. Taylor, P.G.M. of Minnesota;

M.:W.: James E. Durbin, P.G.M. of Illinois;

M.:W.: Joe C. Harrison, Grand Master of Tennessee;

M.:W.: Curtis N. Lancaster, P.G.M. of Utah, Secretary-Treasurer,

and I am M.:W.: Ross Van Ness Bayer, P.G.M. of New Jersey, and Chairman.

In the six years I have served on this Commission, the true universality of Masonry became very clear to me. I am sure the other members of the Commission share the same experience. I believe this universality is what makes this Commission an important part of this meeting.

Since the delegates to this Conference change each year, I would like to repeat the standards for recognition adopted for our guidance when this Commission was formed in 1952.

These are the guidelines used to evaluate the regularity of a Grand Lodge, and thereby determine whether it is worthy of consideration for recognition by our member Grand Lodges. This Commission provides this data for use by our Grand Lodges, and does not attempt to influence or recommend what action should be taken. The Commission serves you in an investigative and advisory capacity only.

The standards for recognition are summarized as follows:

1. Legitimacy of Origin.
2. Exclusive Territorial Jurisdiction, except by mutual consent and/or treaty.
3. Adherence to the Ancient Landmarks—specifically, a Belief in God, the Volume of the Sacred Law as an indispensable part of the Furniture of the Lodge, and the prohibition of the discussion of politics and religion.

Applying these standards to the requests of several Grand Lodges during our deliberations, we now share the following information:

ARMENIA

The Grand Lodge of Armenia was consecrated in the capital city of Yerevan, Armenia, on July 30, 2002, by the Grand Masters of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia, the Grande Loge Nationale Francaise, the Grand Lodge of Russia, and the National Grand Lodge of Romania. This event was the culmination of ten years of careful planning and cooperation of four lodges chartered by the Grand Lodges involved in the consecration. The Grand Lodge of Armenia is officially registered with, and approved by, the Republic of Armenia, as a Non-Governmental Organization with a charitable and philanthropic mission and objectives, and maintains territorial sovereignty over the Republic of Armenia. The Grand Lodge labors under a constitution which includes 15 Landmarks and Ancient Usages adopted and practiced by the consecrating Grand Lodges. The

Commission is of the opinion that the Grand Lodge of Armenia is regular and meets the requirements for recognition. The Grand Master is Christopher Sahakian; the Grand Secretary is Paul B. Najarian; and the address of the Grand Lodge is: P.O. Box 65, Yerevan 375010, Armenia.

BULGARIA

Confusion and disagreement continues within the Grand Lodge of Bulgaria, with two brothers claiming to be the legitimately elected Grand Master of this Grand Lodge. Borislav Sarandev was elected (but not installed) on November 24, 2000. The election results were subsequently contested, and a new election was called for March 22, 2001. In the interim, Bro. Sarandev announced himself the Grand Master in office, and proceeded to function in that capacity. At elections held on March 22, 2001, Bro. Peter Gornovski was elected and installed Grand Master, and has proceeded to function as such. Bro. Sarandev and his delegation did not attend this election, claiming the meeting was unauthorized and illegal. To add to this confusion, there are some Grand Lodges in Europe that recognize Sarandev as Grand Master, some who recognize Gornovski as Grand Master, and others that are just waiting for this situation to resolve itself. The Commission is of the opinion that the Grand Lodge of Bulgaria still meets the criteria for regularity and recognition. From data made available to the Commission, we are unable to conclusively determine who is the legitimate holder of the office of Grand Master, and feel this is a matter that must ultimately be resolved by the brethren of the Grand Lodge of Bulgaria.

CONGO

The Grand Lodge of Congo was consecrated on October 21, 2000, in Brazzaville, Congo, by the Grand Lodge of Senegal in the presence of Grand Officers of the Grande Loge Nationale Francaise. The Constitution of the Grand Lodge of Congo is very similar to those of the United Grand Lodge of England, and the rites practiced in all ceremonies are the same

as those authorized by the Grande Loge Nationale Francaise and the Grand Lodge of Senegal. Each of the ten lodges comprising the Grand Lodge of Congo were chartered by one of those Grand Lodges. It is stated that they strictly apply the Rule of Twelve, and enforce the Regulations, Ways, and Customs of Regular and Universal Masonry. The Grand Master is Denis Sassou N'Guesso, and the Grand Secretary is Bienvenu Aime Bongo. The address of the Grand Lodge is: B.P. 14736 Brazzaville, Congo. The Commission is of the opinion that the Grand Lodge of Congo meets the criteria for regularity and recognition.

