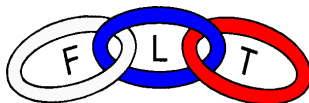


Established 1987



Sorting Through Treasures

The Richard Brouse Degree Lodge (aka the cave degree) recently received a donation of degree props from Sierra Park, an HOA located next to the Three Links camp, which used to be an Odd Fellows establishment, complete with its own lodge, Sierra Park Lodge no. 376.

It did not last especially long. But when it ceased being a lodge, the community that inherited the space didn't know what to do with all of the property that formerly belonged to it. Fifty years later, thanks largely to the persuasive efforts of Brother **Andrew Crockett** (whose family owns one of the cabins there), the directors of the association voted to donate these items to the Richard Brouse Degree Lodge, which, as a non-profit, could issue a tax-deductible receipt.

This is not a minor undertaking, however. The degree lodge borrows space from Yreka 19, but doesn't have a lodge building of its own. We received permission from True Fellowship 52 to temporarily hold these items, and on July 28th, several members began going through them, sorting genuine treasure from rubbish. Once items were identified, they were graded based on how much (if any) repair might be needed, and comparable items sought out online to determine their approximate worth.

While repair and restoration work is still required, and it's still uncertain what the degree lodge will keep or give away to other lodges that would potentially benefit from it, we believe we took in items worth around \$7000 in all, and are grateful that Sierra Park entrusted them to our care.

-- By **Mason Wolf**

Upcoming Degrees:

None in our district in August, but the four main Odd Fellows degrees, as well as the Patriarchal Degree and Rebekah Degree, will be [offered in Yreka](#) on 9/6-7.



- Sister **Pamela Johnson** of Cupertino Lodge no.70
- Sister **Helen Bobias** of Cupertino Lodge no.70
- Sister **Tina Liddie** of Saratoga Lodge no.428

The degree was noteworthy as many members of *Richard Brouse Degree Lodge no.190* were participating in conferring the degree in preparation and practice for the upcoming Degree performances at Odd Con in Yreka, CA on September 5th thru 7th.

Additionally, unexpected and substantial life commitments for Brother **Andrew Crockett** have necessitated his departure from the position of Noble Grand of True Fellowship Lodge no.52, marking this Third Degree as his last official lodge meeting as Noble Grand. There is some poetry in this, as his first official meeting as Noble Grand in January had been presiding over a Third Degree.

-- By **Andrew Crockett**

Third Degree at True Fellowship 52 in San Jose

On July 23rd, at True Fellowship Lodge no.52, IOOF, the Third Degree of Truth was conferred to six worthy candidates:

- Sister **Liana Hidalgo** of True Fellowship Lodge no.52
- Sister **Megs O'Neil** of True Fellowship Lodge no.52
- Brother **Terrance Seddon** of True Fellowship Lodge no.52





Mountain View Lodge 244 Castro Street Window Display - July 2025

Mountain View Lodge #244 is very fortunate to be located on the main street of downtown Mountain View, Castro Street, where we put together different windows displays each month. Our July display is this month dedicated to the Statue of Liberty.

Creating the window was slightly challenging this month, – we had to use a lot of spray paint to match the green of the statue and our mannequin Eleanor kept dropping her torch! Taking a picture of the window is often difficult due the glare in the window so we will show you some of the elements this month.

The statue was designed in France to commemorate the 100th anniversary of American War of Independence and to acknowledge the emancipation of slaves following the American Civil War. The chains on the feet of the statue symbolize freedom from oppression and a movement towards liberty.

The tablet, held in the right hand of the statue, commemorates the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence July 4, 1776. The original name of the statue was "Liberty Enlightening the World".

The torch represents enlightenment, guiding the way to freedom and repre-

sending the statue's official name, "Liberty Enlightening the World".

As part of our window display, we discussed how the statue, originally a golden copper color, is now green. Of course, the answer is Chemistry!

We also invited passing traffic to take a virtual tour of the statue using their smart phones.

You can also take a panoramic tour at

<https://www.nps.gov/stli/learn/photosmultimedia/hdp-virtualtour.htm>

-- In F, L and T,
Sinéad and Ria Toolis



“Most Awed Car”

At the 14th Annual Saratoga Classic & Cool Car Show, the **Saratoga Odd Fellows Lodge #428** tipped their top hats to a ride that had jaws dropping and memories roaring down the boulevard. This year's Most Awed Car roared home to a local Saratogan whose family roots run deep in the soil of Odd Fellowship. With Levi Renn joining the Saratoga Lodge in October 1913, and Earl Renn following in July 1919, the Renn lineage reflects a legacy of community, character—and, it turns out, an impeccable eye for vintage steel.

This year's winner is Brad Renn, a Saratoga High grad (as is his wife Ann).

His winning chariot? The legendary 1932 Ford Roadster — a machine that didn't just define hot rodding, it lit the fuse. With its low-slung stance and timeless silhouette, Brad's roadster is pure Americana on wheels: a chrome-drenched throwback to the sock-hop days, drive-in diners, and dragstrip dreams.

Much like the Lodge itself, this car stands as a tribute to daring style, storied history, and the kind of grit that gets passed down through generations. Here's to horsepower with heritage — and to keeping the spirit of Saratoga bold and beautifully loud.

