

While we pay this fraternal tribute to all those Brethren who have formed and perfected the association of which we are a part, let us remember specifically those who brought Freemasonry to Hawaii and, in particular, those who brought Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie to life and sustained it for almost 200 years.

Early on a Sunday morning, January 18, 1778, Captain James Cook, in command of the British ships, *Resolution* and *Discovery*, sighted Oahu and thus discovered the archipelago which he named the Sandwich Islands in honor of Lord Sandwich, his patron. Two days later, he landed at Waimea on the island of Kauai giving him the distinction of being the first Freemason to set foot in this state.

Sixty-five years later, on March 30, 1843, the whaling ship, *Ajax*, out of Le Havre, France, sailed into Honolulu harbor. Its Captain was Joseph Marie LeTellier, "the Grand Deputy of France" representing the Supreme Council of 33° A. & A. S. R. of France. In his sea chest were documents that empowered him to set up Masonic Lodges in the Pacific Ocean and elsewhere in his voyages, to issue warrants and to call upon the Supreme Council for charters.

LeTellier found at Honolulu a conglomeration of men from America, England, Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany, Italy, and South and Central America, among whom many were Masons. Calling a chosen few of them to a meeting aboard the *Ajax* on April 8, 1843, in a room lighted only by the sputtering wicks of whale oil lamps, he disclosed his credentials and formed a lodge which he named "Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie". He issued the warrant and sent for the charter. The Supreme Council of France issued a charter to Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie No. 124 on July 24, 1850. Thus was formed the first Lodge of Freemasons to be established anywhere in the Pacific hemisphere, including the American mainland west of the Missouri River.

Present at the organizational meeting on the *Ajax* were Robert C. Janion, John Meek, Robert W. Wood, William Paty, John Paty, Robert Davis, William H. Davis, Frederick W. Thompson, John R. Von Pfister, Jules Dudoit, and Joseph O. Carter, Sr.

Robert C. Janion was an Englishman and a clever merchant. His business subsequently became the great house of Theo. H. Davies & Co., Ltd.

Joseph O. Carter, Sr., was a many-sided man, familiar with every kind of commerce and was esteemed the soul of honor to his dying day. He was the trusted confidant of rulers and princes.

William Paty was Honolulu Harbor's third Harbor Master. His brother John Paty was a lovable character and a man who left the memory of good deeds and an exemplary life within the community. He survived his brother and was the captain of the Hawaiian fleet. It is said that, in 40 years of command at sea, the only thing he ever lost was a single spar in a gale.

Jules Dudoit was a merchant, a shipping agent and the most prominent man in the French colony. At our Stated Meeting on February 28, 2020, Mr. Alikea Kaeka of Molokai, the great, great, great grandson of Jules Dudoit, sent special greetings to Lodge Le Progres.

Captain John Meek is of particular significance to the history of Masonry in Hawaii. He first visited the Sandwich Islands in 1809, eleven years before the first missionaries arrived here and thirty one years after the discovery of the Islands by Captain Cook. He remained in the Islands, becoming a business man of enterprising nature and impeccable character. He saw Honolulu grow from grass huts to modern buildings, and assisted in the construction of many of those buildings on the waterfront as well as in the

residential section. Captain Meek was already a Mason when he came to the Sandwich Islands and was the first Mason of record, after Captain Cook, to set foot here.

Lodge Le Progres met aboard the *Ajax* from the time LeTellier called the first meeting until it came time for the *Ajax* to leave port. The Lodge then moved to Meek's residence on the upper side of King Street, at a place where, many years later, Smith Street was cut through.

