

LODGE HARRY S. TRUMAN No. 1727

How it began and events leading to the
Consecration Ceremony on December 8, 1979

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HONG KONG

If this brief article about Lodge Harry S. Truman has a theme, it is perhaps a double one. First, the sterling administrative back up given to the founders of the new Lodge by the Grand Secretary, District Grand Secretary and District Grand Superintendent for Korea. And secondly, the perseverance of the brethren in Korea in their desire to have a Scottish Lodge near their temporary domicile. The R.W.D.G.M. very kindly agreed to let the author borrow the district's file on our new lodge, in order to write this summary of the events leading up to its consecration. It is nevertheless quite clear from the first letter that a lot of work had gone into preparing for the formal petition, prior to opening the file.

It commences with an undated memo which is addressed to the R.W.D.G.M., probably from Bro. D. Leland, D.G. SUPT. for Korea and dated about December 1978. Its brief contents are very relevant and read:

Sixteen Master Masons, all members of the US Uniformed services or US civilian component thereof, have petitioned Lodge Han Yang 1048 and Pusan Lodge 1675, for support for the formation of a lodge in or in the immediate vicinity of (US) Osan Air Force Base located in the city of Songtan Up some 45 miles south of Seoul. There are reportedly some 30 Brn. additionally, who have indicated a keen interest in the formation of the lodge and who will lend their support.

Two of the petitioners are members of Han Yang Lodge: Bro. C. Marcos, W.J.W. elect, whose duty station is Osan A.F.B. and J. Kohns, who spends a great deal of his duty hours at Camp Humphrey (army camp located some 11 miles south of Osan A.F.B.).

Terms of duty of the Brn. at Osan are one year (80%) or two years (15%): Dept. of Defense civilians may extend their terms up to five years.

The nominees for R.W.M., W.S.W., and W.J.W. are on two year tours and have more than one year remaining in Korea.

Han Yang Lodge 1048 voted in favor of the petition 15 Nov. 78, Pusan Lodge 1675 voted in favor of the petition 18 Nov. 78.

The initial petition went unanswered, and Bro. Purves has indicated that the reason lies in his private files. He states:

My first concern (and it has yet entirely to disappear) was that the new lodge would be staffed entirely by servicemen on short tours of duty (with all that could entail for a lodge) and I was therefore anxious to know what my Grand Master's views were before I acted on the petition. That I was able to do when the Grand Master came to Hong Kong for Lodge St. John's Centenary celebrations. His view was frank and straight forward, namely, that the lodge's members would almost all be men of experience and maturity and subject to discipline, and the office-bearers would probably all be officers and senior N.C.O.s. Therefore, as far as he was concerned, the lodge's affairs would be in the hands of responsible men who could be trusted with the job of running all aspects of the lodge's work and administration efficiently and well. A similar situation, the G.M.M. said, existed with respect to a lodge on the Careloch established by US naval personnel attached to the US nuclear sub base there. It was a joy to visit the lodge, he said. So his unqualified advice to me was to proceed, which I eventually did.

On 6 February 1979, Bro. Leland wrote to Bro. Gordon Rowland, D.G. Sec., enclosing copies of a completed petition, lodge membership, details of the petitioners, a list of proposed office bearers, a proposal for premises, letters of recommendation from Lodges Han Yang and Pusan, and proposed by-laws. The originals were to be expected by hand of Bro. D. Baer, to be in Hong Kong within a week. Bro. Leland also answered four questions from an earlier letter not on file, giving proposed initiation and test fees, (US\$100, \$20 resident and \$15 absent, respectively), the regalia colour to be “Blackwatch Tartan with blue padding”, possibly meaning edging, and the banner to be a design based on the Smith Memorial, on a blue field. It is explained that this is “a monument erected in honor of ‘Task Force Smith’ the first US Military force to engage the N. Korean invaders in 1950.”

The petition which was attached is not dated, and contains the usual Scottish phraseology, although it is mistakenly addressed to “the M.W. Grand Master of Masons of the District of the Far East S.C.” rather than to Edinburgh. It states that the petitioners “are desirous of forming a new lodge in the City of Songtan-Eup., county of Pyontaek-Gun and State of Kyonggi-do and Country of Korea, to be named HARRY S. TRUMAN.....” They nominate “Brother David E. Baer to be the first Master; Brother Rodney K. Hess to be the first Senior Warden, and Brother Patrick H. Lazere to be the first Junior Warden, of said lodge.” It concludes, “this desire is prayed for due to the great distance from the nearest lodge. This formation will allow the Brethren to attend lodge regularly.” It is signed by fourteen brethren on the first page, with attached sheets giving a further twenty-two names.

