

Semi-Annual Report of the Grand High Priest May 22, 2019

I would like to thank the Companions of the Grand Chapter of Maryland for allowing me to serve as Grand High Priest for the 2018-2019 year. It has been a busy last six months and it has gone by quickly.

At the beginning of the term, I set goals and responsibilities to be met by the Officers and Committees of the Grand Chapter. These Goals and responsibilities were partially based on the Grand Chapter Long Range Plan and I like to address a few.

One of the goals was to improve communication. Along with the York Rite website and Google Calendar w/ email notifications, (I gave a big thank you to Comp. Dan Brewer for all his work on them) we began to send out a monthly newsletter called The Keystone. It is emailed to over 200 members and I hope this is something the members look forward to every month. Since this has been received favorably by the members, I offer the use of the Keystone to the Grand Council and Commandery for any notices they would like to go out to the membership

We also have been posting on the Grand Chapter Facebook page on a more regular base. This has encouraged a number of chapters to open their own FB page. I know Facebook is not popular with everyone, but the more ways information can be made available, the more the name Royal Arch will be heard.

The Long-range plan set a goal to have the Grand Chapter to hold 1 social event during the year. Two events were planned, one in the spring another in the fall and both will be held. By chance, a 3rd activity accrued in February with the Grand King's Bowling Tournament. REGK. Colburn was trying to form a competition between his Chapter and another but it caught on and became a Grand Chapter event. Looks like it will be held again next year. Thank you, REK Colburn, for making this a Grand Chapter event.

I asked the Membership Committee to inquire from our members their thoughts on membership growth, retention, and other concerns. I also asked them to write a short talk program for one person to present about Royal Arch in order to maintain a constant message. This will be in their report tonight.

Though we support the Royal Arch Research Assistance on a Chapter level, we have not done much on the Grand level. After discussing this with the RARA Chairman, Comp Andrew Martinez, he came up with the idea of selling blankets to help raise funds for the program and they are available tonight.

A Technology Committee was appointed late last year, to find ways to bring the Grand Chapter into the 21st century by addressing the following:

1. Computer friendly forms
2. Online registrations
3. PayPal possibilities
4. A possible online type membership system

The committee has begun addressing these issues and will be in their report tonight and since this committee will have many years of work and I recommended that it be part of the Grand Chapter Committees for future terms.

I hope you see tonight, through the many reports, the Grand Chapter is continually working to improve Royal Arch for our members. I thank the Officers and Committee members for all your work and time you have given to Maryland Royal Arch and its members.

Passing of two Past Grand High Priest this year

January marked the passing of Most Excellent Past Grand High Priest Royce A. Watson. Royce was a very active and dedicated Mason. He was elected to numerous top positions within the Masonic bodies, notably Past Master of Pentalpha Lodge #194, Potentate of Almas Shriners; Most Excellent Grand High Priest(2002), Royal Arch Masons of Maryland; Illustrious Grand Master, Royal and Select Masons of Maryland; Right Eminent Senior Grand Warden, Grand Commandery of Maryland; and Illustrious Thirty-Third Degree (33'), Inspector General Honorary, Scottish Rite Masons. We offer our condolences to Royce's wife Christine and his entire family.

We later learned of the passing of Past Grand High Priest Richard D. Parker (1984). Comp. Parker was ill for many years and unfortunately, we lost touch with him.

I ask a moment of silence in remembrance of our two Past Grand High Priests.

Grand Visitations and Events attended

The Grand Line and I have attended the scheduled Visitation to 10 of the 16 active chapters In Maryland. The remaining 6 Chapters will be visited between now and October.

All visitations have been well attended by the Grand line and by the membership of the Chapters. We are averaging 6 Grand Line Officers and 8 Chapter members per visitation. Special note: the largest Chapter attendance so far was at Salem Chapter with 14 of their members in attendance. A few years ago this chapter was in the rebuilding stage and it was great to see what they achieved since then!

The Annual Group Visitation to the Eastern Shore is scheduled for September and I am looking to do a degree or a training class for the day. I am working with the Grand Lecture to finalize this visitation.

At a number of these visitations, we witness Degrees being conferred and they were done in an outstanding manner.

I had the privilege of representing Royal Arch at 45 events so far this year. They included the York and Scottish Rites, Grand Lodge, Youth groups, and Eastern Star events. Unfortunately, I was only able to attend two out of State Jurisdictional events. I attended the Delaware and DC York Rite Sessions, but due to work and other commitments, I was unable to attend others.

I thank our REGK Bruce Colburn, REGS Jeff Dill, and all the Officers who have made great efforts to attend these visitation and many events during the year. It was also great to see so many of our members representing Royal Arch at many events of our Masonic family.

A full list of events attended will be included in my final fall report in October.

2019 Master Pins

As has been the custom since 2006 the Grand Chapter presented Master pins to the installed Masters of the Blue Lodges in our State. These pins have been the highlight for all the new Masters and they look forward to receiving a pin to remember their year.

We gave out over 90 pins during the month of January this year and I thank all those that helped present these pins. I had the privilege of presenting 13 pins this year and I thank all those that took the time to present these pins for the Grand Chapter.

