LAFAYETTE CONSISTORY NEWS

FROM THE VALLEYS OF BRIDGEPORT, NEW HAVEN, AND WATERBURY

OLDEST CONSISTORY IN THE NORTHERN MASONIC JURISDICTION

Issue No. 35 WINTER 2023

In commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the Sinking of the SS Dorchester on Feb 3, 1943, the Valley of Bridgeport will present the Knight of Valor Degree on February 27 in Stratford commemorating the Incredible story of the Four Chaplains who worked together in Interfaith Harmony to Comfort their Fellow Man during their greatest trial of a Lifetime.

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Lafayette Consistory News is the official publication of the Valley of Bridgeport and Lafayette Consistory, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, USA

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Andrew Kolaski, Jr., awarded the Meritorious Service Award on October 3, 2022.

ALLEGIANCE

The Bodies of the Scottish Rite, sitting in the Valley of Bridgeport, State of Connecticut, acknowledge and yield allegiance to the Supreme Council, 33°, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the United States of America whose Grand East is in Lexington, Massachusetts.

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———

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Lafayette Consistory

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23° - Knight of Valor — The Embodiment of Constans in Real Life

~ John A. Amarilios, MSA, 32°

On Monday, February 27, the Valley of Bridgeport will be presenting the 23rd Degree live. This degree is a celebration of human sacrifice and an exhibition of love for one's fellow man. It is a degree that crystallizes the lesson of the 32nd Degree in concrete contemporary terms.

There is a Buddhistic teaching that posits that your true nature is emptiness, and when this true nature is realized, the divine states of loving-kindness, compassion, and equanimity emerge. The protagonists in this real-life tragedy rise to the occasion in the midst of the worst sort of human cataclysm to exhibit the qualities which Constans taught us to value and revere.

There is also yet another protagonist in this gut-wrenching story, who was previously a sidebar to this narrative, but who was not forgotten by the nation posthumously. Charles Walter David, Jr., a black man born in New York City on June 20, 1917, decided to enlist in the US Coast Guard in March 1941, despite his having a wife and a three-year-old son. Economic opportunities were sparse for black men at the time, and in the segregated American military, he was assigned initially to do menial work in the ship kitchen, established his worthiness over time, and was promoted to Mess Attendant First Class. Once the war started, he was assigned to the USCGC Comanche and was made responsible for maintaining the officer's quarters thereon. At 12:55 a.m. on February 3, 1943, off the coast of Greenland, his destiny and that of the four Chaplains incurred a fated nexus.

The Comanche was one of three Coast Guard cutters that were escorting the SS Dorchester, serving as a troop ship carrying 900 men. The Dorchester, a former civilian passenger liner, was at that moment hit by torpedoes fired by the German Submarine U-233. On board the Dorchester, the minutes that elapsed from its being torpedoed to its rapid sinking witnessed acts of unparalleled brotherly love by the four chaplains who are depicted and honored by this degree. The rapid sinking of the Dorchester caused terror and panic to spread amongst the 900 soldiers and passengers on the ship. Due to the rapidity of the sinking many had to jump into the frigid ocean because lifeboats could not be made usable in time. The four Army chaplains, Methodist Reverend George L. Fox, Rabbi Alexander D. Goode, Catholic priest Father John P. Washington, and Reformed Church in America Minister Reverend Clark V. Poling, guided soldiers trapped below decks to escape venues, passed out life vests and when they ran out gave their own vests to the men who had none. When all that could be done was done, the four chaplains linked arms and prayed and sang hymns until the Dorchester slipped into the Ocean. The entire tragedy took less than 20 minutes, from hit to sinking.

The men aboard the three escort cutters observed hundreds of men die from exposure minutes after immersion into the frigid waters. Those in the lifeboats would also die if they could not be lifted up aboard the escorts. Ten-foot waves soaked all of them, swamping and overturning some of the lifeboats. Time was fleeting.

The crew of the Comanche lowered climbing nets after maneuvering into the immediate area of the sinking, but many of the survivors were too weak to make the climb or hold on to the netting. Observing this desperation, David and several other men climbed down the nets to help lift half-frozen men out of the lifeboats and onto the deck of the Comanche. During these extractions, the Comanche's executive officer fell overboard. David, without hesitation, dived into the icy waters to save him. David then helped lift a second shipmate from the waters as well. He had by then grown too weak to help others but continued to shout encouragement to other Comanche crew to persist in their operations. At the end of the day, the crew of the Comanche rescued 93 men from the icy waters, in addition to the two men that David had rescued.

