



# The Discoverer

## Greetings Brethren,

Welcome to the start of a new Masonic year. The new Master has an enthusiastic team around him and we look forward to yet another successful year. On a sad note we bid adieu to W. Bro. Keith Thomas who has been a stalwart of the Lodge of Discovery—a stickler for ritual and good discipline in Lodge. We will miss you Keith and your delightful Cathy. I asked Keith to give me some highlights of his career which I have pleasure in producing below. I am indebted to our Founder Members (W. Bro. Hans Mol and others) for material as published in earlier editions of the Discoverer dated 1983 –85 which are still relevant today.

## W. Bro. Keith Thomas

Born in 1950 and raised in the East End of London - Bow, in Stepney (*Editor's Note—a true East Ender!!*). Keith went to primary school there and started high school in Essex, where the family had moved, when he was 12. They migrated to Australia, Sydney, when Keith was 15 - yes ten pound poms, but Keith being under 18 got there for free, along with his junior sister and brother, who still live in Sydney.

Keith finished High School at Ashfield Boys High School in Sydney - left in 1967 and joined the RAAF. After training, he spent 14 very happy years installing and maintaining control tower systems and navigation aids. During that time he was married and had two children - Samantha and Karl. Samantha turned 40 last December and has 2 children - Axel and Summer; son, Karl, will be 39 in April and has three girls - Abigail, Madelin and Annabelle.

Keith's personal circumstances changed in 1981 - separation, divorce and all that so he left the RAAF and went to visit his parents, who were then based in Lae, Papua New Guinea. Loving the place he very soon got work with a British company - IAL - working on VHF and UHF communications - land-based and on shipping - quite a change from aircraft-related equipment - MUCH bigger, for one thing.

In 1982 he was sent by IAL to the then new Ok Tedi Gold Mine, which was in the set up phase by the USA conglomerate, Bechtel MKI. His job was to establish all the mine communications both VHF mobile, UHF, and ground to air, for the new airstrip at Tabubil. There, in the Bechtel MKI head office in Kiunga, he spotted "this vision across the huge office area" - "she totally ignored my initial advances, but soon succumbed to my charm" and, in 1983, Cathy and Keith were engaged at Ok Tedi and, in the August of that year, they were married in Port Moresby by one of Cathy's brothers, who was a priest - yes, going on 28 years now.

Once the job at Ok Tedi, and IAL finished, they settled in Lae, where Keith ran a restaurant for a while, then a small b & b named Klinkii Lodge - after

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the Klinkii Pine, nothing kinky. They applied for, and secured, a job as the management team at The Windjammer, a beach resort in Wewak, for the Tribal World group. After three years there, during which time, Cathy left the resort management and joined Air Niugini, as a ticketing agent. Keith was offered a job by the Coral Sea Hotels group, part of Steamships, and they moved to Port Moresby, which is where the rest of Cathy's family lived - all 13 brothers and sisters with their families - Cathy is number 13 of 14 children - "lucky number 13 for me"! That job finished in 1991, so they returned to Australia, where Cathy got a job as a Pizza Hut Manager and Keith worked for a group called Timezone - video game arcades, most of which his hand/eye coordination skills were not good enough to play.

After a couple of years doing that, Keith was offered a job back in PNG to work with the new Poker Machines that were being allowed into the country for the first time - well, legally, anyway. The guy he worked for, was approached by the owners of Club 21, here in Port Vila, as they wanted to establish a gaming lounge in Port Moresby. Keith was sent to Port Vila to meet the Club 21 guys, and was sent back to PNG to build Club 21 in Port Moresby. This he did, and managed it for 3 years. They holidayed in Port Vila in 1997; Cathy liked the place, so Keith asked for a move. Keith & Cathy arrived in Port Vila in November 1997.

Keith remained with Club 21 for 2 years then, after a short stint running the first Internet Casino allowed in Vanuatu, he was employed at PITCO for a year. During this time he was primarily tasked with fixing and maintaining the company web site - enjoying the work he decided he could probably make a business of it - so he left PITCO and started his web site design and hosting company; ktctdotnet (*Editor's Note: Keith also established the Lodge website*).

That company remains his primary business. Cathy secured employment, firstly with Moores Rowland, then left to join Barrett & Partners, where she worked until leaving Vila), as the Administration Manager and setting up new businesses, work permits and residency permits. In 2000, Keith approached his good friend, Charles Kleiman, and asked why he had not invited me to join Freemasonry. Charles replied, that he was waiting to see how long Keith would last in Vanuatu - apparently 3 years was enough, and, with Charles as his proposer, he was initiated into the Lodge of Discovery in April, 2001. Being an ambitious individual, he progressed through the degrees, and ranks, to become Master of the Lodge for 2009/2010.