IRAN (in Exile)

The Grand Lodge of Iran was consecrated on March 1, 1969, under the sponsorship of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, The Grande Loge Nationale Francaise, and the United Grand Lodges of Germany, and was composed of constituent lodges of these three Grand Lodges. During and following the revolution of 1978-79, the government banned the activities of the Grand Lodge within the country and all of the lodges were closed. A large number of brethren, including a great majority of the Grand Lodge officers and members of the Grand Committee, left the country, and thus the activities of the Grand Lodge continued outside Iran. The Grand Committee met in New York City in 1982, with the Grand Master and appointed a Deputy Grand Master and Grand Secretary. This Grand Lodge met again in 1983, and elected a new Grand Master and his Grand Officers. In 1985, The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts granted approval for the Grand Lodge of Iran (in Exile) "to reestablish and continue, for the time being within the commonwealth of Massachusetts, the activity of Masters' Lodges in order to receive and enter Apprentices, pass Fellowcrafts and raise Master Masons, all of Iranian nationality, and elect officers according to their Constitution and By-Laws and the ancient usages and customs of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons."

In the past, the Commission has never sanctioned recognition of any Grand Lodge in exile; however this Grand Lodge has

six working lodges in the city of Boston, and has fraternal relations with forty Grand Lodges in this Conference, and many others around the world. The Commission is of the opinion that the Grand Lodge of Iran (in Exile) practices regular Masonry, and meets the standards for recognition. The Grand Master is Ali C. Razi, and the Grand Secretary is Ghassem Ladjevardi. The mailing address for the Grand Lodge is: P.O. Box 25017, Los Angeles, CA 90025.

MOLDAVIA

The Grand Lodge of Moldavia was established by officers of the Regular Grand Lodge of Italy on October 15, 1999, in the city of Chisinau, Moldavia. The Grand Lodge claims its constituent lodges practice regular masonry and adhere to the basic landmarks of Freemasonry; however we have no information concerning those lodges or whether they were regularly constituted. In addition, the Grand Lodge was created by a Grand Lodge that is considered to be irregular by most Grand Lodges in the world. It should be noted that that Grand Lodge has subsequently withdrawn recognition from the Grand Lodge of Moldavia. Based on the data available, it is the opinion of the Commission that the Grand Lodge of Moldavia does not meet the standards for recognition at this time.

MONTENEGRO

Until recently, Montenegro was part of the Union of Yugoslavia. That state has now been transformed into two sovereign entities: Serbia and Montenegro. The Grand Lodge of Montenegro consists of two lodges with a total of 42 members. They constituted themselves into a Grand Lodge on July 7, 2000, without the benefit of a constituting regular Grand Lodge, and without permission of the Regular Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia under whom they previously labored. It is therefore the conclusion of the Commission that the Grand Lodge of Montenegro does not meet the standards for recognition.

NIGER

The Grand Lodge of Niger was consecrated on November 23, 2002, by the National Grand Lodge of Burkino Faso in Niamey, Niger. Present at this event were the Grand Lodges of: Senegal, Benin, Grande Loge Nationale Francaise, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Congo, Morocco, Mali, and Guinea. The Grand Lodge of Niger states the rites practiced in their ceremonies are the same as those prescribed by the constituting Grand Lodge, and they strictly comply with the regulations, ways and customs of regular Masonry. Although data concerning their constituent lodges is not available, it appears the Grand Lodge of Niger satisfies the requirements for recognition. This is a new, small Grand Lodge, and perhaps caution should be exercised in rushing into fraternal relations with the Grand Lodge of Niger, until more data can be furnished.

PERU

The Grand Lodge of Peru is continuing to function successfully after its restoration on April 24, 2001. New officers were elected for a two year term on March 25, 2002. The Grand Master is Carlos Delgado R., and the Grand Secretary is Francisco Pegorari G.