There is also the list of twelve proposed “officers” with a note saying that “a suitable meeting place has been procured adjacent to the Osan Air Base” giving its address and adding that it is “a community room of the Jaeil Church”. A handwritten note, presumably dividing the petitioners into sheep and goats, lists “Philippines iixi, Scotland iiiii.”

The next item is a list of “Master Masons present for the petition of a new lodge (Harry S. Truman)” giving eighteen names as follows:

Richard E. Leonard	USAF Hospital Osan	Teikoku Lodge No 19 PC (JC)	Okinawa
James R. Byrne	Red Horse	Wichita Fall No 635	Texas
Roy G. McClure	Red Horse	Hillwest No 397	S. Carolina
Rodney K. Hess	HQ UNC USFKKEUSA	Randolf No 1268	Texas
Thomas J. Murray	Dept Mail Section	Macarthur No 183 PC	Seoul
David E. Baer	JCIS Div	Salisbury No 208	Missouri
Donald M. Hutchkiss	51 CES	Okinawa No 118 PC	Okinawa
Patrick H. Lazere	HQ UNC USFK EUSA JCIS DIV	Macarthur No 183 PC	Seoul
Dennis R. Kindrick	554 CES (Red Horse)	Wichita Falls No 635	Texas
Clyde T. Tinsley	51 CES	Greenwood No 91	S. Carolina
Roger Xawasus		No 274	Missouri
William W. Luecke	51 CES/ DEMRP	Local 3 No 68 Mesa	New Mexico
Eddie R. Arnett	51 CES/ DEMRP	No 34	Oregon
Tom Carswell		Anacapa No 710	California
David H. Organ		No 369	S. Carolina
William W. Lorenz		Sacramento No 40	California
Randy James Nix		Solomon’s No 1	S. Carolina
James W. Kohrs		Han Yang No 1048	Seoul

All these brethren would of course have to prove the masonic standing in due time, and the file contains certificates, demits and so on. Han Yang produced a single certificate of masonic standing for Bros. Don Leland, W. Gifford Cheeseman, Robert Stern, Choon S. Lee, Walter E. Ireland, Cristobal S. Marcos, Michael K. King and James W. Kohrs. A similar document for Lodge Pusan covered Bros. Hong U-mo, James J. Nunes, Shaadi Hal Amand, Richard Hildreth, John Martin, Kim In-Kun, Kim Kwang-ha, Eugene Yates and John Watson. One brother is listed twice, the total being thirty-four brethren.

On 2 April 1979 Bro. Rowland wrote to the Grand Secretary, referring to previous correspondence, notifying him of the approval of the petition by District Grand Lodge on 29 March, and enclosing necessary dues. The lodge certificates of most of the petitioners were enclosed, with a promise of the balance soon, to be received directly from Bro. Leland. Specimen bye-laws are enclosed, and Bro. Rowland expressed the hope that Grand Lodge would consider the petition at its quarterly communication in May 1979, followed by a consecration in June.

A few days later, the "proposed master", Bro. David E. Baer, wrote to Hong Kong expressing his thanks for recent hospitality extended to him, with Bros. Lazere and Lorenz. He enclosed some "letters of good standing" and said he would remind others to forward theirs on 21 April. Regalia was being made at a shop in Korea, and he asked for any spare "lodge materials" to be sent up from Zetland Hall, a request which apparently met with no response.

All had been going well so far, and it is not surprising that a hiccup occurred. On 23 April, Bro. Rowland wrote to Grand Secretary asking him to delay the petition because of receipt of information which was "somewhat disturbing" without currently being able to be more explicit, but believing that he was acting "with the best interests of Scottish Freemasonry at heart." A letter from Bro. Baer of 16 May indicates the concern that the delay was causing to the brethren; in particular, a planned consecration on 9 June was having to be cancelled. Some of the proposed founders were leaving Korea, and Bro. Baer wanted to add new names to the petition. However, the cause of the delay was quickly removed, and on 29 May, Bro. Rowland was able to write to the Grand Secretary to say that "the Right Worshipful District Grand Master respectfully requests that the petition now be put before Grand Lodge, at the Quarterly Communication to be held on 2nd August, 1979." On July 4, Bro. Rowland was also able to write to Bro. Baer, offering to include any new founders who were listed to him within "two to three weeks", and was looking forward to the "Big day."