Continued on page 4

23 ° - Knight of Valor... continued from page 3

The other two ships saved another 140 odd men, but over 700 souls were lost to the frozen waters of the North Atlantic that day in a matter of minutes. David contracted pneumonia as a result of his efforts and died two months later in a hospital in Greenland. The Coast Guard awarded him the Navy and Marine Corps Medal. In 2010, the Coast Guard named a new cutter after David in honor of his selfless acts and personal sacrifice.

"The cry of distress, the call of humanity, found him obedient to the paramount duty… if by such a sacrifice he could save his people. Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friend".

Valley of Bridgeport
Winter 2023 Degree Schedule

DATE		DEGREE(S)
Monday	**Feb. 6**	**4th Degree (live), 10th Degree (live)**
Monday	**Feb. 27**	**23rd Degree (live), 31st Degree (video)**
Monday	**Mar. 20**	**4th Degree - New Haven (live), 20th Degree - Consistory (live)**
Monday	**Apr. 10**	**27th Degree (live). 19th Degree (video)**
Saturday	**Apr. 15**	**22nd Degree in Hartford - 11 am.**
Monday	**May 1**	**32nd Degree**
Saturday	**July 15**	**14th (live), 6th Degree (video) - 11 am**

Dinners are at 6 p.m., degrees at 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise noted. The 4th Degree video is offered as needed to new candidates prior to degree portrayals, so they can start their Scottish Rite journey on any date.

New candidates must register 45 min before degree. Dinners before the Bridgeport degrees on Mondays are at 6 p.m. in the Shrine building, unless otherwise noted,

Saturday degrees are at 11 a.m., followed by lunch in the Shrine building. $10/per brother.

RSVP required for dinner or lunch.

Email: Office@LafayetteConsistory.com or call 203-375-0064.

Hospitaler's Corner

Your gifts to the Hospitaler Fund assist David in helping out local brothers who are members of the Consistory. Unfortunately, there never has been a greater need. If you have experienced good fortune in the past year, why not pass a portion of it forward to help a brother in need. Many are struggling with age-related debilities, as well as misfortunes of every kind.

Please make your contribution payable to

Lafayette Consistory

and mail to

David B. Urban, Hospitaler

P.O. Box 309

Stratford, CT 06615

BROTHERS AWARDED CERTIFICATES OF COMPLETING 29 DEGREES OF SCOTTISH RITE - SEPTEMBER 12, 2022

Letters from the Archives: Celebrating Benjamin Franklin

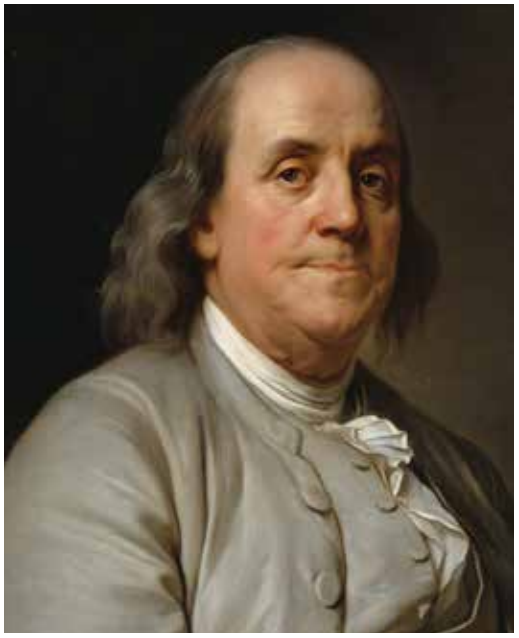
We have yet another interesting reflection from Brother James W.D. Acosta. This letter was penned after he viewed the 25th degree at the Valley of Waterbury on Wednesday, November 29, 2006.

"He snatched lightning from the sky and the scepter from tyrants."
(French statesman Turgot in Isaacson p. 145)

My mind fills with details of Franklin's life as men in brightly colored colonial costumes enter the room. The best-known American of the eighteenth century, our greatest scientist and diplomat, Franklin, is also an accomplished prose stylist and sharp wit (Ellis 109). He is a child of the Enlightenment and a fascinating man of varied interests and world-class abilities.