-- By Neal Casteel

ON STEPPING DOWN: An Interview with True Fel- lowship 52's Andrew Crockett

At the end of June, Santa Clara County Assessor Larry Stone announced that he would be resigning. This set off a chain of events that resulted in **Andrew Crockett**, Noble Grand for True Fellowship 52, feeling compelled to resign midway through his term. To help us understand this decision, as well as take a review of what Andrew was able to learn and accomplish in his abbreviated term, he agreed to be interviewed for the Triple Links newsletter. This interview has been lightly edited for length and clarity.

MW: What do you feel most proud of having accomplished in your six months as Noble Grand?

AC: There were several things that I'm pretty proud of. It's like the fact that we did as large an installation as we did. And that was something that was really important to me because a lot of the older members who attended it said they hadn't attended an installation for a lodge that was that large since the 20th century.



Andrew's awesome installation banquet - 1/19/2025

There is this narrative in a lot of lodges that the good times are in, you know, in the past. And what I'm dedicated to doing is letting us see a sneak peek of what the future could be. And having such an uproarious, well attended installation, it was something that I think gave people that sense.

And again, one of the other things I'm very proud of is how my lodge came

together and supported our DDGM for the District 107 and 175th celebration of Odd Fellows in California. That was another wonderful, well attended, sold out, packed event. That again, shows that it's like we don't need to be nostalgic about the past, because our future is so compelling, we should embrace it. And it's like this again shows up in the swag. It's like the bolo ties have been consistently successful. In fact, I sold two more just today at Grand Lodge.

And it's one of those things where I



District 107 Party, and 175th anniversary of CA Odd Fellows

can see in both the old-timers and the newcomers that there is a future that's starting to be seen through the mists of the morass of the present. And people are eager to get to it.

And something else that I'm proud of was, as I like to put it, we dug up some graves we found. The fact that our lodge had 15 unused grave sites that our lodge brothers and sisters had purchased many decades ago and just discovering that, and knowing that, and saying it's like, this is something that is an extremely valuable resource for our members. How do we use it responsibly?

The fact that I've been, in my position as Noble Grand, starting the conversation with the Order of the Good Death, and how we can really get back to that mission of relieving the distressed and burying the dead. It's like everything I'm proud of is where we have been continuing the never-finished journey of restoring our word of who we are as Odd Fellows.

MW: So, in your time as Noble Grand, what were some of the things

you learned?

AC: There were three: Three things that I think were important lessons. When I approached the office, I had them as hypotheses that I was testing. The first one is: The power of linking together communities. And the best place that this is present is with the Larping group, Refuge LARP. Because, as of today, we confirmed that we do have a green light to start preparing a LARP weekend at the Three Links camp. This has been a journey that has been from the very beginning. In fact, all the Larpers got initiated my first week as Noble Grand, and my last week as Noble Grand, we finally secured the green light to go ahead with this project.

MW: Nice getting closure on that, huh?

AC: Yeah, it is. It is nice and poetic. The fact that we were able to get this done in such a short period of time, even though we thought it would be much shorter to get to this point.

MW: I also found it poetic that your first and last meeting as Noble Grand were both third degree ceremonies.

AC: Yes. That was one of the reasons I did that. Part of the reason why I set being noble grand as the resignation effective August 1st at 11:59 was that yesterday evening, August 1st, I was at the 175th anniversary of my Masonic Lodge, which is the oldest civic organization in the Santa Clara Valley. And we had the Grand Master of Masonry there, and the line officers of the Grand Lodge in attendance. It was a BFD, so to speak, and I was there as the sitting noble grand of the oldest Odd Fellows lodge in Santa Clara County. At the event celebrating the oldest Masonic Lodge in Santa Clara County, one of the things I learned by attending this event, because my Masonic brother Angelo prepared a historical lecture about the Lodge, and he highlighted that the first lodge building that San Jose 10 inhabited, at the corner of



Andrew's first meeting as Noble Grand - 1/22/2025

Santa Clara, St. and market, where the Chamber of Commerce is now, was the original Masonic Odd Fellows building.

And the San Jose Odd Fellows Lodge and San Jose Lodge #10 both occupied the same building as joint tenants. So there's a history of these fraternities being very close and friendly with each other. It was very nice to be there representing the continuity of that cross fraternal connection.

MW: OK. Well, it's good to hear some of what you've learned. But would you say the job was harder or easier than you anticipated?

AC: The job was more boring than I anticipated. In terms of the hypotheses, let me just finish up. So the first was that linking of communities is powerful. It can be challenging, but it's huge. And something else I learned, is never underestimate the power of a member that's very involved in other communities that you don't see much of at the lodge. Because my hypothesis around there was, even if you have just one connection with somebody who's connected with a bunch of other things, you can end up with something amazing happening. And the example I'll give is "Hamiltunes". This is one of those unexpected benefits that was not even on my radar when I took office, but it was just merely engaging in the question of, "oh, I haven't seen you around Lodge. So great to see you again. What are you involved with? Ohh! Is that something we could do too?" And just exploring those connections ended up being a huge benefit.