On 7 August, Grand Secretary wrote to Bro. Rowland telling him that the Charter had been granted and was being sent by airmail, together with founder member's diplomas and a supply of forms. On 11 August, Don Leland told the D.G. Sec. that Saturday was the best day for the "Erection/Installation Ceremonies," that several of the petitioners had left, including Bro. Baer, the proposed master, in his case for the Pentagon, requiring a total reassessment of the office-bearers. Equipment was being obtained, Han Yang donating the V.S.L., square and compasses, Pusan giving the tracing boards, and other equipment being obtained from a lodge in Okinawa, presumably from one of those amalgamated due to American personnel leaving that island. In reply, Bro. Rowland indicated that Saturday 8 December was the provisional erection date, asking for the up to date list of office bearers as soon as possible, and enclosing notes on the consecration ceremony.

The “proposed slate of officers” was:

Right Worshipful Master
Depute Master
Substitute Master
Senior Warden
Junior Warden
Secretary
Treasurer
Almoner
Senior Deacon
Junior Deacon
Inner Guard
Tyler
Director of Ceremonies
Chaplain

**Morris L. Weinman*
Don Leland
**George Krause*
Rodney Kent Hess
Patrick H. Lazere
**Ronald P. Petrovic*
**Gordon W. McCreavy*
**Edward R. Nowonty*
Clyde T. Tinsley
**William E. Weimer*
**James W. Cowan*
**Walter E. Chan*
**Kenneth K. Eichorn*
**Sullivan G. Scott Jr*

**New office bearers*

In his covering letter, Bro. Leland refers to two of the new names: “the proposed R.W.M. is a Medical (Dental) Officer, Lt. Colonel, U.S.A.F. who is a real good organizer and doing a real good job getting things together,” and “you may note the name of George Krause. He is the Depute (District Deputy?) Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines, Korea.” He adds, “we are now planning a Banquet at Osan A.F.B. after the ceremonies and for most parties to remain at a hotel just outside the compound for the night. As you know, we still have a curfew in Korea: from midnight to 4:00 A.M.”

In his reply, Bro. Rowland was concerned about the need for a new charter, as the outdated one already sent would probably have to be either destroyed or returned to Grand Lodge. Eight brethren were proposing to travel to Korea for the consecration (and the installations of Lodges Han Yang and Pusan): Bros. A.L. Purves, W.S.L. Wong, M.K. Lane, G.W. Rowland, J.P. Wilson, H.W.C. Lavery, A.E. Gomes and F.van Ginkel.

On 31 October, Bro Rowland wrote to Grand Secretary expressing the same concern, adding “correspondence with Korea is always something of a tedious business and will probably be more so in the near future due to the assassination of President Park a few days ago.” He attached a list of the fourteen founders still present in Korea: Bros. J.W. Martin, Kim I-kun, Kim K-Ha, Hong U-Mo, James J. Nunes, Walter E. Ireland, W. Glifford Cheeseman, Don Leland, Robert Stern, Lee S. Choon, Cristobal S. Marcos, Michael K. King, James W. Kohrs and Shaadi L. Amand.

On the same day, he wrote to Bro. W.G. Cheeseman, asking him to act as D.G. Organist, enclosing a copy of the ceremony used at Pusan, and asking him to select his own music, but with Psalm 23 to “Wiltshire” at Bro. Purves request.

Next day, the hard working D.G. Sec. wrote to Bro. Leland indicating that he was having ceremonial leaflets printed in Hong Kong as had been done for Pusan, to be delivered by “the good offices of Brother Geoff Green.” The contingent likely to attend with Bro. Purves was increasing, the names of

Bros. T.D. Davies, J. Stocks and J. Banks being added. Referring to the assassination again, he adds, "I trust that the turmoil of the past few days does nothing to prevent our trip as all the Hong Kong brethren are looking forward to the privilege of being part of the Erection and Consecration Ceremonies and in most cases renewing old acquaintances and making new."