An early and active Mason in Philadelphia, Franklin creates a public sensation by joining Paris's Masonic Lodge of the Nine Sisters at the same time as Voltaire in 1778. He participates in the Lodge's memorial service when Voltaire dies later that year. He saves the Lodge from expulsion by Louis XVI, who, though a Mason himself, grows concerned by its anti-religious public image by agreeing to serve as its Venerable, or Grand Master. Franklin also initiates his grandson Temple and the naval hero John Paul Jones during his years in Paris (Isaacson 355-356).

Franklin's achievements and activities in science and diplomacy are interwoven throughout his life. He invents the lightning rod but refuses to patent his invention. Instead, he publishes instructions for making and positioning lightning rods and quiets centuries-old fears of lightning-induced fires. Thus, he subdues the greatest natural destroyer of cities



while setting a magnificent example of his credo, "The best service to God is doing good to man" (Isaacson 380).

As America's chief representative in France during the Revolutionary War, Franklin seduces the French monarchy and aristocracy into giving our fledgling democracy material aid in our war for independence. The French increase their national debt to such an extent during our war that the burden is later counted among the causes of their own revolution. Later, it is the French statesman Turgot who most eloquently expresses the vast influence of Franklin's genius in the epigram, "He snatched lightning from the sky and the scepter from tyrants" (Turgot in Isaacson 145).

Franklin symbolically hosts the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia following the successful conclusion of the War for Independence. Delegates habitually spend afternoons relaxing at his home which stands just a few hundred yards from the scene of their formal deliberations in the statehouse. It is easy to picture him skillfully lulling delegates into a mood of compromise while all enjoy the shade of his mulberry tree. At 81, he is twice the average age of the other members and deftly uses his stature and grandfatherly image to advantage in championing an atmosphere of moderation and conciliation (Isaacson 445, 450, 457).

Yet Franklin does not always compromise. Mirroring his all-or-nothing stand in support of American Independence is his decision in advanced old age to take on slavery, the most divisive issue facing the young republic. Only a few weeks before his death in 1787, his last public act is a powerful endorsement of the abolition of slavery on behalf of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society (Ellis 110-112).

Is it any wonder that Philadelphia witnesses the largest funeral in its history when nearly twenty thousand mourners watch as clergymen of every faith lead Franklin's procession (Isaacson 470)? Franklin, the American leader of the Enlightenment and professed Deist, contributed to the building funds of every religious group in the city (Isaacson 468) and gave us, even here at his death, a stunning endorsement of religious toleration and example of brotherly love.

The Prologue to the degree exhorts us to implement Masonic virtues consciously and daily. With Franklin's decisions and accomplishments before my mind, I understand why his life is used to exemplify these lessons. His humanity comes through in the acting, and I appreciate the skill with which my brothers perform their various parts in this well-crafted script. From the first view of Franklin at age 24 defending the morality of his common law marriage to the last view of him at 84 responding

Continued on page 11

Walk for the Children's Dyslexia Center

WHAT A SUPER DAY!

October 2, 2022 - Waterbury

THE VALLEY OF BRIDGEPORT~
December 5, 2

Cast, Crew
after the 32

Thomas E. Beck, 32° MSA, Secretary, and Illustrious Jack J.S. Farkas, 33°, holding the Valley of Bridgeport's two Valley of Excellence Awards for 2021 and 2022.

2022 VALLEY OF EXCELLENCE
2022

~ After the 32nd Degree ~

, Candidates of the Lafayette Consistory, along with the State of Connecticut's NMJ Hierarchy
2nd degree of December 5, 2022.

Valley of Bridgeport
2020-2021
VALLEY OF EXCELLENCE

Awarded at the
2021 NMJ Annual Session in Cleveland, Ohio

The Valley of Excellence award is to recognize Valleys in the Scottish Rite, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction who go above and beyond in their endeavors with superior excellence in areas of membership, service/ philanthropy, leadership development, and operations!

(*Lafayette Consistory News*. Issue No. 30. Fall 2021. Page 10.)

NIGHT OF CHARITY
NORTHERN MASONIC JURISDICTION HEADQUARTERS

The Lafayette Consistory was invited to attend in person the Night of Charity at the Headquarters of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. The Night was a resounding success. The Online TELETHON raising over $450,000 dollars for the various Scottish Rite Charities.

LEXINGTON, MA ~ NOVEMBER 26, 2022

Letters from the Archives continued from page 6

gracefully and with winning, self-deprecating humor to praises of his accomplishments, I feel as though I am in his presence on this, the 300th anniversary of his birth.