So that's another hypothesis, and the

last one was, uh, and this gets into the difficulty of being Noble Grand, is what is the right amount of committees? How do you manage committees effectively? And that was a harder question to answer than I initially imagined, because I thought having bespoke committees dealing with each thing individually was the way to go. And what was fascinating was that by trying that hypothesis, we found it didn't work. And then

what we did was we tried to find affinities in these committees, and then clustered them based on their logical affinities, and just fewer numbers of committees. And this helped us have faster meetings.

And one of the innovations that I hope [Vice Grand and presumptive successor] Zandria takes on is recognizing that some committees might not need to report twice a month, but only once a month. And how do we structure that so that some committees report on the first meeting of the month and others on the second, so that it further expedites the meetings?

So these things? The parliamentary aspect. It's both boring and vital, and that was one of the lessons this time has taught me is that, if you love community, the thing that is going to make you a great community advocate is a tolerance for boredom. If you have that tolerance, you will be one of the best community advocates in your area. It's kind of strange, but this is what I've been seeing first-hand this whole year.

MW: Well, we've talked about what you're proud of, what is something that you wanted to accomplish but weren't able to and maybe something you hope that your successor takes on?

AC: Well. One of the things I was really looking forward to was the Grand Master's reception. And the other thing was restarting the fact that, our lodge,

being a consolidated lodge, has 2 birthdays. We have the birthday in January, which is from Santa Clara 52, and then we have the birthday in November for True Fellowship 238. And the thing is, we had kind of fallen away. As we found out from the Schulers, that doing that celebration used to be a big annual thing, and we realized that it's our sesquicentennial this year.

MW: Right, this year will be 150 years for True Fellowship 238.

AC: So that is pretty awesome! So those are two things that I'm very much looking forward to Zandria's leadership as Noble Grand, and they were ones that I was looking forward to.

And I think that she will revel in them, and indeed she's commented that she thinks it's going to be really awesome, you know? Being a woman, noble grand, receiving the first woman Grand Master of the state in the Grand Master



Hamiltunes, performed at True Fellowship on 7/26/2025

reception. She is excited about it, and I'm looking forward to supporting her and having her six months as Noble Grand be historic.

MW: So now that you aren't Noble Grand, what will your focus be on? Maybe talk a little about why you had to step down.

AC: So, one of the reasons why I wanted to be Noble Grand in 2025 is because this isn't an election year. Unfortunately, this year has been absolutely terrible in so many ways. And I work in government. I'm active in union politics. There's a lot of things where I'm

connected to the political sphere of Santa Clara County, including the fact that I ran for Santa Clara County Assessor in 2022, and got the most number of votes, both percentage and absolute, against a 28-year incumbent out of any challenger he ever faced in his time in office. So it was something where that was a big deal and I specifically chose this year because I was wanting it to be a quiet year politically, so that it wouldn't interfere with my ability to enjoy a full year as Noble Grand. Unfortunately, two things have happened. One was Larry Stone, the assessor, after 30 years in office, announced, to everyone's surprise, that he was resigning. And that resignation came as a surprise because he had frequently said that he planned to die in office! So this was quite a shocker, and he had already announced that he was planning to run for the 2026 election. It was a political earthquake. And because I had previously run for Assessor, I was tapped as the most logical person to be appointed to the vacancy this has created. So I suddenly was in this position where if I was appointed, it would be on August 12th.

And I looked at the calendar and I talked with my executive committee saying, OK, If I wait until August to find out definitively if I'm going to get this, it will be something where I step down and somebody has to step in, and they'll only have five months in office, which means they don't become a Past Grand. But if I step down in July and take nominations at the last meeting in July, it means that we can elect them in the first meeting of August and they can have six full months as Noble Grand, and they are able to become a Past Grand. And one of the challenges that was discussed in the Executive Board meeting was that our lodge has grown a lot recently, and so we're entitled to a lot more slots at Grand Lodge, but we don't have enough Past Grands in travel-worthy condition to send to the Grand Lodge.



So, we decided as a community that, even though this was me, you know, taking a risk politically, going out to try and seek this appointment, it's something where there's the best case scenario if I get appointed, and then everything's cleared off my deck so that I can actually take care of business in the 84 day term that I would have. Or, the alternative is that I stepped down and I don't get appointed. And in that circumstance, I would be able to be involved in the assessor campaign. That's one of the things that's been an expectation of me from my union involvement in all of this.

So I was going, even if I don't get appointed, the likelihood is that I'm going to be tapped for a lot of political involvement this year because we're having an election and it's like "Crud, this was not my plan!" So I'm now available to deal with that, and one of the things that actually has me give a sigh of relief is that my union is going to be spearheading an effort to try and staunch the bleeding of the financial kind at the hospital, because we had a billion dollar hole blown in our budget by federal action. And we're pursuing having a ballot measure on the November ballot where the assessor race is going to be, to do a sales tax increase in order to raise about 300 million.

MW: And you know we can't talk about that in the lodge because that is definitely politics.

AC: Yeah, all of this is politics, and this is why I needed to step away, because it's like I would never be able to serve. It's like as long as I am a creature of politics, I would never be able to serve in an even-numbered year. And the reason I chose an odd numbered year was because this was supposed to be a quiet year!