The charter problem was easy to solve, and Grand Secretary wrote on 6 November. Since the revised charter could not be signed by the customary Grand Office-bearers in time, he authorized Bro. Rowland to amend the first charter for the ceremony. He could expect a properly signed charter with the new names as soon as possible. Bro. Rowland replied on 14 November, asking if possible for the names of Bros. D. Baer, J.L. Jenkins, D.M. Hutchkiss, D. Miers, R.C. Drener and D.R. Henkinerio to be added to the charter, because, as explained in a telephone call from Bro. Leland, "these Brethren were very much prime movers in respect of the petition and the Brethren of Lodge Harry S. Truman No. 1727 would very much like to see the names continuing with the Lodge. Brother D. Baer would of course have been the first Right Worshipful Master but for a service posting back to the United States of America." Presumably therefore the fourteen referred to as resident and these extra six constitute the final list of twenty founders of the lodge as recorded in Scotland.

On the day of the consecration, the contingent visiting from Hong Kong consisted of:

Consecrating Officer, R.W.D.G.M
W. Depute D.G.M.
As W.D.G. Senior Warden
As W.D.G. Junior Warden
As W.D.G. Chaplain
W.D.G. Secretary
As W.D.G. Senior Deacon
As W.D.G. Junior Deacon
W.D.G. Director of Ceremonies
As W.D.G. Inner Guard
As W.D.G. Tyler

Bro. Alec Purves
Bro. W.S.L. Wong
Bro. M.K. Lane
Bro. A.E. Gomes
Bro. H.W.C. Lavery
Bro. G.W. Rowland
Bro. J. Stocks
Bro. F. van Ginkel
Bro. John W. Wilson
Bro. J. Banks
a lodge member

Two brethren failed to arrive; Bro. T.D. Davies was stuck in Seoul because of fog, and Bro. J.K.F. Leung failed to get beyond Kai Tak Airport because the names on his passport and ticket were not identical (Leung Kam Fai v. Jimmy Leung?)

The consecration was carried out at 4 pm, Korean time, in freezing conditions, the church hall being heated by two drip feed diesel stoves which let out a loud hiss at every drip. The hall had a bare wooden floor but, in accordance with Korean custom, loose sock like overshoes had to be worn, quite a sight when combined with kilts. However, the cracks in the raised floor which let in gusts of freezing wind caused the kilt wearers greater concern. The over shoes caused problems for the organist too, who spent most of the ceremony untangling them from the pedals. The environment lacked other refinements, paper blinds covering the windows not too adequately, whilst privacy from eavesdroppers was better assured by the lusty singing of a nearby children's class than by the walls and windows. The toilet could be found without the need to ask its location in Korean.

The ceremony was, according to all eye witness reports, carried out with efficiency and ceremonial perfection that is associated particularly with Bro. Purves and those who hold office under him. A sterling effort was put in by Bro. Lavery who held the very important task of consecrating chaplain. However, a light point occurred early on, when Bro. Banks assayed the tiling of the room and receiving no reply, kicked the door to the proper rhythm. Knowing a tyler was posted, but untrained, he duly proceeded to the centre of the hall to report that all was well, and was returning to his place when the tyler at last responded, Never at a loss, Bro. Banks did an about turn and reported, "And it's tyled again, District Grand Master!" The tyler, subject to snow under foot and a bone-freezing breeze, had moved around the corner of the building into more shelter, had failed to hear the knocks, and responded only to the louder kicks.

At the following banquet, every brother was presented with a small plastic apron with a poem printed on it, a bannerette and other mementoes, all typical of American masonry, welcomed treasures of a happy event to the recipients. Bro. Purves' satisfaction in his task is expressed in his words:

It falls to few brethren under the Scottish Craft to consecrate a new lodge. I am one of the privileged few and I therefore look upon the event with pride – and humility- and with heartfelt thanks to the U.S. brethren who made it possible.

On 17 January, Bro. Rowland told the Grand Secretary that "the Ceremony took place at Jaeil Church Hall, Sungtan-Eup, Korea on Saturday 8 December 1979. The ceremony was carried out by the Right Worshipful District Grand Master, Brother A.L. Purves. Ten Brethren, including myself, travelled from Hong Kong with Brother Purves and all assisted in the Ceremony. I forward forms of the Ceremony for Grand Lodge records and which I trust you will find of interest." A draft of another letter is on file which must have been sent at the same time to Bro. Pat Lazere, founding W.J.W., which states:

The arrangements made for our visit were indeed excellent and the District Grand Master was pleased to have had the opportunity to meet many of the Brethren during his short stay. Added to this, it was a great privilege to have been involved in the founding of Lodge Harry S. Truman, No. 1727 and I trust that all is progressing smoothly...

We had quite an eventful trip back commencing with us almost not getting on the plane, followed by an adequate sufficiency of whiskey and three of the worst landings I have ever experienced.