PORTUGAL

A Grand Lodge calling itself the "Grande Loja Regular de Portugal" is sending a letter to all regular Grand Lodges informing them of a change of address. This Grand Lodge is a small remaining group of the original rebel group that broke away in 1996. It is not a part of, or to be confused with, the Grande Loja Legal de Portugal, which is recognized as regular by most Grand Lodges of the world. The address of the Grande Loja Legal de Portugal is: Rua Serpa Pinto, n°. 17 3,° Esq., 1200-443 Lisboa, Portugal.

ROMANIA

Romania is another jurisdiction suffering under the confusion of several Grand Lodges. The National Grand Lodge of Romania has been plagued with allegations of impropriety on the part of several Grand Lodge officers. Extraordinary Communications to address these problems were held by two factions within the Grand Lodge, and as might be expected, one faction confirmed the existing Grand Master, Gheorghe Comanescu, and the other faction elected Viorel Danacu as the Grand Master. Both groups call themselves The National Grand Lodge of Romania. There is a third Grand Lodge, called The United National Grand Lodge of Romania, headed by Petru Stetiu, that claims to be the legitimate heir of the original Grand Lodge founded in 1880. At the present time, the National Grand Lodge of Romania, with Gheorghe Comanescu as Grand Master, and Cristian Dumitrescu as Grand Secretary for Foreign Relations is considered to be the Grand Lodge that meets the standards for recognition. It was reported that Grand Master Comanescu has announced that he will not stand for re-election, so perhaps harmony and unity will be restored to this Grand Lodge.

RUSSIA

The Grand Lodge of Russia has been under attack by a dissident group that broke away and irregularly formed the Regular Grand Lodge of Russia. This group, headed by Vladimir Lopukhin, has made numerous allegations of wrongdoing by the Grand Lodge of Russia, but none have been legally supported. The Grand Lodge of Russia has continued to progress, with 21 Lodges now working under its jurisdiction. It now maintains fraternal relations with 88 Grand Lodges. On September 28, 2002, the Eighth Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Russia was held, and Dmitry Denisov was elected Grand Master, and Alexander Kondyakov was elected Grand Secretary. The Grand Lodge of Russia moved into new premises, and the address is: Box 2053, 101000 Moscow, Russia.

GRAND LODGE OF FRANCE

The Grand Chancellor of the Grand Lodge of France made a presentation to the Commission which restated their claims of practicing regular Masonry. In response to questions, he provided answers that supported regularity with regard to requiring all their members to express a belief in the Supreme Being, with the use of the Volume of the Sacred Law (VSL), and with regard to permitting visitation and plural membership with the Grand Orient and the International Order of Co-Masonry, "Le Droit Human." He also stated they did not recognize the standard of exclusive territorial jurisdiction, and did not consider establishing lodges in another Grand Lodge's jurisdiction an invasion of their territory, if there were brothers there who wanted to use the Grand Lodge of France ritual (the Scottish Rite ritual) instead of the ritual of the regular Grand Lodge there. He further stated the protocol signed in Reykjavik, Iceland on March 10, 2002, between the Grande Loge de France, Grand Orient de France, and International Order of Co-Masonry, "Le Droit Human," was not in effect because he made a mistake and therefore did not submit it to his Grand Lodge for ratification. This protocol recognizes as co-partners all members of each organization, and, "authorizes Brothers and Sisters to participate in the ritual workings of its Lodges according to rules and regulations, and in respect to mutual sovereignty."

A representative from the Grande Loge Nationale Francaise requested permission to speak, and he offered facts that refuted the information just presented by the Grande Lodge of France. As had happened in the past, the Commission again had two sets of information that were in total conflict.

After the conclusion of the meeting, the Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of France, Jean-Marie Doumbe, requested permission to speak to the Commission, who agreed to meet with him later in the afternoon. With the assistance of an interpreter, he stated he came to "rectify some untruths" that had been given to the Commission in the morning by his Grand Chancellor. In the name of his Grand Master, Michel

Barat, he apologized for some false information that had presented, and stated that it was important to the identity of the Grand Lodge of France to be honest in its representation. He stated they do not normally discuss their differences and problems outside of France with the GLNF at the Commission. The following summarizes the corrections he made in the information previously presented:

1. They do not require all members to express a belief in the Supreme Being; it is a matter of freedom of conscience. So in the Grand Lodge of France there are brethren who believe, and brethren who don't believe. The freedom of conscience is one of the most important characteristics of the identity of the Grand Lodge of France.