And instead it's like one of the worst political earthquakes in my lifetime. So accordingly, that has unfortunately im-

pacted my ability to serve. And the thing I'm proudest of is that my lodge recognizes my commitments and they say, "Yeah, we are a healthy enough community that we can step in and give you relief." And that was something I was discussing this last week with some of the brothers and sisters in the lodge. Part of our duty is to relieve the distressed, and this fact pattern has been terribly distressing to me. And if we do not relieve our own distress, relieving the distress of others just makes us hypocrites. So we have to mind the care for ourselves and make sure that we're recognizing that there's only so much a human body can take.

MW: I thought you had an excellent six months as Noble Grand and I look forward to seeing what you do next. And just personally. I want to thank you for making clear that your commitment to the degree lodge is solid, even if you do become the interim assessor.

AC: Yeah. If I was appointed to that, I would still be going to the degree weekend because honestly, it's like, the fact that Masons are now talking about what we're doing at the degree lodge, we're making waves with this thing, and I'm very proud of it, and I want us to continue to pursue positive growth.

MW: Alright, thank you for sitting for this interview. And I know that in about a week and a half, you're going to turn 40, and you'll either be the interim assessor of Santa Clara County or you won't, but either way, we'll have a party for you at the next potluck.

AC: I can tell you that no matter how it breaks, and it does look likely that I won't be appointed, but however this thing breaks out, I will be so much less stressed on August 13th than I will be up until the 12th.

MW: Well, thank you for your six months of loyal service and good luck!

-- Mason Wolf and Andrew Crockett

Pilgrimage for Youth 2025

In 2024, District 107 raised money to send one young person from within our district on the IOOF Youth Pilgrimage, as selected by an essay contest. The winner was a young man named **Bao Nguyen** of San Jose, who has now completed his trip, and wanted to share a photo essay of what he experienced. The rest of this article are his words and photos.

This article records my once-in-a-lifetime experience during the Odd Fellows' Pilgrimage for the Youth '25. I'll share how my journey on the East Coast reshaped my perceptions about the world in practical ways.

My inspiration before the pilgrimage was significantly shaped by Tara Westover's memoir, *Educated*. The memoir centered on Westover's inspiring story of from being "uneducated" until seventeen to earning her doctorate at Cambridge University. Her reflections in *Educated* showcase how education can transform one's life, perspective, and opportunities. Her meaning of education emphasizes not only accumulating facts, but also challenging one's assumptions and constructing one's understanding of the world. Therefore, the Pilgrimage for the Youth would be one of the rare opportunities that I become "educated" by transforming my worldview through the cities I explored in the East Coast. Westover's situation also highlights the divides within our country, from political differences to the college-educated vs. "uneducated" divide. Motivated by Westover's insights, I was eager to explore more about American and world history, particularly the foundations of these societal divides on this trip.

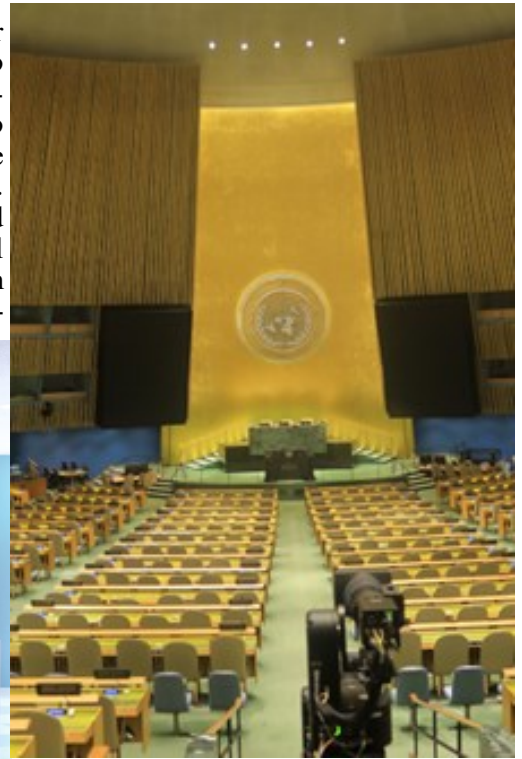
New York City:

My visit to the United Nations Headquarter was a powerful start for the trip in New York City. I explored numerous exhibits of global topics like human rights, sustainable development, and climate action. These displays

served as powerful, daily reminders for the world leaders, especially those who walked past them every day, of the purposes they were working for. They also reminded the public of the collective responsibility for our better future. Through diverse art, photographs, and personal stories, I realized how crucial everyone's active participation is in building a more, peaceful, just, and sus-



Homo Sargassum Exhibition: Highlighting the environmental challenges in the Caribbean in honor of World Ocean Month



The UN General Assembly



A mural showcases mankind's struggle for a lasting peace



My tour group photo with the "Golden Rule" artwork

tainable world.

The main theme during our speech workshops also centered on the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you want them to do unto you." The Golden Rule reminded us of our responsibility to always contribute to supporting our communities, as our communities had been providing resources for us.

Beyond the UN, our group engaged in brainstorming activities to address commu-

nity issues and solutions. By researching benevolent societies like the Elk, the Moose International, or the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and Rebekahs, I gained valuable insights on how organizations were created in the past in order to make a change in our society. Over the next few days, I also had the chance to explore New York's iconic landmarks. These experiences helped enrich my perspectives to develop my speech for the competition on the last day in New York.



