

Problems with Life Memberships

Both Las Palmas and Clovis Lodges have had Life Memberships available to their members who desired to purchase them. Ponderosa Lodge never had Life Memberships. The price and terms are defined in the California Masonic Code. (presently 21 x the current dues) When Clovis Lodge consolidated with Las Palmas-Ponderosa Lodge, the two Life Membership funds were merged. Currently we have a total of 64 living Life Members.

Even though the Trustees manage the investment of this money, the money in the Life Membership fund is not owned by our Lodge, but is owned by our Grand Lodge and they have determined that no matter how good or bad the investment has been for the year, we are limited to withdrawing, as earnings, 4% of the average amount in the fund for the prior three years.

The formula creates many problems for our Lodge. If a member purchases a Life membership at the beginning of the year, the Lodge does not get any dues from that member for the first year, then 1.33% of the amount paid for that life membership for the second year and 2.66% for the third year and then 4% for the fourth year. During all that time the Lodge must pay the Grand Lodge assessment which for 2020 will be \$50.75 per member. Traditionally, the Grand Lodge assessment increases by about 3% per year so the loss to the Lodge is even greater in future years.

For 2019, if the 64 Life members had actually paid dues, they would have paid a total of \$7,680. Our Life Membership fund generated for us only \$4,463.84 or a net loss of \$3,216.16. When a Life member passes away, the money he paid for his Life Membership is kept in the invested fund, but remember that Life member probably paid \$1,000 or less for his Life Membership compared to the 2019 sum of \$2520.00.

Our Lodge has had a net loss of members for many years due to deaths, suspensions for non-payment of dues and requests for demits. This has not been offset by new members. The life of Las Palmas-Ponderosa Lodge is in the ability of the Trustees to earn sufficient funds from Lodge investments to augment what is paid in dues so that our bills and temple can be kept alive.

If you are a Life Member of Scottish Rite or York Rite, you got a letter from them asking that you send in a check for the amount of their Grand Lodge assessment as your Life Membership did not generate sufficient funds. I understand that these requests have not been that successful.

At this time, your Lodge Trustees have determined an important change that must be made. We must amend this Standing Resolution so that no new Life Memberships can be purchased. As a Lodge Trustee, I made this motion in writing at the September Stated Meeting and now I am informing the membership in writing of this motion. The Lodge will vote on this motion at its October 17th Stated Meeting. Existing Life Members will keep their Life Membership and not be affected.

If any of you have questions about this, please call me on my cell phone (559) 779-7798 so that we can discuss it.

Richard Frey PM, Trustee

We lost a Past Master

In 1989 Lee French was our Master. I recently received word that Brother French passed away on August 18th in Prescott Valley, Arizona.



Dr. French was the only Medical Doctor to ever become Master of Las Palmas, or Las Palmas-Ponderosa Lodge. Lee graduated from the University of South Dakota and graduated from Temple University Medical School in 1960. After his residency at Kern County General Hospital, he was in the Air Force serving in Freising, Germany. In 1967 he started a practice of Family Medicine in Fresno. In 1982 he closed his practice and started an internship in internal medicine at UC San Francisco/Valley Medical Center. In 1984 he re-opened his practice in Fresno.

Brother French petitioned Las Palmas Lodge and was initiated in June of 1978 and raised a Master Mason in November of that year.

After serving as our Master, brother French moved to Arizona and joined a Lodge there. After several years, he started suffering from Alzheimers and as a result got suspended from the Arizona Lodge for non-payment of dues. Even though he had a Life Membership in Las Palmas-Ponderosa Lodge, we were required to suspend him due to the fact that he had been suspended from a Masonic Lodge in Arizona. Bro Jim Clark tried to get the Arizona Lodge to reinstate him and then grant him a demit so he could be reinstated in Las Palmas-Ponderosa, but this never came to fruition. Not being a Mason in good standing at the time of his death denied him the right to a Masonic funeral.