Bro. Weinman, R.W.M., wrote a letter of thanks on 7 February, noting the bye-laws would have to be changed to "reflect my successful negotiations with the base commander for a suitable meeting room on the first and third Saturdays at 1:30 pm. The old church proved totally inadequate and it was imperative for us to move on to the base to provide a central meeting place convenient to the brothers." Another change requested was because of "the fact that the installation should be moved from December, due to military exercise in the spring, we recommend moving it back to October or November when the weather is most accommodating." In response to a letter which had been sent on 24 January, the lodge expected to vote for Bro. M.K. Lane as proxy master to District Grand Lodge shortly. Apart from the installation returns, which arrived late in Hong Kong, the lodge was well set on its future.

The following installation was, however, in January, happily combined a visit from the Grand Master Mason, Sir James McKay. Bro. Rowland wrote,

To express sincere thanks for the wonderful hospitality extended to us during our recent visit to Harry S. Truman No.1727. The arrangements for our visit were indeed excellent and we are all so delighted to have had the opportunity to have carried out the Installation and further to have spent the evening with the Brethren of the Lodge.

Bro. James McKay, Most Worshipful Grand Master Mason, has stressed in the strongest possible terms, his desire to be associated with these sentiments. In fact Sir James remarked to Bro. A.L. Purves, Right Worshipful District Grand Master, upon our return to Hong Kong, that he felt it a very fitting end to a memorable trip....

In conclusion may I wish Lodge Harry S. Truman No. 1727 every success for 1981 and the Brethren everything that they wish for themselves.

And with these good wishes, this article should end.

Appendix

OBITUARY OF HARRY S. TRUMAN

(This article taken from the Grand Lodge Year Book for 1973)

Now approaching its 240th year, The Grand Lodge of Scotland has conferred the honour and dignity of Honorary Membership on but twenty-four brethren – of whom Harry S. Truman, President of the United States of America was one.

Born in Missouri in 1884 he succeeded Franklin D. Roosevelt, also a member of the craft, as President of the United States of America in 1945 and the measure of the man can be judged from the words he used when addressing the American people for the first time as President. He said – “At this moment I have in my heart a prayer. As I assume my heavy duties, I humbly pray to Almighty God, in the words of Solomon: ‘Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this Thy so great a people’ – I only ask to be a good and faithful servant of my Lord and my people.”

Harry Truman was initiated in Lodge Belton, No 450, under the Grand Lodge of Missouri on February 9th, 1909 and became the Junior Warden of his Lodge the following year. A year later, in 1911, he was a Founder Member and the first Master of Grandview Lodge, No. 618, and for a time served that Lodge as secretary. He was called to the chair again in 1917.

In 1940 he was elected as the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Missouri and though he was at that time a Senator he carried his duties without any thought of excusing himself on the grounds of more pressing public business. It was during his term of office as Grand Master that a Charter was issued to the Missouri Lodge of Research and it is believed that this Charter to a Lodge is the only one carrying the

signature of a President of the United States. He accepted the office of Marshal in the new Lodge and attended its meetings as often as he could arrange it.

The holding of the highest office his country could confer upon him in no way diminished his interest in the craft. In 1948, in the midst of his presidential campaign he installed the Master of Grandview Lodge in Kansas City and he also attended the initiation of Dr. Thomas Burns, the White House physician, taking part in the ceremony and, according to all accounts, being word perfect – which was more than could be said for some of the other members of the Lodge who were probably put off their stride by the presence of the President in the Lodge.

On the death of Andrew O'Reilly, who had long been the Representative of the Grand Lodge of Scotland near the Grand Lodge of Missouri, Brother Harry Truman was appointed in his stead and was at the time of his death still Scotland's Representative at the Grand Lodge of Missouri.

As might be expected Brother Truman was a member of a number of other masonic bodies. He became a Mark Master Mason and a Royal Arch Mason in November 1919 and of the Order of the Knights Templars in 1923. He was also a member of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite.

Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them – so wrote Shakespeare in Twelfth Night. Harry Truman was not born great for he was the son of a small farmer; he both achieved greatness as President of his country and had greatness thrust upon him with the sudden death, in office, of his predecessor. Harry Truman was one of those men who, when given responsibility or having it thrust upon them, rose to the occasion and revealed to the world and, one suspects, even to himself, that there was more in him than anyone had envisaged.

The Grand Lodge of Missouri has lost a great Grand Master, the United States a great President and the Grand Lodge of Scotland a great Honorary Member.

G.D.