Statue of Liberty: A universally recognized symbol of freedom and democracy



Ellis Island: American's largest and most active immigration station from 1892 to 1954



Wall Street: Located in Lower Manhattan of New York City. Served as a powerful symbol that represents the US financial market and its influence on global economy



Waterfalls at the 9/11 Memorial: Water cascading down and dropping into a central void represents the absence of Twin Towers and remembrance of lives that were lost during the attack.

Boston and Salem, MA

Following our New York tour as we concluded the speech competition, Massachusetts was our next destination. Exploring Boston and Salem allowed me to observe the very local side of the American lifestyle, blending with its modern urban atmosphere.

Before stepping into Faneuil Hall Marketplace, I didn't know much about how deeply significant Boston and its landscapes were to American history. But my perspectives changed when I learned that this marketplace wasn't just a place to shop, but a meeting spot hosting early protests against British rule in the American Revolution. The old building structures have stayed since the founding days of our nation, implying its rich history associated with Boston itself. It made sense how much the revolutionary spirit continued to shape not only the marketplace itself, but the identity of Boston as I experienced it today, especially when my visit was on Independence Day.



A Photo at Faneuil Hall Marketplace on the Independence Day

ence Day.

The following day, our group visited Salem for the Salem Witch Museum. I watched a haunting narration with wax figures about the 1692 Salem Witch Trials, when accusations of witchcraft spread uncontrollably because of fear and suspicion. Although several pieces of evidence seemed flimsy or fabricated, human fear and widespread misinformation tragically led to the persecution of innocent people at the time.

But the Salem Witch Trials are fa-

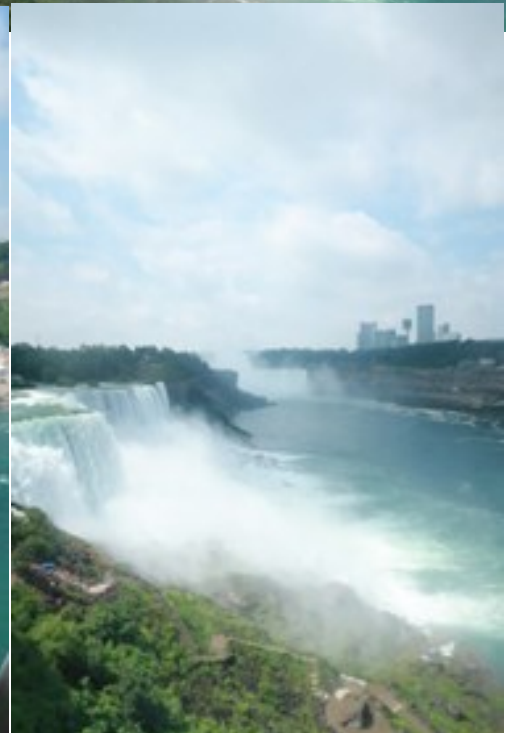
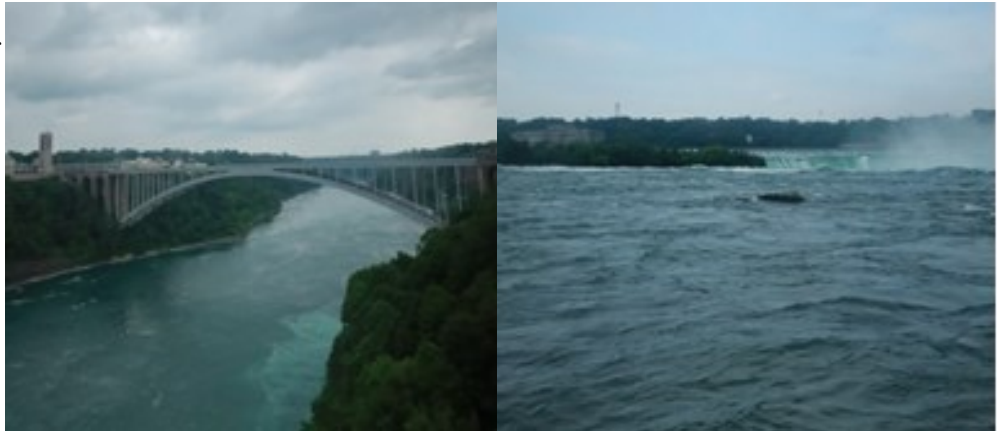
mous not simply because many individuals were persecuted in the context of mass hysteria or scapegoating. Their stories were an example of how history could repeat itself. They suggested that destructive patterns of human behavior like prejudice, unchecked accusations, or scapegoating could continue to exist till this day. These insights became more universal as I observed the exhibitions about how societal views of “witches” evolved over time. The lessons from the Salem Witch Trials connected with later events of human history: The Holocaust and the Japanese Relocation. They showcased when certain communities were targeted, not based on individual wrongdoing but their identity. It became clear that societal fear and prejudice had the power to blind society away from fundamental human rights and due process.



A Photo at Salem Witch Museum

Buffalo (New York):

Editor's Note - Bao didn't write anything about Buffalo or Gettysburg, but he did include several nice pictures.



