

Not-So-Secret Masons Moving Into New Lodge

by Joel Jacobson - Chronicle Herald

The
ChronicleHerald.ca

Published on October 20th, 2008



ROY LIVELY sits in the big chair, the emblems of office and recognition displayed proudly around his neck, waist and on his jacket pocket. The Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Nova Scotia is soon to take part in the dedication of a new Grand Lodge in Halifax. The official ceremony is at 1 p.m. on Saturday at the former St. Pius X Church in Fairview, which was bought by the Masons to replace their old lodge on Hollis Street.

The Dartmouth businessman, 66, says his time in this special year of service is never his own. He spends several evenings and weekends at meetings and functions, spreading the Masonic word of brotherhood and community service.

"Our dedication is open to the public, so they can see what we're all about," says Roy, admitting the Masons have always been seen as a secret society "Yes, we have some secrets, but that's just to recognize each other. And much of our (charitable) work is behind the scenes." Through the years, the 104 provincial lodges and 5,800 members have assisted Big Brothers Big Sisters, Scouts Canada, schizophrenia and Alzheimer societies and other organizations. They provide university scholarships, assist people less fortunate and always promote a social conscience. In 1917, the Masons set up food lines to assist after the Halifax Explosion.

Roy was in his late 30s when he joined in 1980, following his grandfather, father and brothers into the Masons. "I waited to join because I knew the commitment they all put in, and I wanted to spend time with my kids first. I now realize I could have done both, and should have joined when I was much younger." He says members of lodges throughout the province average from 50 to 70 years old and he wants younger men to join.

Oh, yes! Masons is an all-male brotherhood, but there is a sister organization, Order of the Eastern Star, which is coed, and of which Roy is a member, too. In all, he is part of 19 various rites of the Masons, including the York Rite and Scottish Rite, the original organizations from centuries ago England and Scotland, when Masons were only for the aristocracy and royalty served as Grand Masters.

Reo Matthews, director of ceremonies, is a retired teacher and administrator. He relates some history. "After colonization, the landed gentry, a new class of people, was the impetus to establishing Masonry. By the early 20th century, Masons added the middle class and by the 1950s, all classes were represented. Today, everyone and anyone can join." He stresses that once a person walks through the door, each is on the same level. Social stratification ends, he says.

Roy looks around the former church sanctuary. "We have a smaller, homier space, but there is room to grow here. The old space, certainly beautiful and with a lot of history, was deteriorating and needed major dollars to fix. Parking was difficult and our membership was aging. "This is one level, better member access, and parking is plentiful. We bought the glebe house here for office space."

He explains Edward Cornwallis was the first Grand Master in 1750. Among others were lieutenant governors John Parr and John Wentworth. Alexander Keith served 33 years as Grand Master from 1840 to 1873.

Reo says a strong bond forms among members. "Roy and I joined together 28 years ago and we're close in everything we do." Roy nods. "Brotherly love is more than a phrase here. You know the strength of each other is always available. Masons has renewed my faith, spiritually and in my fellow man."

Original URL: http://www.footstepsofthemasters.ca/no_secret.html

Presented by: King Solomon Lodge #54 G.L.N.S - Digby, Nova Scotia, Canada