

Not many Masons have the fortunate opportunity to have been a Mason for 50 years and an extremely limited number of Past Masters have the opportunity to celebrate the 50th anniversary of them being Master. 2018 is that extremely rare opportunity to have a Past Master celebrate the 50th anniversary of him being Master of Las Palmas Lodge. Leonard "Len" Gottner is now the 4th Past Master of our Lodge to have that distinction.



Several weeks ago I found some old pictures from 1968 and I sent them to Len who lives in Washington State. Len sent me a letter, which, with his permission; I am using for our January "From the Archives" message.

Seeing that good looking top hat I was wearing in the picture caused me to remember why it looked so good. Prior to when Sam Pavlovich was Master, when he and I served in the East for degree work, we wore an old, old top hat (we both wore the same hat). The leather inside brim had deteriorated to the point, that when you were warm and removed the hat during prayer, the hat came off but the brim clung to the forehead. So at Grand Lodge prior to Sam's installation we ordered a new hat from the fraternal supply house. So that hat was just a year old at the 1968 installation.

Updates: My wife Frances passed on in September 2010—we had been married just short of 63 years. In early November 2016, I attended a moneymaker Turkey Dinner put on by an Eastern Star Chapter in Renton, WA. They had been doing the dinner for years but this was the first time I attended. It went from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. I got there about 1:30 p.m. and sat down with several lodge and Eastern Star friends who were just finishing their dinners, so in a short time they left and I was sitting alone at the table. A lady named Merrily Johnson, who had been making the salads, came and ordered her dinner and sat with me. (She later told me she didn't think it right I should be eating alone.)

In conversation I discovered she and her husband had served as Worthy Matron & Patron in 1978-79 at that Chapter when Frances & I were serving in the same positions at another Chapter. Her husband, who was also a Past Master and former Treasurer of his Lodge, has passed on 23 years before. She told me that she, her daughter and son-in-law had recently rented a house in Auburn, just five blocks from my home. We began attending OES meetings together and going out to dinner—and on February 18th of this year we were married and had our reception at the Masonic Temple in Renton, with 86 friends in attendance. So we are still happy newlyweds, I'm 89 and she's 82.

As you may know, I was Worthy Grand Patron of the OES, here in Washington in 1993-94. I was Worthy Patron of La Sierra Chapter in Fresno in 1970, and have been Worthy patron of five Chapters in Washington 20 times so far. This year I'm serving as Chaplain of Merrily's Chapter.

I received my Blue Lodge degrees in Bakersfield, CA in 1950 and became very active. We had candidate proficiency classes of 5 candidates per class and I coached two classes in a row, three nights a week. I also visited two other Lodges fairly regularly. I joined the Royal Arch about 3 years later and was just getting active when Standard Oil Co. transferred me to Fresno in 1955, where I joined Center Lodge and the Royal Arch Chapter. Several years later I was transferred to Lindsay Lodge, where I served as Senior Deacon and about 6 months as Jr. Warden—and then moved back to Fresno working for Reynolds Aluminum. After a few years I joined Las Palmas and you know the rest. After I served as Master of L.P., I thought I should maybe get active in Royal Arch again, so I went to two meetings. The RA Officers at that time were not memorizing the work, and being used to very good work at Las Palmas, I didn't go back.

About nine years ago, a Royal Arch Chapter moved into our Des Moines Temple and I started to attend, and at 80-81 years I memorized the Principal Sojourner's work for the Royal Arch Degree. This was not easy at that age and took me many months; however, I'm still giving it at my own Chapter and others. In fact, I've given it twice at the annual outdoor RA Degree done in the royal Arch Park in Renton each July. I was serving as Chaplain for several years, when last year they couldn't find anyone to serve as King. So I took the job and last month was installed as High Priest for the Chapter – at 89 years.

Yes, I'm 89, and walk with a cane. My voice has weakened--to the point where it's important that I use a microphone when serving in the East or giving a lecture, but I still love doing ritual work and visiting various meetings, and being married to a wonderful lady.

Fraternally, Leonard Gottner

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