

Masons honor Law Enforcement at 32nd Annual Banquet

by Michael G. Maness – www.PreciousHeart.net

[Tyler County Booster](#) (11-8-18), 2A & 3A.



The Masons of Tyler County held their 32nd Annual Law Enforcement Banquet at First Baptist Church, Warren, Tuesday evening, Oct. 16. In the photo are (L-R) Tyler County Sheriff Bryan Weatherford, wife Ashley, Leeza and Tyler County Judge Jacques Blanchette, U.S. Congressman Dr. Brian Babin, Tyler County District Attorney-elect Lucas Babin, John Sutton (MC), Texas Grand Master of Masons Tommy F. Chapman, wife Kathy, Sue and Jerry Saunders, and Woodville Police Chief Scott Yosko.

Texas Grand Master of Masons Tommy F. Chapman’s inspiring keynote compared how the officers and the fraternity shared noble values at the 32nd Annual Law Enforcement Banquet hosted by the Masons of Tyler County at First Baptist of Warren, Tuesday evening, Oct. 16.

John Sutton welcomed all to their sumptuous bar-b-que.

U.S. Congressman Dr. Brian Babin and Tyler County District Attorney-elect Lucas Babin acknowledged their gratitude.

Tyler County Sheriff Bryan Weatherford expressed his thanks to the Masons and Eastern Star who had delivered gifts the week before, and many of his deputies and staff stood for recognition.

Woodville Chief of Police Scott Yosko thanked the Masons and especially honored Officer Arin Dees.

Texas Department of Public Safety Trooper Sgt. Joshua Senn introduced his troopers and thanked all.

Other justices of the peace and emergency first responders were thanked.

Sutton reminded all that this annual banquet was started by D. B. Thomson Jr. 32 years ago to honor all law enforcement.

After the meal, GM Chapman’s keynote resonated well with his fellow law enforcement officers, himself a 33-year-plus deputy of the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Department.

The significance for Masons and the officers of Chapman’s words entails a difficulty not mentioned by Chapman. The Grand Master of Masons for Texas was elected at a Grand Lodge in Waco after decades of his working in the fraternity and his rising through the ranks of service and honor—no mean feat of service! One of the highest honors in the world of Masonry, it is made more honorable in that the Texas GL is one of the largest in the world (www.GrandLodgeOfTexas.org).

Chapman this evening was a fellow Texas Mason, with country drawl, and fellow tenured veteran senior law officer. Nederland was his home, so he was “just down the road.”

“We in law enforcement are a brotherhood,” he said, and in Masonry “we are brotherhood.”

He asked law officers who were Masons to stand.



“I refer to these as my double brothers.” An applause ensued.

All officers, he said, encounter “things the average person would never even think about. There are times in your career when you think, ‘Why am I doing this?’”

Chapman reflected the common reasons for becoming a cop as his rapport resonated. A penny dropping could be heard.



Law Officers stand to be honored

He married ten days after he started with the sheriff’s department decades ago, saying, “I’ll do this awhile until I find a better job. But I ain’t found a better job yet, and I haven’t found a better group of people to be around and work with.”

The most common reason people get into law enforcement, he said, was to “help people” and “make a difference in the world.”

Law enforcement and Masonry have a common bond. He said, “We are trying to help people and help make the world better.”

In a slightly elevated determined Texas drawl, “I want to assure all the law enforcement personnel here tonight.... there are a lot of people in this room who support you.... they thank you for the job you do every day.... Every day you put that badge on your chest, the reality is you may not come home to take it off.

“There are a lot of the people in this room that appreciate you for doing that, along with this fraternity.

“On behalf of Masons and all the Masonic bodies [as Texas Grand Master], I salute you, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart ... for puttin’ that badge on every day, and going out there and helping to make your community safe and the world a better place to live.”

After a big applause, and for those who may not know, Chapman proceeded to tell a bit about Masonry.

“It’s a fraternity. It’s not a religion.”

The term “worshipful” hails back to the fraternity’s beginning in England and simply means “honorable.” He did not want any confusion. Though not a religion, it is religious; in order to join, one must already believe in a “supreme being.” “We do not dictate how you worship or what you believe,” he said. “You must believe in a supreme being to be a Mason.”

