

**The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge**  
**of**  
**Free and Accepted Masons of Florida**



**GRAND**  
**ORATION**

**By R.: W.: Stephen R. Gladstone**  
**W.: Grand Orator**  
**2008 – 2009**

## *THE PRIDE OF A FATHER*

### *The Legacy of Freemasonry*

I would like to thank our Grandmaster, M.:W.: Joe Fleites, for the opportunity to serve as your Grand Orator this year. I would also like to thank my father, Alfred Gladstone, a fifty year member, for the honor he bestowed upon me when he raised me to the sublime degree of Master Mason some nineteen years ago.

Despite having fought long and hard to draft something in the abstract or third person, thereby limiting the use of the words “I” or “My”, I was unsuccessful. I found, however, that in order to speak from my heart and perhaps give each of you cause for reflection, their use was unavoidable. It is therefore my sincere hope that the effect of my message surpasses any criticism caused by the use of these terms.

Throughout our Masonic History, there have been many legacies to which we attribute our fraternal conduct and philosophies. These legacies have been handed down from generation to generation, working their way into our ritual, our Masonic education and traditions. Legacies which perhaps unknowingly, but gratefully, control our interaction; not only with a Brother Mason, but at work, in public and at home. The integrity of the builders of King Solomon’s temple, the heroism of Jacques DeMolay and the ideals of Albert Pike are but a few. They have received recognition for much of their contributions and are memorialized in Masonic archives. There are many others whose names we do not even recall that shaped our Fraternity, its teachings, its mission. They too may be found in the history books, on works of art, on buildings, and in today’s electronic world, on the internet.

Our Masonic history is rich with heroes as well; Masons whose acts or adventures have become legend. Lists abound with the names of scientists, composers, war heroes, movie stars, founders and inventors known to be members of our honored Fraternity. These men, however, whose fame may well have been occasioned by the Masonic legacies which affected their own lives, in most instances left no recognizable Masonic legacy.

What appears lacking in our Masonic history, however, is the acknowledgment of perhaps the greatest legacy in Freemasonry. One which is subconsciously recognized, albeit with deep emotion and reflected upon with heartfelt gratitude. It is the legacy left to us by our fathers, our grandfathers and even our great-grandfathers, pride. Those same men who stood in the sands of Iwo Jima, fought in the jungles of Viet Nam, Korea and the deserts of Iraq, those fathers who proudly fought for the liberties we enjoy today and (whose memory in some instances we respectfully honor this Memorial Day) unknowingly created the greatest legacy of Freemasonry.

Unlike the fraternal orders of the late 1800s and early 1900s, whose basic purpose was to enable working people to pool their financial resources, thus supplying each other with life insurance, pensions and funeral benefits, our Masonic father's purpose was to help others. They nurtured the principles of brotherly love, truth and charity, which in time, made them better men, better fathers and better citizens. They earned the respect for the Fraternity we often take for granted. They raised the funds to build the Lodges we meet in today, and passed the very laws by which we as Masons are bound. All this and at the same time by not only being a father, but by serving our communities, our charitable endeavors, and as we recall this Memorial Day, our country.

While each of our fathers, grandfathers or even great grandfathers joined our Fraternity for different reasons, it was not to become famous or wealthy. Their fraternal interaction with other members, each step they took as Masons, fostered this inner pride. It grew from when they first stood proficient as an Entered Apprentice, to handing out food to destitute families or the victims of floods or hurricanes. They were like the artist who stands back realizing he has just placed his last brush stroke on the canvass, or the sculptor who has chiseled off that last piece of stone. They took pride in their Lodge, their family and their country. It was this sense of pride in the Fraternity they represented that ultimately honed a fraternal legacy.

This sense of pride has transcended from generation to generation, from father to son and from Brother to Brother. I have often caught myself smiling when this particular legacy of Freemasonry is subtly, if not unknowingly, referred to. It can be as simple as when a Brother proudly displays his father or grandfather's ring or apron. Recently, at my own Lodge, a Brother receiving his twenty-five year certificate was stricken with emotion as he proudly recalled his now deceased father having been there to raise him. While he may have felt embarrassed as his words were replaced by tears, I can assure you this solemn moment was not missed by a single person in the Lodge. Perhaps not a week later, I spoke with a forty year Brother who was intent on prolonging his knee surgery so he could attend this Grand Lodge session. No, it was not unfortunately to hear my oration, but he proudly announced it was to watch his son, a fourth generation member of the same Lodge, receive his gold card. If you had been at a surprise visit of our own Grand Master to his son's Lodge, you would have had difficulty choosing which was more proud of the other, the father or the son. The cover page of The Florida Mason depicts three generations of a Masonic family representing their Lodge in ritual competition; the prideful look of the youngest is unmistakable.

I ask that each of you help continue this legacy. I am doubtful that there is a Brother among us here today who would not stand proud at the raising of his son, or that of a friend's son, in the Lodge. Many of your children have already found the other members of your Lodge to be their mentors and friends. Their interaction at Lodge functions, picnics, parades, dinners and the like has already begun preparing them to be the proud leaders of the Fraternity, their community and their country.

We have many young men who have become interested in our Fraternity recently, drawn by web sites, friends that joined, or perhaps having seen a Masonic movie on television or in the theatre. Regardless of what has attracted them, let us share the pride of being a Mason with them. They may not have the benefit of having a father who was a Mason, however by making them feel at home, and that they are a part of something, they may well feel that same pride that is within you.

As you leave here today, I am hopeful you will lend a moment to consider the legacy of pride left behind by our fathers. Those who fought to keep this Fraternity, and this country, safe from harm. If you are able, give your father or grandfather a call and thank them for this legacy. If not, take a moment for silent reflection of how having introduced you into this Fraternity, they shaped your life.

May God bless the United States of America, our servicemen and women abroad and this great Fraternity.