Two Cents on Pike's Twenty-Fifth Chapter, "Knight of the Brazen Serpent" in Morals and Dogma: Following the marathon 200-page 28th chapter, this one's 88 are just a long jog in the park. Ancient authorities appear again, including Ovid, Plutarch, Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Philo, Shahristan, Sanchoniathon, Julius Firmicus, and Emperor Julian. Pike refers several times to passages in the book of Job with astrological meanings and draws on examples from Indian, Egyptian, Arabian, and Chinese religious, astrological, and cultural traditions.

He even mentions "the Mexican hierogram … formed by the intersecting of two great Serpents" (496), which sends me to the dictionary to discover that a hierogram is a sacred emblem or graphic symbol. Now I'm frustrated because I don't remember such a symbol from my studies of Aztec or Mayan cultures, and he doesn't include a diagram. I could spend days in the dictionary and encyclopedia tracking down such references and improving my understanding of Pike's arguments, but I go forward with confidence because his main points and conclusions are always clear.

I laugh at my habitual defense of Pike's writing, given the dizzying effect of so many of his passages. The authorities he cites are often just names to me or completely unfamiliar in spite of my credible academic and personal studies in history, religion, and philosophy. Nonetheless, his core meanings really do scream in clear voices from his pages.

Pike's writing style is strange. About a quarter of the way through the whole work, Morals and Dogma now strikes me as an epic poem written in a stream of consciousness by a mind overflowing with convictions, advice, and love based on decades of study, action, and experience. I am awed and renewed in my determination to continue my self-appointed journey: to deepen my understanding of Freemasonry by reading and reflecting on Pike's comments.

My particular comments on this chapter concern snakes and worshiping the sun. Pike teaches me that the snake is a common symbol of immortality: "The property possessed by the Serpent, of casting its skin, and apparently renewing its youth, made it an emblem of eternity and immortality" (496). This makes sense once it is explained to me, but I'm struck again by my insulation from the natural world. I've seen a snake's old skin and film footage of a snake undergoing this process, but I haven't seen a snake in my environment for years. My experiences are limited to visits to my grandfather W. H. Manning's ranch in Oklahoma when I was young, visits to zoos, and some light camping experiences. My daily life is removed from most goings-on in nature.

Pike makes a convincing case for commonality among the ancients and in the spiritual impulse of men in every age in his observations of sun worship, "… traces of the worship of the Sun yet linger in all religions. … In all churches and chapels, as in all Pagan temples and

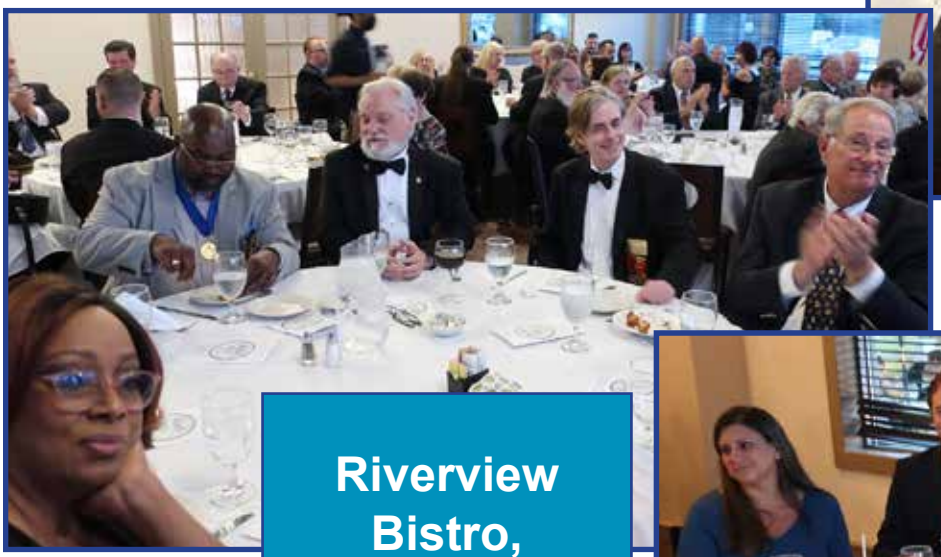
Continued on page 14

On the Walls at NMJ

THE VALLEY OF BRIDGEPORT

September 25, 2022

Installation of Officers and Dinner



Riverview Bistro, Stratford

Letters from the Archives continued from page 11

pagodas, the altar is in the East" (483). A little digging in my trusty Encyclopedia Britannica yields support for Pike's views from a world expert in classical studies, Reinhold Merkelbach, who concludes, "In the religion of Sol, an elaborate syncretistic theology was developed to show that all known gods of all nations were nothing but provisional names for the sun god" (Merkelbach 783).