Gettysburg (Pennsylvania):



Our Group Photo at Hershey Chocolate World



Civil War Battlefield

Washington D.C.

As we approached the last days of our trip before heading back to Philadelphia for flying home, we visited Washington D.C. We explored foundational landmarks like the Lincoln Memorial, the National Mall, or the Arlington Cemetery. But, the visit to the National Holocaust Museum had the most impact on my perspective.

Upon passing the security at the Holocaust Museum, my friends and I were directed to receive a booklet containing testimonies from the Holocaust survivors. These narratives described the discrimination, violence, and loss that devastated the Jewish community. It was disturbing for me to imagine the amount of individuals who had to suffer from this hardship at the time. Walking through the museums, I observed exhibits describing the stories of Holocaust and its impact on human history. In 1930s Germany, the fragility of democracy enabled the Nazi party to rise. The Nazis then supported movements like burning books to suppress knowledge and dissent in order to seize absolute control. They also applied their antise-



The Burning of Books in 1933

mitic beliefs by controlling public opinion against Jewish people through propaganda campaigns. It reminded me of the historical patterns I noticed from the Salem Witch Museum: Prejudice and misinformation had the horrible power to control an entire society. I then realized how each individual must be educated from diverse perspectives so they could contribute to preventing these patterns from happening in the future.

hind the glass wall, highlighting the immense human cost from the genocide. Watching these exhibits in front of my eyes, it was tough to imagine how humanity could turn so cruel and dehumanizing just for a man thirsty for power. Profoundly, I didn't just observe history, but rather I empathize with the personal, painful feelings that those in the past had to endure.

Reflection:

The Pilgrimage for the Youth '25 was an unforgettable experience that enabled me to learn with a completely different approach. Instead of watching lectures in a classroom, I discovered new knowledge firsthand through the landmarks I explored, the friends I made from around the US and Canada, and a community-centered environment created by the Odd Fellows. This was a profound experience that challenged my past assumptions about everything, from the atmosphere of cities I only saw in movies to daily stereotypes that I didn't recognize. I was able to reshape my mind with more practical knowledge and insightful opinion.

One of the most important activities I had in the trip was to observe the factors that contributed to building the landscape of my travelling city and our nation as a whole. For example, the visit to Ellis Island in New York showed me the immigrants' role in supporting major contributions and diversity for the US. Or the experience at Boston transformed my perspective with local aspects of the American lifestyle and our proud history of the American Revolution. The trip became even more educational when I could visit famous museums like the Salem Witch museum and the Holocaust. From there,

I immersed myself in using my critical thinking to deeply understand stories of the past.

Although the trip was only two weeks, the knowledge I acquired and the memories I made from the trip would have a positive impact on my future. It

was a life-changing opportunity for my education in the long term. Through the practical insights I gained from many places, I must actively educate myself with languages, history, and politics. This education wouldn't just support my self-discovery, but rather enable myself to inspire others. The trip has helped me understand my purpose that I must also help those around me to become "educated", whether starting with reading a book or a meaningful conversation. The people I help could be my parents, my siblings, my friends, or anyone from my community who could be constrained by a narrow understanding of the world. It was truly a blessing to be in the Pilgrimage for the Youth trip by the Odd Fellows.

-- By *Bao Nguyen*

We finished the puzzle!

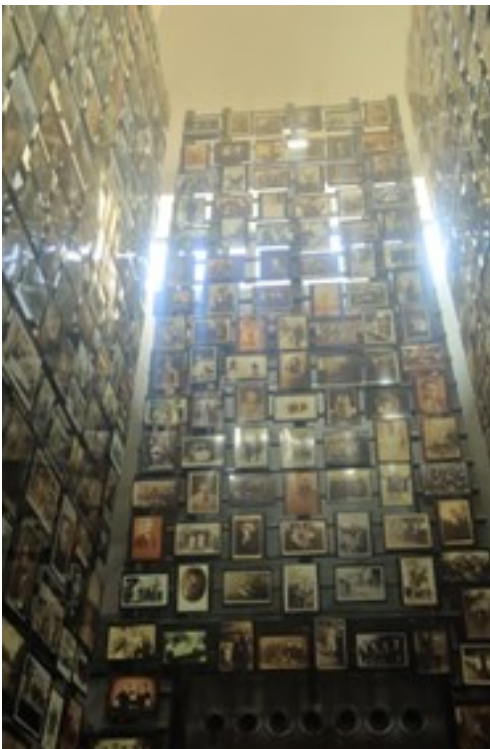
On the first Friday of the month, Sister **Kat Powell** brought a puzzle to the bimonthly gaming night.

It was worked on by Sister Kat, her friend Jeff, me, and my son **Harold**. Brother **Andrew Crocket** and Sister **Bex Clark** came in at 9:45 to join us.

I kept the lodge open so we could finish the puzzle.

Game night happens every 1st and Last Friday of the month from 6 to 10pm at True Fellowship #52 Lodge, 1035 Emory St, San Jose. Come and join us for games, puzzles, snacks and conversation.

