

Grand Orator Speech

March 9, 2018

Today the world we live in appears to be in a state of confusion and chaos. These are perilous times, and much evil abounds. Yet I thank God for our great fraternity and our great country. Freemasonry has always tried to do the right thing for the right reason. Freemasonry has been very closely associated with the history of our nation, these great United States of America. Masons and Masonry have been on the cutting edge of everything good and wholesome in America.

Let us go back to its inception. Few indeed are the men revered as is George Washington. It is doubtful that our nation would be as it is today without his leadership during a trying moment in history. We Americans call him “The Father of Our Country”. The life of this great American has been referred to as “The Heartbeat of the American Revolution”. The legacy he left to us we now call the American way of life. He was our first President in 1789. Without George Washington there would have been no victory in war and no stability in peace. He came as close as anyone in our history to being the indispensable man. He was truly that man sent from God.

On September 17th this year we will celebrate the 231st anniversary of the signing of the Constitution of the United States of America, which is the oldest and longest lasting constitution in the entire history of the world!

July Fourth has been observed as Independence Day for almost two hundred and forty-two years; for on that day in 1776, the Second Continental Congress in session in Philadelphia adopted the Declaration of Independence which broke political ties with England and made that document the cornerstone upon which this nation is founded. It was written by Thomas Jefferson and was signed by 56 stalwart colonial patriots, nine of them known to be Masons.

We are proud of the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C., and we are proud of the White House. Perhaps some of you don't know that George Washington, wearing a Masonic Apron and attired in full Masonic

regalia in a Masonic ceremony, laid the cornerstone for the United States Capitol as well as the cornerstone for the White House. James Hoban, another Mason, was the Architect of the White House. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Master Architect and Freemason, possesses the title of “Father of Architecture in America”. His greatest work is the U.S. Capitol.

Francis Scott Key, another Mason, wrote “The Star-Spangled Banner”. One hundred and seventeen years later It was designated as the United States National Anthem by act of Congress and approval of President Herbert Hoover on March 3, 1931.

Francis Bellamy, an ordained minister, magazine writer and Mason was the author of “The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America”.

John Phillip Sousa, a 33rd Degree Mason, and the seventeenth Director of the United States Marine Band is known as “The March King”. He wrote “The Stars and Stripes Forever”, which was dedicated as the National March of the United States on December 10, 1987.

Patrick Henry, patriot, orator, statesman and Mason, made the famous statement, “Give me liberty, or give me death!”

Brother John Hancock was the first signer of the Declaration of Independence.

Irving Berlin is well known for *God Bless America*, which some considered another National Anthem. After the tragic attacks at the World Trade Center, Pennsylvania and the Pentagon did you notice how America instinctively turned to Berlin’s old song? Its sentiment still rings true – God Bless America!

When we open our lodges, we say the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag which occupies a very special place in the honored East. Somehow that pledge has taken on a very special meaning to me since the terrorists’ attack on the Twin Towers and subsequently committing our troops to war in the Middle East. In your devotions and prayers to deity please remember these who struggle in a hostile foreign land for my freedom and

yours. Indeed, some of our very own lodge Brothers are engaged in that war.

Brother Paul Revere was the American who rode on horseback to warn his fellow patriots that the British were coming. The highest structure in Boston was the Old North Church Tower where the lookout placed two lanterns – “one if by land and two if by sea”.

Masons were involved in the Boston Tea Party as a protest to the high taxes levied on the colonies by England.

Benjamin Franklin was the distinguished leader of the American Revolution. As a matter of fact, nearly all of the leaders of the American Revolution were prominent Masons.

Fourteen Presidents have been Masons, along with five Chief Justices of the Supreme Court.

J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the FBI, deceased, was a 33rd Degree Mason.

On July 20, 1969, two American Astronauts landed on the lunar area known as Mars Tranquillitatis, Sea of Tranquility. One of them was Illustrious Edwin Eugene “Buzz” Aldrin, Jr., 33rd degree, a member of Clear Lake Lodge in Seabrook, Texas. The then Grand Master of Texas constituted and appointed Brother Aldrin as his Special Deputy and granted him full power to claim Masonic Territorial Jurisdiction on the Moon. On his initial walk on the Moon, Buzz Aldrin asked Mission Control for complete silence. Though they didn’t know why, Mission Control granted Aldrin’s request for silence. In this quiet time Buzz Aldrin observed the Lord’s Supper on the Moon for the first time in the history of the World. In remembrance of Jesus Christ he broke the bread representing Jesus’ body, and he drank the juice from the cup representing the blood of Christ shed for the propitiation of our sins. Another astronaut, Walley Shirra, was also a Mason.

Brother Robert R. Livingston, in association with James Monroe, brought about a great bargain for the United States, the Louisiana Purchase. He was a member of the committee which drafted the Declaration of Independence. He became the first Chancellor of New York; and, as such, he administered the oath of office to George Washington at the first Presidential Inauguration in New York on April 30, 1790. He introduced gypsum as a fertilizer, and was also instrumental in the development of the steamboat with Robert Fulton.