Professor Merkelbach explains that worship of the sun was common among mystery religions and that, "Mystery religions were secret cults of the Greco-Roman world that offered to individuals a way to feel religious experiences not provided by the official public religions. … [furthermore] The mystery religions reached their peak of popularity in the first three centuries AD …[and] exerted some influence on the thinkers of the Middle Ages and the philosophers of the Italian Renaissance" (Merkelbach 778, 785). Merkelbach's scholarly, outside, and modern commentary on mystery religions leads me to think of Masonry as an organization with similar structures, purposes, and beliefs though one without a clear or unbroken lineage to any mystery religion.

My Masonic studies compel me to conclude that scientists and philosophers during the Enlightenment chose the operative stone masons guilds to form safe, trusted communities for the discussion and dissemination of beliefs deemed heretical to the Christian church. Scottish Rite Degrees, as written by Pike, draw inspiration, form, and symbolism from long-dead mystery religions which taught, at their highest levels, monotheism and religious toleration.

James W. D'Acosta
Fidelity-St. John's 3, Fairfield, CT
Scottish Rite Valley of Bridgeport, CT

Ellis, Joseph J. *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*, New York: Vintage Books, 2002.

Merkelbach, Reinhold. "Mystery Religions," in *Encyclopedia Britannica Macropedia,* 15th edition, Vol. 12. London: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1984. Professor of Classics, University of Cologne, West Germany.

Pike, Albert. *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry.* Charleston: Supreme Council of the Thirty-Third Degree for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States,187:reprint, Richmond: L. H. Jenkins, Inc., 1944.

Walter Isaacson, Walter. *Benjamin Franklin:An American Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003: Franklin's son Temple became the third generation of Frankins to beaar an Franklins to bear an illegitimate son, page 381.

Fellowship and Family Life Activities 2023

January - March

-Following All Safety Precautions - Limited Numbers

Please Call the Office in Advance to Reconfirm Details Before Attending any of the Events.

JAN. 13, 2023 - Scotch & Cigar Night, 7 to 10 p.m. at the Stamford Cigar Bar. Reservations required. Details are on page 16 in this edition of *Lafayette Consistory News.*

FEB. 5 - Two Roads Brewery, 1 p.m., at 700 Stratford Avenue in Stratford. $15/pp includes beverages and light food. 21+ only. Join us for a fun afternoon.

FEB. 18 - Trip to The George Washington Masonic National Memorial, Alexandria, VA. Re-enactment of the cornerstone laying on Monday, February 20, President's Day. **Three-day trip from 2/18/2023 to 2/21/2023.**

MAR. 11 - Curling & Cocktails, 6-9:30 p.m., $20/pp if curling, $15/pp viewing only, includes curling session, beverages, light food. Consistory members and their guests have first shot.

Stay tuned for **Subway Series - Mets & Yankees** in July!

- TURKEY TROT - STRATFORD

NOVEMBER 24, 2022

WINNERS

WINNERS

FROM GREENWICH:

I-95 to Exit 9–Glenbrook. Turn left on to Seaside Ave. Turn left on to East Main Street. Turn right on to Courtland Ave. Follow Courtland Ave. to the end. Turn right on to Glenbrook Road. Turn left on to Research Drive. Stamford Cigar Bar is on left.

FROM BRIDGEPORT:

I-95 to Exit 9 – Glenbrook. Turn right at East Main Street. Quick right on to Courtland Ave. Follow Courtland Ave. to the end. Turn right on to Glenbrook Road. Turn left on to Research Drive. Stamford Cigar Bar is on left.

CONTACT: Mike Jachimczyk at 203-979-5011 or email mcjesq@icloud.com or the Consistory at 203-375-0064 or email Office@LafayetteConsistory.com $15.00 per person for two cigars and one drink. Additional available.

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BROTHERS REMEMBER

Whether traveling from in or out of the state it is easy to get to the Stratford Leo H. Lohrman, II, Scottish Rite Theatre via Metro North. Our Theatre is located right next door to the Stratford Station. Avoid I-95 traffic and parking concerns. Consult the Metro North Train Schedule at: http://www.mta.info/schedules.