Dispensations and Edicts

When I assumed office in October, I continued many of the Edicts as the previous GHP's with added clarifications. They are on the website.

I continued allowing the Grand Secretary to issue routine type dispensations in order to speed response. When needed, the Grand Secretary would contact me for my approval on certain dispensation request he received. This has worked very well over the last 6 months and will continue this year.

Appointments

In December 2018 I appointed a Committee on Technology. This committee was appointed in order to study and implement ways to improve the use of modern technology in the Grand Chapter.

In March 2019 I appointed Comp. Charles Matulewicz as Assistant Grand Secretary. Comp. Matulewicz will work with our Grand Secretary over the next year to insure he is confident to take over those duties when needed.

Chapter Merger and Inquiries

Prior to taking office, a request was received by PGHP Curtis from Ithiel Chapter #27 notifying him of their desire to merge with Druid Chapter. Since this was at the end of his term he asked me to handle this inquiry. I appointed an Ad Hoc Merger committee to review the request and to see all rules and regulations were followed.

This committee and members of the Grand Line meet with the chapter to ensure the Ithiel was making a proper decision and had a full understanding of the processes. We also had to agree on how to handle the membership for those who voted for merger, but may not want to transfer into Druid and wanted to go into another Chapter. A vote to merge with Druid Chapter was approved by Ithiel chapter and Druid approved the merger. Grand Chapter final approval will be voted on at this Semi-Annual.

I received a communication from Piscataway Chapter, No. 46 late last year about the status of the Chapter and possibility of a merger. I informed the HP I was not in favor of a merger at this time and requested a meeting of the members of the chapter to discuss their concerns.

We met in February with the members of the chapter, the elected Grand line, and MIGM Robert Lumbert, representing the Grand Council. At this meeting, I again expressed my reservation on a merger and suggested we set an action plan to improve the chapter before it is moved or merged.

An action plan was set to find ways to improve the membership and attendance of the chapter. The members agreed to follow this plan before any other discussion is made. The Grand Chapter will continue to monitor the chapter.

It has come to the attention of the Grand Chapter that Baltimore Chapter has discussed with Concordia Chapter of a possible merger. Baltimore Chapter has not been meeting on a regular bases for the last few years and this may be the proper thing to do.

I have to remind Baltimore Chapter, that they must officially inform the Grand Chapter of their intentions to seek a merger. After this notice, the Grand Chapter will then appoint Ad Hoc Committee on the Merger to work with both Chapters and see that all rules and regulations are followed. I expect a notice to be received soon.

Council of Anointed High Priest

On Saturday, April 27th, the Maryland Council of Anointed High Priests conferred the High Priest Degree and anointed three new High Priests.

We congratulate Comp. Jeff Disney from Carroll Chapter, Comp. Christian Miele from Tuscan Chapter, and Comp. Patrick Stangler from Salem Chapter on receiving this degree and being installed as High Priest

All three chapters had long-serving High Priests and we thank them for their service to these Chapters and know they will continue to work with their chapters and assist the new HP.

Awards Review

I asked the Awards Committee to review, update, and make necessary changes to the current awards presented by the Grand Chapter. This was done in order to ensure the awards have current written requirements and are relevant to today's membership.

After their review, I will recommend that an Appendix be added to the Constitution to include the list of Awards and requirements. By adding it to an Appendix it would readily be available to the members and would ensure they would be easily updated when needed.

The committee is currently working on this review and will have an official report of recommendations at our fall meeting in October.

Award Presentation

As many are aware, we have a few awards where recommendations can be submitted by individual chapters to the Grand High Priest for consideration. I encourage all chapters to take advantage of this opportunity in order to recognize worth companions in their chapters.

We received the following nominations and I would like to make the following presentations to the following Companions who are in attendance.

White Tau

Austin Fogle, II - Enoch

David Hahn - Enoch

Gordon Munholland - Concordia

Triple Tau (red)

Alfred Letle - Enoch

James Stargel - Enoch

James King – Enoch

Final Thoughts

I have a special thank you at this time. The Grand High Priest has two collars he can wear while representing the Grand Chapter. He has the standard Gold Officer collar for all formal and official occasions and a Collaret. The collaret comes in handy when in a suit or at a non-formal function.

The Grand King and Scribe have attended a number of events over the years where a collaret would have been appropriate for them to wear, but they did not have one and I thought they should.

After looking and not having any success on finding a version of the GHP collaret for the Grand King and Scribe to use. Comp. Colburn asked his wife if she could copy and make a version of the collaret. She said she could and the Grand King and Scribe now have one to use when representing the Grand Chapter.

My special thank you is to Elisa Colburn for the time she took to make the Collarets for our Grand King and Scribe. I have a Thank You note and Gift card for her and ask our REGK to see that she gets it and express the appreciation of the Grand Chapter.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation for all the support received by the officers and members of this Grand Chapter. I have been mentored by many of you and without your support, the last 6 months would have been impossible.

Thank you to all the members of Royal Arch in Maryland; you are the backbone of our organization and the true leaders of Royal Arch.

With Fervency and Zeal,

William C. Eppig

M.E. Grand High Priest