As well as enjoying his association with Freemasonry; Cathy and Keith have been involved with VATS, as actors, writers and directors; SKAL; Lions; the Tourism Association and many other groups here in Port Vila. Associations which have given them many happy memories and friends. Keith's main hobby is woodworking and, over the years here, he has made many items of furniture for the house - all of which are now packed up for shipment to Australia.

On March 18, they departed Vanuatu for Sydney. Both of Keith's parents are still alive and retired there, and Cathy thinks that after 27 years with him, she should become an Australian citizen. As for what they plan in Australia? Nothing fixed, at this time. Cathy has put out feelers to business contacts she has made through her work at Barrett & Partners, and has a couple of interviews set up for her arrival. Keith will wait and see what comes along.

Keith says "once we are settled in our own place, I will seek out, and join a Lodge, but will always carry very fond memories of the Brethren of the Lodge of Discovery - which will, always, remain my Mother Lodge."

## THE ARTS

It is a function of the Great Arts—Music, Painting and Poetry—to express for us the inexpressible. From that viewpoint, Freemasonry is one of the Great Arts and requires individual personal attention for its proper interpretation.

*The Masonic Consistory*

Freemasonry is the science of Life, taught in a Society of men by signs, symbols and ceremonies, with peculiar Ritual, having as its basis a system of Morality, and having at its end and purpose the perfection of the individual and race.

*George Fleming Moore*

The following is an extract from the Report of the Board of General Purposes adopted by Grand Lodge in December 1981:

1. **The Relationship of Freemasonry and Religion**—Grand lodge adopted a statement on the relationship of Freemasonry and religion. The Board believes that it is of fundamental importance to the reputation and well-being of English Freemasonry that no misunderstanding of the subject should exist in the Craft or outside it, and that it is opportune to re-issue the statement. Its text follows:

It cannot be too strongly asserted that Masonry is neither a religion nor a substitute for religion. Masonry seeks to inculcate in its members a standard of conduct and behaviour which it believes to be acceptable to all creeds, but studiously refrains from intervening in the field of dogma or theology. Masonry, therefore, is not a competitor with religion though in the sphere of human conduct it may be hoped that its teaching will be complementary to that of religion. On the other hand its basic requirement that every member of the Order shall believe in a Supreme Being and the stress laid upon his duty towards Him should be sufficient evidence to all but the wilfully prejudiced that Masonry is an upholder of religion since it both requires a man to have some form of religious belief before he can be admitted as a Mason, and expects him when admitted to go on practicing his religion.

2. **Solicitation of Candidates for Freemasonry**—the question of improper solicitation of candidates has been raised on many occasions and the Board feels that a statement on this matter would be helpful to the Craft.

There is no objection to a neutrally-worded approach being made to a man who is considered a suitable candidate for Freemasonry. There can be no objection to his being reminded, once, that the approach was made. The potential candidate should then be left to make his own decision, without further solicitation.

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### What can we tell?

We attach the greatest importance to the following which is extracted from a paper read at United Masters Lodge No. 167 N.Z.:

"The question is often asked: "what can we tell an individual who wishes to join the Craft regarding the foundations on which the Craft rests?" An excellent answer is given in the following statement, which is officially used for that purpose by a very old Lodge in England: -

Freemasonry consists of a body of men banded together to preserve the secrets, customs, and ceremonials handed down to them from time immemorial, and for the purposes of mutual, intellectual, social and moral improvement, they also endeavour to cultivate and exhibit brotherly love, relief and truth, not only to one another, but to the world at large.

Freemasonry offers no pecuniary advantages whatever, nor does there exist any obligation nor implied understanding binding one Mason to deal with another, nor to support him in any way in the ordinary business relations of life.

Freemasonry teaches us to remember our common origin, it also distinctly enjoins us to respect all social distinctions, so that while some must rule, others must obey and cheerfully accept their inferior positions.

Freemasonry has certain charities, but it is not in any sense a benefit society, nor is it based upon any calculations which would render this possible. The Charities are solely for those who, having been in good circumstances, have been overtaken by misfortune or adversity, and they are quite insufficient to meet even these demands now made upon them.

Freemasonry distinctly teaches that a man's first duty is to himself, his wife, his family, and his connections, and no-one should join the Order who cannot well afford to pay the initiation fees and subscriptions to his Lodge, as well as to the Masonic charities, and this without detriment in any way to his comfort, or to that of those who have any claims upon his support.