Meek and Le Progres were largely responsible for the creation of Hawaiian Lodge. The Grand Lodge of California officially opened and came into existence at the City of Sacramento, California, on April 18, 1850. On the evening of December 8, 1851, a number of Hawaii masons held a meeting at Meek's home to consider forming another lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in the City of Honolulu. Those present were: Lemuel Lyon, Charles W. Vincent, Alex. J. Cartwright, Andrew C. Mott, Thomas W. Russom, Jacob Brown, John Meek, F. W. Thompson, D. P. Penhallow, William Wond, C. B. Chappel, E. Low and Calvin Bradley. Of these, Meek, Vincent, Cartwright, Mott, Thompson, Penhallow and Wond were members of Lodge Le Progres. Lemuel Lyon presided and, after a full discussion, the group resolved to petition the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of California for a charter. The Deputy Grand master of California granted a dispensation on January 12, 1852 and Hawaiian Lodge, F. & A. M., became the 21st Lodge in the Grand Jurisdiction of California.

On February 18, 1852, the first regular meeting of Hawaiian Lodge was held in a room previously used by Lodge le Progres. Here an election for membership was held and the following brethren were declared as forming the Lodge: Lyon, Penhallow, Thompson, Meek, Wond, Cartwright, Vincent (all from Lodge Le Progres), J. G. Sawkins, Joseph Irwin and F. M. Stokes. Later that year, Vincent, Meek and Davis tendered their resignations from Hawaiian Lodge in order to resume work in Lodge Le Progres under the French jurisdiction.

Meek remained a member of Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie from its inception until his death in 1875. On January 30 of that year, Lodge Le Progres called a special meeting for the purpose of attending Meek's funeral. The Lodge was called to labor at 2 o'clock P.M. by the Master's gavel "In memory of Capt. John Meek, our late brother and one of the founders of Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie No. 124, A. & A.S.R, born A.D 1791, Nov 24, at Marblehead, Massachusetts, U.S.A., died at Honolulu, January 29, 1875, aged 83 years, 2 months, and 5 days. By his deeds do we know him." The brethren of Lodge Le Progres No. 124 and Hawaiian Lodge No. 21, led the officers and members of other Masonic bodies, in procession to the residence of Brother Meek. From there, they escorted the remains to their last resting place and, upon returning, the Lodge was closed in peace and harmony.

In September 1904 some of the brethren of Lodge le Progres proposed that the Lodge's best interests, and the best interests of Masonry in Hawaii, would be well served by changing our jurisdiction to the Grand Lodge of California. Accordingly, the Worshipful Master announced that there would be a summoned meeting on Saturday evening, October 1, 1904, to consider withdrawing from the Grand Lodge of France and the Supreme Council of France, and transferring our allegiance to some Grand Lodge of the United States, preferably that of the State of California. Past Master Ed Towse, having analyzed the proposal, presented a summary of the topic together with his observations for and against. Thereupon, Past Master White offered and Past Master Farrington seconded a resolution to approach the Grand Lodge of California. The resolution was adopted by unanimous vote and an application was laid before the Grand Lodge at its annual communication of October, 1905. The Grand Lodge approved the application and issued a Charter in the name of "Oceanic Lodge No. 371". Appropriate steps were

then taken to withdraw from the French jurisdiction. The separation was amicable and received the blessing of the French.

Oceanic Lodge No. 371 conducted business as usual until 1916, when, on May 29th of that year Past Master Ed Towse offered the following resolution:

“Whereas, this Lodge was instituted April 8, 1843, by a Deputy of the Supreme Council of 33° A. & A. S. R. of France, under the name of Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie No. 124, and worked under that name until it entered the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of California as Oceanic Lodge No. 371, and

“Whereas, it was and is desired by all the members to retain the former name of this body, be it

“Resolved, that the Grand Lodge of California is hereby respectfully petitioned to permit and instruct this Lodge to resume its former name with its present number.”

Since a portion of the work done by Lodge Le Progres under the Supreme Council of France differed somewhat, especially in the third degree, the Grand Lodge of California was also asked to consider whether the Lodge might continue its work according to the French usage.