2. There is visitation with the Grand Orient and other French Grand Lodges. It is essential to be inside this French network of French Masonry, and they will not lose this to obtain recognition by U.S. Grand Lodges.

3. They do not want to talk about regularity; only legitimacy. They do not want an official treaty; but they want to be considered for a social friendship and respect.

4. He had informed the Grand Master of what had been presented that morning, and stated that a clear position, in respect to the identity of the Grand Lodge of France, will be presented in a letter from the Grand Master to the Commission. He stated it was very important to be honest.

5. The Commission thanked him for coming forth and for his sincerity. This was a great moment for all concerned. After three years of contention, it is satisfying to bring some closure to this issue.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

1. The United Grand Lodges of Germany installed the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Lithuania on April 13, 2002, in Vilnius, Lithuania. The United Grand

Lodges of Germany also announced its intention to install the Grand Lodge of Latvia this year.

2. The Grand Orient of Brazil continues to cement relations with the state Grand Lodges in Brazil, and formally share those jurisdictions. The Grand Orient of Brazil is the largest obedience in Latin America, and is composed of more than 100,000 members in over 2,000 lodges throughout the country. The Grand Orient is recognized by 25 Grand Lodges in this Conference, and 23 other Grand Lodges throughout the world.
3. The United Grand Lodge of England has restored fraternal relations with the Grand Lodge of India. This should add stability and support to the Grand Lodge of India, which is the regular Grand Lodge in that country, and which has been under verbal attack by four irregular Grand Lodges calling themselves the United Grand Lodges of India.
4. The Grand Lodge of California has requested assistance from the Commission in providing accurate information on the state of Freemasonry in Mexico. The relationships between the state Grand Lodges, and the York Grand Lodge is confusing to say the least. The issue of granting asylum to lodges in the territory of another Grand Lodge which have a dispute with the parent Grand Lodge will lead to even greater turmoil in Mexican Masonry. There is also an instance where a Mexican State Grand Lodge has invaded the jurisdiction of Texas and established at least one lodge there. The Commission agrees with the necessity of clarifying the current situation in Mexican Masonry for use by member Grand Lodges of this Conference. The Commission will undertake this investigation this year to include determining the relationships and practices of these Grand Lodges, as well as their compliance with our standards for recognition.

5. The correct address for the Grand Lodge of Morocco per Grand Master Emile H. OUAKNINE is:
Grand Loge du Royaume du Maroc-GLRM
6, rue Halab / Boulevard Mohamed V
1000 Rabat
Royaume du Maroc
E-mail: glrm@menara.ma

I will now call on M.:W.: Bro. Curtis N. Lancaster for the Treasurer's report.

TREASURER'S REPORT

TO: THE CONFERENCE OF GRAND MASTERS OF MASONS IN NORTH AMERICA

This report is an accounting of the funds of the Commission on Information for the year just past, ending December 31, 2002. Since January 1, 2002, fifty seven (57) of the member Grand Lodges have contributed \$2,944.00.

BALANCE FROM REPORT DATED FEBRUARY 19, 2002:

\$ 5,688.25

Receipts from Grand Lodges received between
January 1, 2002 and December 31, 2002:

Alabama	\$	50.00
Alaska		15.00
American Canadian (Germany)		15.00
Arizona		15.00
Arkansas		50.00
California		100.00
Canada – Alberta		15.00
Canada – British Columbia		15.00
Canada – Manitoba		24.00
Canada – New Brunswick		15.00

Canada – Nova Scotia	\$	15.00
Canada – Prince Edward Island		15.00
Canada – Saskatchewan		15.00
Colorado		50.00
Connecticut		50.00
Delaware		15.00
District of Columbia		15.00
Florida		100.00
Georgia		100.00
Hawaii		25.00
Idaho		15.00
Illinois		100.00
Indiana		100.00
Iowa		50.00
Japan		100.00
Kansas		50.00
Kentucky		100.00
Louisiana		50.00
Maine		50.00
Maryland		100.00
Massachusetts		100.00
Michigan		100.00
Mississippi		50.00
Missouri		100.00
Montana		15.00
Nebraska		50.00
Nevada		15.00
New Hampshire		15.00
New Mexico		15.00
New York		100.00
North Carolina		100.00
North Dakota		15.00
Ohio		100.00
Oklahoma		100.00
Pennsylvania		100.00
Puerto Rico		15.00
Rhode Island		15.00
South Carolina		100.00
South Dakota		15.00
Texas		100.00

