

Masonic Opportunities Unknown

On September 11, 1987 at the Masonic Temple in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Lt. Gen. Robert D. Springer, USAF was made a Mason at-sight. This extra communication was called at the request of Brother Carl Stenberg, Right Worshipful Grand Master. Grand Master Stenberg was so impressed with the story and background of Lt. Gen. Springer that he felt making him a Mason-at-sight at the celebration of the Bicentennial of the Constitution of the United States would be a fitting acknowledgment of a life of service and contribution to our nation. Lt. Gen. Springer has certainly exemplified the best principles of our craft without being a member. Now we welcome him as "one of us". He has affiliated with Abraham C. Treichler Lodge #682 in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania.

Normally we do not publish "testimonials" in the Short Talk Bulletin, however we feel this story is so important that it needs to be told publicly.

As you read this Short Talk Bulletin please keep in mind that there are literally thousands of such stories that could be told! Masons have, since the beginning of our Fraternity, been extremely influential in the lives of young people, our families, our friends, our communities and our nation! Most times we are not even aware of our impact. That's why it is so important on special occasions like this, we need to be reminded that we are observed and our influence felt, even without our knowledge that it is happening.

At one time there was a show on T.V. called "The Naked City". The show always ended with this line:

"There are eight million stories in the Naked City, this has been one of them."

Since we cannot tell all of the accounts of Masonic help or influence, we have chosen this one to be representative of and reflective for all of the similar stories "out there".

We would like to dedicate this Short Talk Bulletin to all those unknown Masons, who have, over the years had a positive impact on some

one's life. We further dedicate this Short Talk Bulletin to the Masons of today who have the golden opportunity to "Co Thou And Do Likewise" Let no one ever forget that "MASONS CARE AND WILL ALWAYS BE THERE." Here is how Brother Springer expresses it:

A LIFETIME OF OPPORTUNITY

Events of the past year have helped me better realize that my life has been filled with opportunities. Certainly there has also been adversity. My father died while I was a 10-year-old

boy. My mother, along with an older brother and sister and I were clearly not secure financially. We all worked at something or other. But in a few short years Freemasonry intervened. When I was fourteen I was offered an opportunity to attend the Thomas Ranken Patton School for Boys in Elizabethtown Pennsylvania. A Past Grand Treasurer Brother Patton had provided funds for this school – for boys whose fathers were dead And it was also to be a school where the Bible would be taught.

Although I didn't realize it at the time the principles of Freemasonry were clearly present at Patton School We were a small group (about 35) with a dozen or so boys in each of our three high school classes. This small number in each class was significant. In both academic classes and in our "shop" (Carpentry, bricklaying, machine shop) we enjoyed a superb teacher to student ratio.

We also worked together as a team... brothers. Whether it was personal habits such as room and dorm cleanliness... or working on the grounds... or in the orchards of the Masonic Homes... or building cabins for the Carlisle Pennsylvania YMCA... we were learning about life and the importance of being a disciplined contributor to society.

At Patton School each day started with a Matin Service. Each meal was preceded by prayers. We were encouraged to attend the church of our choice in Elizabethtown each Sunday. We were developing our relationship with the Supreme Architect of the Universe.

Discipline of a negative nature was not a major concern. The positive connotation of discipline was incumbent in all of our programs and activities. We wore neckties everywhere-classes, shop, dining room. Because there were so few of us we were involved in everything. . . all of us..in sports and extracurricular activities I was five feet and one inch tall and weighed less than 100 pounds my senior year-but I was on the football team. That's a disciplining and learning experience, believe me. We all had an opportunity to grow and develop and mature In those years at Patton School.

A few of us went on to college. I was especially fortunate because our Masonic fraternity allowed me to continue living in the Patton dorm and walk a few miles each way to Elizabethtown College. Without that "room and board" I would not have been able to attend. Even then, it wasn't all that easy. I worked over 30 hours a week in a wheelbarrow factory and a supermarket to help with the tuition costs. Although I only finished two years at Elizabethtown College I've long remembered their motto – "Educate to Serve".

While still living at Patton, my Country provided me another opportunity In 1952. The Air Force selected me to attend a year long Aviation Cadet program leading to a commission as a Second Lieutenant and the awarding of my navigator wings. A few years later I would complete pilot training. In the United States Air Force, opportunities abound – without regard to who you are or where you came from.

In my 35 years with the Air Force, my family and I have traveled and lived throughout America – as well as in Japan and Germany. I served in the Republic of Vietnam and I've traveled to over 40 Countries. The Air Force gave me a chance to complete my civilian education with Bachelor and Masters degrees from George Washington University.

I've flown. . . instructed. . . served as a staff officer... been to combat... and have had several opportunities to command. And "command" is the ultimate assignment for the Air Force officer. Most importantly, I've had the opportunity to serve my nation and my God for the past 35 years – an opportunity that my teen years at Patton School prepared me for.

Patton School helped me to develop a disciplined learning pattern... a work ethic... the importance of my brothers... a motivation to serve mankind... and a healthy respect for God. Clearly the principles of Freemasonry were evident – even if too subtle for us youngsters to realize then.

Now that I've been raised as a Master Mason, I'm on the threshold of another world of opportunities. There is simply no way to express – even for Brother Masons – how I felt in September when I was made a Mason at Sight in the Masonic Temple in Philadelphia. The emotion and elation of that day will live with me as I remember its significance and the many personal friends (among them some of my Patton classmates) who were present in the Grand Lodge convened for that special occasion.

That evening I noted that in addition to my natural parents and my God I had three people who contributed mightily to my life. First, was a gentleman I never knew – Thomas Ranken Patton. Second was an individual I met but can't recall his name – an Air Force recruiter. Third, a particular person I'm far more intimate with-my wife of 34 years, Bonnie Brubaker Springer of Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. These three people have provided me opportunities – but then, so has Freemasonry and America.

Let me close with a final thought. I suspect my Brothers who read this do not often realize what a tremendous impact their lives and their labors have on others. Any successes I may have enjoyed in my career are clearly the fruits of some mighty powerful seeds planted on the campus at the Patton School for Boys. While I was not born with material advantages, I have acquired a wealth unknown to many – love, care, compassion and opportunities to serve.

STB - January 1988