-- By *Lisa Deutsch Harrigan*



I also stepped into a skyscraper room with pictures on the wall. These pictures showcased the ordinary lives of the Jewish which would never be the same again after Holocaust. There were also countless number of shoes shown be-



A Response to the Sovereign Grand Lodge Executive Committee Letter

*In May, all units of the Order received an unexpected letter from the Sovereign Grand Lodge, with instructions that it be read at their next meeting. It dealt with the matter of belief in a Supreme Being, and that principle's centrality to the Order. The following is a response composed by **Andrew Crockett**, and is his own statement, not representative of any lodge or unit he belongs to.*

--

Dear Esteemed Members of Our Friendly Order,

The recent letter dated 5 April 2025 from the Executive Committee of the Sovereign Grand Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows was a reminder of the general state of distress Odd Fellowship is facing across the continent. In particular, we share the deep and abiding concern that the rituals of our order have been seen as either an obstacle or an afterthought by many members.

We know that our Rituals are of the utmost importance and hold the highest authority in our order. They are a centerpiece of how Odd Fellowship enables the improvement and elevation of the character of mankind.

And proudly, our lodge not only has a Chaplain who performs all required

Opening and Closing Prayers, our altar features an antique gilded set of three links with the Holy Bible, resting upon several other volumes of sacred lore from major world wisdom traditions, including Islam, Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. We do this because, as the Past Grand's charge in the Initiatory Ritual states: "Our Order does not believe in the divisions and classifications of society. It teaches veneration for religion and subordination to civil government and its laws but avoids any relationships with systems of faith or sect, whether religious or political. It requires no sacrifice of your opinions."

As the 5 April 2025 letter states, "Our earliest rituals set forth that belief in a deity was not tied to any specific religious sect, nor any theological system or doctrine."

However, that sentence in the letter continued onward to say that belief in such a being "was an acknowledgement of objective truth" – which is a theological and dogmatic statement that contradicts the idea that "belief in the existence of a Supreme, Intelligent Being, the Creator and Preserver of the Universe, is an integral requirement to hold membership in this Order."

Such a statement is a contradiction because belief is not necessary if what we "believe" is objectively true. Indeed, belief becomes superfluous and pointless when objective certainty is invoked. Why believe in what is objectively true if one's belief is not required for it to remain objectively true regardless of my belief?

Faith, a core component of Our Order (as exemplified in the Encampment Degrees), is null and void if we bludgeon it with the metaphoric cudgel of treating God as an object. Objects are things we can measure, scrutinize, and tear apart – and lowering the "Supreme Intelligent Being, the Creator and Preserver of the Universe" into such mud would rightfully be called blasphemy if it were not for how seriously we take the command that Odd Fellows should "restrain ourselves from relationships with systems of faith or sect, as mentioned in our ritual" as stated in the letter.

Resolving this contradiction, Odd Fellows must make a choice like the Is-

raelites did in Exodus: do we want to become an "Order of the Golden Calf" and treat God as an object, or shall we be the Levites in this story and maintain that the humility of both belief and faith held without objective proof be sacrosanct in our order? As the Serpent and Staff symbol reminds us of the exercise of wise caution in the proper regulation of life and conduct, so should it be imperative to recognize that disunity or hypocrisy are the only fruits from maintaining contradiction such as this in the core of our membership standards.

Until this contradiction is resolved, this lodge will adhere to the standard stated in the Preliminary Questions, where we ask each candidate "Do you believe in the existence of a Supreme, Intelligent Being, the Creator and Preserver of the Universe?" The candidate being asked this question is not just a random person: they were recently an applicant, whose character was approved of by the vote of the lodge before arriving at the night of their Initiation. And on that night, as long as their answer is not "no" to this question of belief, we have and will continue to engage in no further policing of the new member's personal relationship with the divine, as it is forbidden by our non-discrimination clause in our code: "Exclusion practices at membership application or after membership has been established based on... religion or other social identity is deemed an offense against the Order." As such, we leave it up to each member to practice religion in their own way, recognizing that any belief they have would hold no value if it was not overcoming the doubt that exists as part of human life. Indeed, if we betrayed the trust our members have placed in Odd Fellowship and run any member out of the order through illegal discriminatory practices, the reality of the Sword and Scales will rightfully be wielded against any such inquisition or excommunication that would threaten our hard-earned reputation as a diverse and welcoming organization.

That said, there is a way to monitor and maintain the quality of members' faith that is consistent with the code. Indeed, we Odd Fellows have chosen the Holy Bible to be in our rituals for the

important lessons it imparts – so let us utilize such a lesson about faith provided to us by Jesus: “Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit...

Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” 4 If someone practices Friendship, Love, and Truth with earnestness and humility: then by their works we will know them to be a person of faith.

Indeed, if a member follows the rituals, and practices Friendship, Love, and Truth in their deeds – all while doubt exists in their mind – one should sooner call that a miracle than call that a problem.

To conclude, we share the 1834 poem “Abou Ben Adhem” by Leigh Hunt: the themes of which underscore the beauty of letting acts of the heart, not thoughts in the head, be the true measure of a person’s beliefs.

*Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,*

*And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:—
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,*

*And to the presence in the room he said,
“What writest thou?”—The vision raised
its head,*

*And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, “The names of those who love
the Lord.”*

*“And is mine one?” said Abou. “Nay, not
so,”*

*Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, “I pray thee,
then,*

*Write me as one that loves his fellow
men.”*

*The angel wrote, and vanished. The next
night*

*It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God
had blest,*

And lo! Ben Adhem’s name led all the rest.

-- By **Andrew Crockett**

One Man Gone Returns to Bay View 109

On July 13th, 2025, Bayview Lodge 109 hosted the Grateful Dead cover band "One Man Gone" in our main hall, from 2-6 pm.

Opening for One Man Gone was the folk duo "Redwood Souls". We had about 90 attendees for the event. The band sounded great, and people really had a blast. As an added, unexpected bonus, the "Grateful Guitars" Foundation brought one of Jerry Garcia's guitars, named "GATOR" to the event, and the band played that very guitar. FYI--that guitar was then being flown to New York, where it was being sold for \$500,000!!!! (Personally I thought the guitar had AWESOME tone).

In addition to the music, Bayview 109 provided, via our member/chef **Joshua Bachant**, nachos, grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup, and Jalapeño Poppers. We provide quality food and drinks at very reasonable prices at our concerts, as way of letting our attendees know that we appreciate them, and that we are not "sticking it to them" price-wise. In addition to the band and food and drinks, there were numerous vendors at the show, selling tie-dye clothing, jewelry and hand made crafts. And-- **Tatiana Kuvaldina**, member of the Mtn. View Oddfellows lodge was there selling her original, beautiful artwork!

There were about 10 volunteers from the Bayview Lodge helping out with the event, providing much needed help for activities such as cooking, preparing food, setting up audio & lighting equipment, taking tickets at the door, cleaning up messes and spills, serving food and drinks, and interacting with guests. We also had several volunteers from the local community helping out. As alcohol was



served at this event, the lodge paid for a professional security person to be there. While it's an expense, our attitude is "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure", especially where alcohol is concerned.

After the concert, we encouraged attendees to hang out, chat, socialize and play games, in an effort to create community, and perhaps attract new members. I think I speak for everybody, when I say that I had a great time, really enjoyed the music and general FUN VIBE of the event. We are absolutely committed to putting on more shows and events of quality in the future at Bayview 109.

-- By **Steve Koehler**



You can almost hear the laid back rhythms and harmonies captured in this picture. You could even [click here to watch it on youtube](#).

Hamiltunes!

On Saturday, July 25th, we had over 50 attendees come sing-a-long to the musical Hamilton alongside 15 performers for our Hamiltunes event with Harmony Werks, Inc.

Nicole Ennen is on the board of HarmonyWerks, Inc. - a Silicon Valley based nonprofit offering informal training and performance opportunities that help strengthen relationships and build communities by sharing our love of music and the arts. They produce events such as open mic nights, community cabarets, music therapy, and more. Harmony Werks, Inc. is an authorized provider of Hamiltunes - a sing-a-long event featuring the music of the musical Hamilton authorized by the producers of the Broadway musical that gives everyone a chance to be a part of the experience.

At the show, both attendees and performers dressed up in revolutionary garb and belted out all 43 songs from the musical. Did you miss out? Don't throw away your shot to come to the next show scheduled for Saturday, August 30th. Tickets available here:

True52.org/hamiltunes

-- By Nicole Ennen



Watch one of the [songs on youtube](#).

Volcano 25 Winding Down

I am sad to report that the Volcano Historical IOOF Lodge No. 25 executive committee directed me to inform the Grand Lodge that we have discontinued regular meetings for lack of interest. It seems our older residents lack extra energy, while the energy of our non-retired sisters is work/family-related.

-- In FL&T,
Jim Reyner, secy, V-25

Things to do in August

GAME NIGHTS AROUND DIST. 107:



August 8 - Mountain View 244

(7pm - 10pm)

August 15 - Bay View 109, (6pm - 9pm)

(includes dinner, \$10 sug. donation)

August 29 - True Fellowship 52, San

Jose (6pm - 10pm)

August 30 - Bay View 109, (12p - 6pm)



HAMILTUNES SING-A-LONG

DATE: Saturday, August 30th

COST: \$15

TIME: 7pm-10:30pm

PLACE: 1035 Emory St, San Jose

URL: True52.org/hamiltunes

This is the officially-licensed sing-a-long show featuring all the songs from the hit Broadway musical, *Hamilton*!



JANE AUSTEN DANCE

DATE: Saturday, August 9

COST: \$25 in advance, \$30* at door

TIME: 7 - 10:30PM

PLACE: 1035 Emory St, San Jose

URL: True52.org/RegencyBall

* availability of tickets at the door is not guaranteed (or likely)



ARTISTS MOUNTAIN VIEW

ART SHOW

DATE: Friday-Sunday, Aug 29-31

COST: FREE

PLACE: 823 Villa St, Mountain View

URL: mvcocef.org/artists-mountain-view

This is an art show featuring a variety of artists and styles, with a portion of sales donated to support downtown murals in Mountain View.

See more events on the district calendar:
siliconvalleyoddfellows.org/district-calendar



Image of the month - the completed puzzle from the Aug 1 TF52 game night, worked on by Lisa, Kat, Jeff, Harold, Andrew and Bex.