The Grand Lodge of California sent its reply on November 10, 1916, saying that the name of Oceanic Lodge No. 371 was changed to Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie No. 371. Of even greater import was that the Grand Lodge had also amended its constitution by adding a proviso that “...anything in the section to the contrary notwithstanding, that the Lodges in the jurisdiction whose long established ritualistic work is in part a departure from the uniform ritual of this jurisdiction may continue to perform such work as the same is now being performed, in so far as the same may not be disapproved by the Grand Master and the Grand Lecturer.” We had not only preserved our long-standing traditional Third Degree but also set the standard for all future lodges with traditional forms of ritual.

Masonic constitutions in the United States generally provide that “Whenever there are three or more chartered lodges in any state or territory in which no Grand Lodge exists and there is substantial unity among Freemasons of such State or territory in favor of forming a new Grand Lodge, they have the absolute right to meet in convention, and a majority of them, not less than three, can organize a Grand Lodge for such state or territory.” When Hawaii was granted Statehood on August 21, 1959, many Hawaii Freemasons thought that the Grand Lodge of California would automatically extend this principle to the State of Hawaii, essentially creating a spin-off entity, or that California would at least allow Hawaii to start the process on its own. However, no action was initiated, nor was it encouraged by California. The mood appeared to be that of “carry on as usual”. Certain segments of the Grand Lodge of California were of the opinion that Hawaii was too small to justify or sustain a Grand Lodge of its own, and did not encourage any movement in that direction. A number of Hawaii Freemasons fully supported the idea of a Hawaii Grand Lodge and felt that it was long overdue. Other Hawaii brethren supported the idea in principle, but had some reservations about the ability of Hawaii Lodges to finance their own Grand Lodge.

After two unsuccessful Hawaii efforts to form its own Grand Lodge, California Grand Master Jack R. Levitt learned that a number of Hawaii Freemasons were again initiating an independent action to establish a Grand Lodge of Hawaii in 1987. Once again some members of the Craft in Hawaii wanted their own Grand Lodge, and felt compelled to take the appropriate action to achieve this end. The

leaders of this movement were Past Masters Frederick H. Overstreet and Jerome Borro, both of Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie.

Most Worshipful Levitt contacted the Master of each of Hawaii's twelve lodges and explained that the "ground rules" established by the Grand Lodge of California in the 1983 Grand Lodge proceedings must be adhered to. As a result, a Special Committee of Hawaii Freemasons was created. The members were nominated by their respective Lodges, with the actual selection made by Grand Master Levitt. The committee was composed of a representative from each Hawaii Lodge, plus an additional member from the three Lodges with the greatest membership. Consequently Hawaiian Lodge, Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie, and Pearl Harbor Lodge each had two representatives on the committee, for a total of fifteen committee members.

At the 1988 Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of California, Worshipful Fred Overstreet, chairman of the Special Committee, presented the "Report of the Committee on the Feasibility Study of a Grand Lodge of Hawaii", and the "Resolution for a Proposed Grand Lodge of Hawaii". The Grand Lodge of California approved the resolution and, in subsequent meetings with the California Grand Master, the committee developed the structure, functions and budget for the proposed Grand Lodge of Hawaii. Once this was completed, the Hawaii Committee set about to develop the necessary procedures that would enable every Hawaii Freemason the opportunity to vote "Yes" or "No" as to his choice of establishing a Grand Lodge of Hawaii. On April 8, 1989, Worshipful Overstreet convened a meeting at the Honolulu Masonic Temple on Makiki Street, where the voting results were tabulated and announced by Brother Roy Ota. Nine of the twelve Lodges and 65.5% of the voting members voted in favor of forming a Grand Lodge. Le Progres, Hawaiian, Honolulu, Kona, Kilauea, Waikiki, Maui, Ko'olau, and the King Kalakaua Daylight Lodges had all voted in favor, while Pearl Harbor, Schofield, and Kauai Lodges had voted against it.

