



# THE LODESTAR



Richmond Lodge A.F. & A.M. № 23 G.R.C.

193rd Year

June 2018

## From the Editor

Does the expression, "We've always done it that way!" ring any bells?

The U. S. standard railroad gauge (distance between the rails) is 4 feet, 8 ½ inches. Now, that is an exceedingly odd number. Why was that gauge used? Because that is the way they built them in England, and English expatriates built the U. S. railroads. Why did the English build them like that? Because the first rail lines were built by the same people who built the pre railroad tramways, and that is the gauge they used.

Why did "they" use that gauge then? Because the people who built the tramways used the same jigs and tools that they used for building wagons, which also used the same wheel spacing. Okay! Why did the wagons have that particular odd wheel spacing? Well, if they tried to use any other spacing, the wagon wheels would break on some of the old, long distance roads in England, because that's the spacing of the wheel ruts..

So, who built those old rutted roads?

Imperial Rome\* built the first long distance roads in Europe (and England) for their legions. Those roads have been in use ever since. And the ruts in the roads? Roman war chariots formed the initial ruts, which everyone else had to match for fear of destroying their wagon wheels. Since the chariots were made for (or by) Imperial Rome, they all had the same wheel spacing. The United States standard railroad gauge of 4 feet, 8 ½ inches is derived from the original specification for an Imperial Roman chariot. Specifications and bureaucracies live forever. So the next time you are handed a specification and wonder what horse's ass came up with it, you may be exactly right. This is because the Imperial Roman war chariots were made just wide enough to accommodate the back ends of two war-horses.

Now, the twist to the story...

There is an interesting extension to the story about railroad gauges and horses' behinds. When we see a space shuttle sitting on its launch pad, there are two big booster rockets attached to the sides of the main fuel tank. These are solid rocket boosters, or SRBs.

## A Message From Our WM

My Brothers, In the days leading to the Investiture of our new Officers and the Installation of our new Worshipful Master, reflection seems appropriate.



Over the last year, I have tried to plan and pre-

pare as best as possible. However, like life, you cannot foresee and anticipate everything. Even though perfection is our goal, perfection is a very small and a continually moving target! There were evenings when I truly thought we would struggle to complete our degree work. But my brothers, both officers and general members alike worked in harmony to make our evenings a success. It was an amazing sight to see. It took several months to get comfortable with the idea that being Worshipful Master is not about striving for perfection but about cultivating an environment so that others are able to participate to the best of their ability. I believe the outcome of such an environment is mutual trust. With that backdrop, I share these parting words to our new and upcoming officers. Never give up. Learn from your mistakes. Strive to improve. Most importantly, support your brothers. Therein lays the strength of our fraternity. In our modern society, there are few institutions that engender such qualities. In the sharing, my hope is others will make this discovery as well. I extend my final thought to our Past Masters. Their guidance and support were invaluable. Thank you for your generous time and cogent advice.

Have an enjoyable summer. I look forward to meeting everyone in the fall.

Fraternally,  
W. M.  
Geo. Brown.

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Thiokol makes the SRBs at their factory at Utah. The engineers who designed the SRBs might have preferred to make them a bit fatter, but the SRBs had to be shipped by train from the factory to the launch site. The railroad line from the factory happens to run through a tunnel in the mountains. The SRBs had to fit through that tunnel. The tunnel is slightly wider than the railroad track, and the railroad track is about as wide as two horses' behinds.

So, a major design feature of what is arguably the world's most technologically and advanced transportation system was determined over two thousand years ago by the width of a horse's ass. Ahh! Yes! But we've always done it that way!

(Author: Anonymous - Contributed by W. Bro. Paul Natale)

*\*The Romans are my ancestors and some of these road builders might have been my relatives. I seem to recall the old "Galati Stone Road Building Company" mentioned in our family history. Their motto, "All roads lead to Rome."*

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*In this issue, we witness the drawing to a close of W. Bro. George Brown's tenure as our Worshipful Master. In his message here and in the June sum-mons, he humbly touches upon some of the highlights of his year. What I was impressed with most, was the common thread running through these accomplishments, and that is, either by introducing new activities or slightly adjusting older ones to make them more interesting. Freemasonry is founded upon a strong base of tradition, rituals, concepts and methodology, which stand steadfast from generation to generation. However, the various activities peculiar to a particular Lodge can always be tweaked and shaped to allow for the ever changing dynamics of the Lodge membership brought in by every new Initiate.*

*Thank you Bro. George...you did it your way!*

*Brethren, enjoy your summer.*

*Joe*

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## **A Good Story**

### **From the 1977 New Mexico Freemason**

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A young man passed a pawnbrokers shop. The money lender was standing in front of his shop, and the young man noted that he was wearing a large and beautiful Masonic emblem. After going on a whole block, apparently lost in thought, the young man turned back, stepped up to the pawnbroker, and addressed him: I see youre wearing a Masonic emblem. Im a Freemason too. It happens that Im desperately in need of \$25 just now. I shall be able to repay it within ten days. You dont know me; but I wonder whether the fact that you are a

Freemason and that I am a Freemason is sufficient to induce you to lend me the money on my personal note.

The pawnbroker mentally appraised the young man, who was clean-cut, neat and well-dressed. After a moments thought, he agreed to make the loan on the strength of the young man being a Freemason. Within a few days the young man repaid the loan as agreed and that ended the transaction.

About four months later the young man was in a Lodge receiving the Entered Apprentice Degree; he had not really been a Mason when he borrowed the \$25. After he had been admitted for the second section of the degree, the young man looked across the Lodge room and saw the pawnbroker from whom he had borrowed the \$25. His face turned crimson and he became nervous and jittery. He wondered whether he had been recognized by the pawnbroker. Apparently not, so he planned at the first opportunity to leave the Lodge room and avoid his benefactor. As soon as the Lodge was closed he moved quickly for the door, but the pawnbroker had recognized the young man, headed him off and, to the young mans astonishment, approached him and greeted him with a smile and outstretched hand.

Well, I see you werent a Freemason after all when you borrowed that \$25, the pawnbroker commented.

The blood rushed to the young mans face as he stammered, No, I wasnt, but I wish youd let me explain. I had always heard that Freemasons were charitable and ready to aid a Brother in distress. When I passed your shop that day I didnt need that \$25. I had plenty of money in my wallet, but when I saw the Masonic emblem you were wearing, I decided to find out whether the things Id heard about Freemasonry were true. You let me have the money on the strength of my being a Freemason, so I concluded that what I had heard about Masons was true, that they are charitable, that they do aid Brethren in distress. That made such a deep impression on me that I presented my petition to this Lodge and here I am. I trust that with this explanation you will forgive me for having lied to you.

The pawnbroker responded, Dont let that worry you too much. I wasnt a Freemason when I let you have the money. I had no business wearing the Masonic emblem you saw. Another man had just borrowed some money on it, and it was so pretty that I put it on my lapel for a few minutes. I took it off the moment you left. I didnt want anyone else borrowing money on the strength of my being a Freemason. When you asked for that \$25, I remembered what I had heard about Masons, that they were honest, upright, and cared for their obligations promptly. It seemed to me that \$25 wouldnt be too much to lose to learn if what Id heard was really true, so I lent you the money and you repaid it exactly as you said you would. That convinced me that what Id heard about Masons was true so I presented my petition to this Lodge. I was the candidate just ahead of you.

(Contributed By. Bro. Nazar Shamoon)

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