Utah	\$	15.00
Vermont		15.00
Virginia		100.00
Washington		50.00
West Virginia		50.00
Wisconsin		50.00
Wyoming		15.00

TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS	\$	2,944.00
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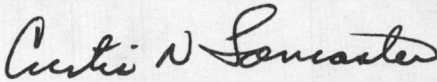
Expenses between January 1, 2002 and December 31, 2002:

2/19/02	Commission Photos	\$	140.00
2/28/02	Conference and Travel Expense		765.54
5/4/02	Printing Annual Report		185.48
5/5/02	Envelopes and Printing		101.18
5/6/02	Postage for Report		171.93
5/30/02	Postage for Foreign Letters		5.95
8/1/02	Secretarial Services		270.00
8/2/02	Stamps and Postage		48.87

TOTAL EXPENSES	\$	1,688.95
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BALANCE AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2002 :	\$	6,943.30
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Respectfully submitted,



CURTIS N. LANCASTER, P.G.M.
Secretary/Treasurer

M.: W.: Bro. Lancaster, thank you for the report.

Most Worshipful and Right Worshipful Brethren, my sincere thanks for your attention and for the opportunity to serve this Conference. This concludes the 50th annual report of this Commission, and I move the acceptance of the report.

Respectfully submitted,

Ross Van Ness Bayer, PGM, Chairman
Robert J. McKibbin, PGM, Vice-Chairman
Aaron W. Harvey, PGM
Roger J. Taylor, PGM
James E. Durbin, PGM
Joe C. Harrison, MWGM
Curtis N. Lancaster, PGM, Sec/Treas.

The Conference Nominating Committee submitted the name of M.:W.: Jefferson E. Williams, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi, as the new member of the Commission, and he was duly elected by the Conference. Subsequent action by the Conference added a seventh member to the Commission, so that all Regional Conferences would eventually be represented on the Commission. The term of service for a Commission member was also extended to seven years, commencing with M.:W.: Bro. Williams. The Conference Nominating Committee submitted the name of M.:W.: Donald G. Hicks, Jr. to fill the newly created seventh position, and he was duly elected.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMISSION FOR 2003

On February 18, 2003, the Conference of Grand Masters approved the Commission recommendation electing the following organization for the year 2003:

CHAIRMAN

**M.: W.: Robert J. McKibbon
Past Grand Master of Ontario**

VICE-CHAIRMAN

**M.: W.: Aaron W. Harvey
Past Grand Master of Oregon**

SECRETARY/TREASURER

**M.: W.: Curtis N. Lancaster
Past Grand Master of Utah**

**NAMES, ADDRESSES AND YEAR OF RETIREMENT
OF COMMISSION MEMBERS INSTALLED
FEBRUARY 18, 2003**

- 2004 — M.:W.: Robert J. McKibbon
Past Grand Master – Ontario, Canada
1200 Kaladar Drive
London, Ontario N5V 2R5
E-mail – BobMcKibbon@aol.com
- 2005 — M.:W.: Aaron W. Harvey
Past Grand Master – Oregon
3824 N.E. Skidmore Street
Portland, OR 97211
E-mail – aharvey@prodigy.net
- 2006 — M.:W.: Roger J. Taylor
Past Grand Master – Minnesota
1212 Riverside Drive. SE
St. Cloud, MN 56304-1655
E-mail – taylfisc@cloudnet.com
- 2007 — M.:W.: James E. Durbin
Past Grand Master – Illinois
P.O. Box 1250
Homewood, IL 60430
E-mail – jdurbin33@aol.com
- 2008 — M.:W.: Joe C. Harrison
Grand Master – Tennessee
6262 Garden Cove
Memphis, TN 38134
E-mail – jchlch@bellsouth.net
- 2009 — M.:W.: Jefferson E. Williams
Grand Master – Mississippi
229 Kiowa Drive
Madison, MS 39110
E-mail – jwillms@bellsouth.net
- 2010 — M.:W.: Donald G. Hicks, Jr.
Grand Master – Massachusetts
861 West Street
Leominster, MA 01453-2062
E-mail – donald.HicksJr@verizon.net

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