A lot of the Founding Fathers of America and of Texas were Masons, like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Teddy Roosevelt, Davey Crocket, William Travis, and Jim Bowie.

“We have a glorious past.... Masons are still doing good things.... And I believe we have a bright future ahead of us.”

What would this world be without law enforcement? “It would be chaotic,” Chapman continued.

“Like law enforcement, Masonry is trying to make the world a better place.”

He outlined some of the fraternity’s contributions to democracy, being forerunners in electing their officers by the members’ “own free will” long before the U.S. Constitution.

On health care, the Shriners and Scottish Rite hospitals help all, the majority of which have no affiliation with the fraternity. Masons contribute millions of dollars to charity.

They also give several million dollars a year in education. Mt. Hope Lodge in Chester was there that very night selling \$10 chances on a \$1,000 Walmart Gift Card with all proceeds going to Chester ISD scholarships. They will be in the community selling, too, for a Dec. 11 drawing just time for Christmas shopping. All the lodges in Tyler County give scholarships to local students.

Democracy, healthcare and education are three of the many things Masonry do to make the world a better. Within the Masonry family there are affiliated bodies for women, girls, boys, and a host of others that teach cherished values.

“There are three things make a good Mason,” he said: an intelligent head learns the teachings; the working hands help, as in repairing a neighbor’s roof after a storm; and an emotional heart, this latter being most important.

Chapman recalled a quote from Mason and President Theodore Roosevelt that wove law enforcement and the fraternity together as kindred professions, even kindred spirits.

Roosevelt said, “Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.” We need to work hard in both our fraternity and law enforcement professions.

In an elevator, a lady asked him if he could tell her a little about it.

He said, “We are a society of friends and brothers banded together for mutual improvement to help each other in our journey through life and to help make the world a better place to live.”

She looked at her husband and said, “You need to join that.”

“I’ve learned a lot for over 42 years now,” he said of his membership. “We do not solicit membership, but we need to be able to tell people who we are and what we do when they ask.”

There is much more than health care and education. “We’re constantly trying to help make the world a better place to live, much like the law enforcement brotherhood,” he said. “I am proud to call you my brothers. Some are my double brothers.

“Masonry is the fifth best thing that I belong to, brothers. I belong to God first, I belong to my family, my country, my place of worship, and this fraternity....

“I am proud to be a Mason. I am proud to be in law enforcement. I am proud to call you my brothers, and some of you are my double brothers.

“When you sum up all the teachings of Masonry, it’s the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God. It’s a way of life.”

GM Chapman designated that to be this year’s motto for all Texas Masons, today numbering over 122,000 in 914 lodges.

“I carry in my pocket a little marble,” he said. “It has a little gold band wrapped around it. And it has what I know as the Golden Rule. Masonry certainly teaches the Golden Rule: ‘Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.’...”

“I try to treat all people the same way I would want to be treated.... In law enforcement, sometimes, we have to treat people how they chose to be treated, and I understand that. But ‘do unto others as you would have others do unto you,’ I think that’s a really good thing.”

GM Chapman thanked all there, then closed with, “God bless the United States of America. God bless Texas. God bless Masonry. And God bless each and every one of you.”

John Sutton gave a special thanks to his church for allowing this and then to Ruben Phelps who smoked the beef for the sumptuous bar-b-que.

John Sutton II sang a touching rendition of Lee Greenwood’s “Proud to be an American.” When the line came, “And I’d gladly stand up next to you and defend her still today”—all stood up! All felt the comradery as Sutton continued to belt out, “Cause there ain’t no doubt I love this land, God bless the U.S.A.”



“G” for God. The square is the symbol for “right, honesty, and fair-dealing, and the compass, for undeviating truth and loyalty.”¹ By due attention to their use, “they are taught to circumscribe their desires and keep their passions in check.”²

¹ Henry Wilson Coil, *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia* (1996; 734p.): 631.

² Grand Lodge of Texas, *Monitor of the Lodge* (www.GrandLodgeOfTexas.org; 1982): 27.