Freemasonry recognises no distinctions of religion, but none should attempt to enter who have no religious belief, as faith in God must be expressed before any can be initiated, and prayers to Him form a frequent part of the ritual.

Freemasonry, therefore, demands that everyone before offering himself as a candidate, should be well assured in his own mind: -

"That he sincerely desires the intellectual and moral improvement of himself and his fellow creatures, and that he is willing to devote his time, his means, and his efforts in the promotion of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

That he seeks no commercial, social, nor pecuniary advantages.

That he is able to afford the necessary expenditure without injury to himself or connections.

That he is willing to enter into solemn obligations in the sight of God."

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## BLACKBALLING

*“A white ball accepts; one blackball rejects. Let the ballot proceed”*

With those familiar words the Master speeds a process which may result in pleasure, or extreme unhappiness.

The taking of objections to candidates, and the proper use of the Ballot, are often not fully understood. In each there is etiquette as well as right, which may account for the confusion which does exist in the minds of many Brethren, not only in our Lodge, but in the Craft generally.

Our By-laws provide that an Investigation Committee shall report to the Lodge on every candidate's application for membership. The Committee must receive objections from both within and outside the Lodge, and the latter will be treated just as seriously as the former.

A member of the Lodge having a reasonable objection to a candidate, or suggested candidate, has two courses open to him:

- (a) TO INTIMATE IN CONFIDENCE TO THE MASTER that he entertains such an objection as would cause him to blackball in the event of a ballot being taken.

If the objector does not wish to give his reasons, the Master cannot demand them.

- (b) TO BLACKBALL the candidate WITHOUT NOTICE of intention to do so.

The first course is that indicated by etiquette and fraternal spirit, and its adoption should be the invariable practice of Brethren; the second may be their right, but to exercise it would be to insult the Master.

To repeat—every Brother has the right to use the blackball, BUT HE SHOULD EXERCISE IT ONLY AFTER HE HAS INDICATED HIS INTENTION TO THE MASTER. He should be prepared to discuss his objection with the Master, but, guided by his own conscience, he may retain his objection. In such a case the Master will rarely let the Ballot proceed.

Finally, the time to take an objection is as soon as possible after the circulation of the candidate's name. An objection indicated in advance, as it always should be, gives the proposer the opportunity of avoiding the blackballing of his candidate by withdrawing the proposal.

**MORAL—when in doubt consult the Master.**

## Humour

**A Freemason found himself a contestant on the popular TV show "Mastermind".** After the presenter had exchanged the usual greetings and enquired his name and occupation the brother declared his "chosen specialist subject" to be "the history of Scottish Freemasonry since the foundation of Grand Lodge" the first question was, in what year was the Grand Lodge of Scotland founded? to which the brother answered "pass". Undeterred the question master continued by inquiring, who was the first Grand Master Mason of Scotland? as in the former instance the brother's answer was "pass". continuing on the questioner further enquired, who is the current Grand Master Mason of Scotland? and for a third time the answer was "pass". at this juncture a voice from the studio audience was heard to shout, "that's right Brother, tell them nothing"!

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**Along Norwegian highways we have quite a few "photo-boxes",** as we call them. These devices are equipped with radar or laser which triggers a digital picture of the front of your car when you're speeding, showing both the licence plate and the driver's face, and send it online to the regional police HQ. You always know when you've been photographed because the red flash lightens up pretty sharply even in daylight. Once when I was visiting with brethren somewhere else in the country, we were running short of time to reach the opening of the lodge and the driver exceeded speed limit and of course his car was immediately taken a picture of. We all of course agreed to a Dutch treat on the fine that we knew was coming and didn't give the incident a second thought. Two months later we're on the road again for a meeting together and I brought up the subject, wondering what my share would be. The owner of the car surprised us with telling that the police officer who sorted out the photos from the speed-control boxes was a brother of his lodge, so the picture of evidence was apparently lost in administration somewhere. We never heard about any fine. Now we never pass a speed-controlling photo box in this district without giving our lodge's secret recognition sign...

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**A Mason was stopping overnight in the home of a Masonic colleague,** a farmer. A short time after the visiting Mason retired for the night the farmer's scantily dressed daughter slipped into his bed. The Mason shoved her out of his bed saying, "I am a Mason. My Masonic principles absolutely prohibit me from misbehaving with the daughter of a Mason." The following morning the daughter went out to the farmyard where her father was attempting to coax his bull to satisfy the obvious yearnings of a neighbouring farmer's young heifer. The bull refused to cooperate, wandered away and lay down in the hay. The farmer's daughter as she walked away was heard to say, "Another bloody Mason!!!"