

National Sojourners

"Born In War, Nurtured In Peace"

Unknown

We have had numerous requests for information about The National Sojourners; therefore, we have made this organization the text of this month's Short Talk. We would like to acknowledge the work of The Sojourners Bridge of Light committee, particularly John Henderson, for preparing the text for this Short Talk.

We are all familiar with the term "Sojourning Mason", but did you know that a formal, recognized Masonic organization named "National Sojourners" actually exists?

The group had its beginning over 90 years ago in August 1898 in the Philippines, upon the arrival there of a North Dakota Regiment of Volunteer Infantry. The Grand Lodge of North Dakota had granted this Regiment a dispensation for a field lodge and it conducted its first meeting upon its arrival.

Meetings were held regularly thereafter – once even while under hostile fire at the Culi Culi Church with the officers of the lodge wearing sidearms while bullets splattered through the roof!

Early in 1900, the North Dakota Regiment of Volunteer Infantry left the Philippines, taking with it the Field Dispensation. The American Masons who were left behind quickly filled this Masonic void by forming the first informal "Sojourners Club." In 1901, these "Sojourners" provided the impetus, funds and paraphernalia to charter Manila Lodge under the Grand Lodge of California, and the "Sojourners Club," was temporarily disbanded. One of the original members of the informal "Sojourners Club", Surgeon Captain Harry Eugene Stafford, was Charter Master of Manila Lodge No. 342, Grand Lodge of California (later Manila Lodge No. I) and, in 1913, became the first Grand Master of the newly created Grand Lodge of the Philippines.

The Philippine "Sojourner Club" resurfaced in 1907, open to Masons who were not members of local lodges, and soon had nearly 200 members from every State and Territory of the United States and eight foreign countries. As time went by, most of the Philippine Sojourners scattered throughout the United States. A group of these Masonic military officers, meeting in Chicago,

Illinois in 1917, recognized the highly transient life of Master Mason military Officers and formally organized the "Chicago Sojourners Club." Additional Clubs quickly formed at army posts and naval bases around the nation and overseas. In 1927, the word "Club" was dropped and the National Sojourners were incorporated in 1931 as a formal part of the Masonic Fraternity.

Since its inception, the purpose of the National Sojourners has steadfastly been to affirm the unique responsibilities military officers have to their brothers-in-arms, the Masonic Fraternity, and to our Nation. Thus, National Sojourners to this day organize commissioned officers and warrant officers of the uniformed services of the United States (past and present), who are recognized Master Masons, into chapters to actively provide good fellowship among its members, to assist those who may be overtaken by adversity or affliction, to cultivate Masonic ideals, to support patriotic activities in Masonry and to develop true patriotism and Americanism throughout the nation. National Sojourners, Inc., formally brings together Masonic leaders of the uniformed services of the United States into a united effort to further the National Defense, and work to oppose any influence calculated to weaken our National Security.

Members of National Sojourners are reminded of their primary obligations to the symbolic lodges and the Grand Lodges under which they work. The organization's "Bridge of Light" program provides the bridge for Sojourners to cross more easily into active participation in local symbolic lodges and appendant body activities. By this "bridge," many military Master Masons have become affiliated with local lodges, and many have become leaders of the fraternity.

National Sojourners willingly and proudly assist local Masonic authorities through presentations which reinforce and promote patriotism and Americanism, both with the fraternity and the community. Its Heroes of '76 members, (an invitational organization within the National Sojourners Inc.), attired in colorful Revolutionary War uniforms, provide "Toast To The Flag", "Building The Flag", "Historic Flags", "Service Flags", flag donations, flag raisings and numerous other patriotic programs for the benefit of Masonic and community gatherings.

Heroes of '76, are composed of selected, worthy members of National Sojourners who have been recognized for outstanding service to the fraternity. Heroes of '76 Camps (named after prominent American heroes and battles) have been organized in nearly all of the Chapters. These Heroes of '76 Camps form an enjoyable part of the Chapter activities and provide colorful patriotic groups for Masonic and community programs.

In 1976, The Declaration of Independence Bicentennial Year, National Sojourners acquired that part of Brother George Washington's "River Farm" known as "Collingwood". A new headquarters was established on this historic property, and a renowned Library and Museum of Americanism has since been created that daily serves the Masonic fraternity and a public constituency.

This Headquarters, Library and Museum on Americanism now forms part of a Masonically important triangle in our Nations' Capital area; The George Washington Monument to the east in the city of Washington, D.C.; the George Washington Masonic National Memorial on "Shooters Hill" to the west of Alexandria, Virginia and the National Sojourners Headquarters, Collingwood Library and Museum on Americanism to the south on the Potomac River near Mount Vernon.

National Sojourners, Inc., now organized in some 150 chapters in 44 states, Germany and Panama, is an important, highly visible and integral part of the fraternity of Freemasons that cements the ties that bind military Master Masons closer together for the good of all. It has ever championed the Masonic principles that political, economic and social problems are subsidiary to and separate from a steadfast belief in God as the Supreme Architect of the Universe. National Sojourners maintain that God must motivate man if present day problems are to be solved and urges active participation of all patriotic Americans in maintaining that government for which our forefathers fought.

National Sojourners remember that George Washington once said: "When we assumed the soldier we did not lay aside the citizen!"

TOAST TO THE, FLAG

by John J. Daly

Here's to the red of it –
There's not a thread of it,
No, nor a shred of it
In all the spread of it
From foot to head.
But heroes bled for it,
Faced steel and lead for it,
Precious blood shed for it,
Bathing it Red!

Here's to the white of it –
Thrilled by the sight of it,
Who knows the right of it,
But feels the might of it
Through day and night?
Womanhood's care for it
Made manhood dare for it,
Purity's prayer for it
Keeps it so white!

Here's to the blue of it –
Beauteous view of it,
Heavenly hue of it,
Star-spangled dew of it
Constant and true;
Diadems gleam for it,
States stand supreme for it,
Liberty's beam for it
Brightens the blue!

Here's to the whole of it –
Stars, stripes and pole of it,
Body and soul of it,
O, and the roll of it,
Sun shining through;
Hearts in accord for it,
Swear by the sword for it,
Thanking the Lord for it,
Red White and Blue!

STB - July 1989