The Statue of Liberty was designed by Frederick Bartholdi, a Mason, and given to our country as a symbol of values the Masons in France shared with our forefathers.

The beauty and size of Mount Rushmore National Monument is overwhelming. Each President's head is sixty feet high, scaled to a man who would stand 464 feet tall, if fully carved. Each nose is twenty feet long, and the eyes are eleven feet wide. Lincoln's mole is sixteen inches across. Brother Gurzon Borglum, the genius behind this massive monument, chose four Presidents to stand as epic symbols of our nation - George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. Of these four, Washington and Roosevelt were Masons. Innovative sculptural techniques were employed with dynamite and jackhammers. The project took fourteen years. Borglum didn't start until he was sixty years old and worked on it until he died at age seventy-four. His son then picked up his father's tools and completed the work. Both father and son were Masons.

Here is the Legend of the Coffee Break. One cold morning on top of Mount Rushmore, Borglum's crew was huddled in a shack warming up with some coffee. Borglum burst in and yelled, "What's going on here?" When one of the laborers said they were just having some coffee, Borglum said to this handyman, "See to it that about ten O'clock every morning we get some donuts and coffee up here for these men." According to local legend, that is how the coffee break was born.

Brother Albert Belmont Graham initiated the 4-H Club. Current membership is estimated at near six million.

Brother Dave Thomas, 33rd Degree Mason, is the founder of Wendy's Old-Fashioned Hamburgers Restaurants and is often referred to as "the Lee Iacocca of the Fast Food Industry". Wendy's grew from a modest one store operation to a multi-billion-dollar worldwide marketing giant. Brother Dave said, and I quote, "There is no doubt in my mind that Freemasonry is the cornerstone of America."

Have you ever shopped at J.C. Penny's? James Cash Penny, 33rd Degree Mason and a great philanthropist and humanitarian, was the most prolific retail merchandising genius the world has ever seen.

Every time Brother Lou Gehrig, the baseball great, played there was an overflow crowd. Lou died of a disease that later was named the Lou Gehrig Disease.

Another baseball hero, Cy Young, had 511 career wins. He tossed three no-hit games and May 4, 1904, he pitched baseball's first perfect game of the modern era, in which no one on the opposing team was allowed to reach first base. Prior to his death, he received a fifty-year medal in Masonry, and at his death was buried wearing his Masonic Apron.

Audie Leon Murphy, 33rd Degree, was the most decorated soldier in World War II and was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the highest single honor that can be received in the military service for valor.

Brother Will Rogers was called the best-loved man in the world, a title never given to anyone before or since. He was awarded more official honors, by more nations, than any other person.

Roy Rogers is the ONLY performer to be elected to the Country Music Hall Of Fame – TWICE! Roy once sold out the Madison Square Garden an incredible twenty-nine straight nights! Brother Roy holds the record

for the largest crowd to ever see an indoor rodeo (46,884 in the Houston Astrodome).

There are 254 counties in Texas; at least 102 of them have been named after Masons. The state capital is named after Stephen F. Austin, the “Father of Texas”. Some other notable Masons are James Bowie, David Crockett, William B. Travis; and many other men who fought and died at the Alamo were Masons.

Brother Burl Ives, actor, writer and singer of ballads and folk songs

Mel Tillis, 33rd Degree and renowned country music singer, famous for his stuttering

Brother Daniel Carter Beard had a good idea about training young boys; it became the Boy Scouts of America.

Brother Frank Land had another idea about training young boys; it became the Order of DeMolay.

Brother Sam Colt had an idea about how to make a gun fire quickly. His idea became one of the most famous names in the American West.

Brother Jean Henri Dunant had a good idea; it became the American Red Cross.

Brother Thomas Edison invented the light bulb.

Brother M.K. Guertin started the Best Western International, at one time the largest hotel chain in the world.

Red Skelton, one of America’s best loved comedians, got his start as a Shrine Clown.

Others include: W.C. Fields, Houdini, Tom Mix, Ernest Borgnine, Arnold Palmer, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, John Wayne, Archie Bunker, General Douglas MacArthur, Charles Lindbergh, Michael Richards, Sheriff Pat Garrett who killed Billy the Kid and Bill Monroe.

Certainly, there are many more. Most of these are from our past, but I assure you that we have many who now walk among us that will go on to make us very proud in the future of America. If there ever was a time when America and the world needed what our churches and Masonry offers, this is that time. Masons, you learn our beautiful ritual; take it outside these walls; live it in your life; and be an example for those who are watching you. Today I submit to you that Masonry will do to live by, and Masonry will do to die by. Thank you and God bless you and the United States of America.

Charles “Fuzzy” Cox, PGM

Grand Orator, 2017-2018