On May 20, 1989, a convention was held at the Honolulu Scottish Rite Cathedral for the purpose of instituting The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Hawaii. All Hawaii Freemasons were invited to attend, and the auditorium was filled to capacity. Worshipful Fred Overstreet who chaired the convention, called the brethren to order, Brother Charles C. Kippen, Past Master of Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie, offered a prayer and William K. McKee, Jr., Past Master of Waikiki Lodge, led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our country. Chairman Overstreet then introduced the members of the Special Committee, and the election of Grand Lodge officers commenced. Each Lodge had four votes; the Master, Senior and Junior Wardens, and a Past Master who represented the Past Masters of the Lodge, were the only brethren eligible to vote. The maximum 48 ballots were cast and the Grand Officers were elected as follows:

Grand Master: William K. McKee Jr. (Waikiki Lodge No. 774)
Senior Grand Warden: Ernest Y. Yamane (Hawaiian Lodge No. 21)
Junior Grand Warden: David K. Lindsey, Jr. (Honolulu Lodge No. 409)
Grand Treasurer: John G. Simpson (Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie No. 371)
Grand Secretary: Glenn R. Petty (Honolulu Lodge No. 409)
Grand Lecturer: Louie C. Ondo (Pearl Harbor Lodge No. 598)

Worshipful Overstreet installed the elected officers and the convention adjourned for lunch.

After lunch the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Hawaii opened for the first time on the Third Degree of Masonry for the transaction of Grand Lodge business.

The Masters of the twelve Lodges were honored by having them occupy the chairs for the opening ceremony as follows:

David N.E. Kaohelaulii (Hawaiian Lodge No. 21) as Grand Master
Melvin Kau (Waikiki Lodge No. 774) as Senior Grand Warden
Dewey Sturges (Honolulu Lodge No. 409) as Junior Grand Warden
Flip Grisolano (Ko'olau Lodge No. 801) as Grand Treasurer
Bernard Suganuma (Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie No. 371) as Grand Secretary
Louie C. Ondo (King Kalakaua Daylight Lodge No. 838) as Senior Grand Deacon
Eugene Simon (Lodge Maui No. 472) as Junior Grand Deacon
Art Martin (Kilauea Lodge No. 330) as Grand Chaplain
Clifford Hiatt (Kona Lodge No. 836) Senior Grand Steward
Jim Sullivan (Schofield Lodge No. 443) as Junior Grand Steward
Mike Warren (Pearl Harbor Lodge No. 598) as Grand Marshal
William Hicks (Kauai Lodge No. 598) as Grand Tiler

The main business considered was:

- Adopting the California Masonic Code, subject to a few minor changes relating to local conditions and geography;
- Adoption of a proposed budget and approval of a per-capita assessment;
- Adoption of the Ritual of the Grand Lodge of California; and
- Establishing that all constituent Lodges in the Hawaii jurisdiction would discontinue the use of Lodge numbers, and be identified by name only.

The formal installation of elected and appointed Grand Lodge officers took place on July 1, 1989 at the Honolulu Scottish Rite Cathedral with Stanley L. Channon, Grand Master of Masons in California, serving as the Installing Officer. For their installations, Most Worshipful William K. McKee, Jr. wore the Past Master's Jewel of King David Kalakaua and Right Worshipful Ernest Y. Yamane wore the Past Master's Jewel of John O. Dominis, Consort of Queen Lili'uokalani. The Brethren of Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie had loaned them the jewels as both of the earlier brethren were very active in the Craft. The Very Reverend David N.E. Kaohelaulii, Grand Chaplain, gave the Devotional Services in the Hawaiian language. This was most appropriate since Very Reverend David was originally from the neighbor island of Niihau.

The last Lodge to be founded in Hawaii and warranted by the Grand Lodge of California, was the King Kalakaua Daylight Lodge No. 838. It was chartered on October 15, 1985. The vast majority of its members were also members of other Hawaii lodges and its newer members gradually migrated to those lodges. Eventually King Kalakaua Daylight Lodge was unable to remain in operation as the number of meeting attendees dropped. Its last year of operation was 1997 when it merged into Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie.

Waikiki Lodge was chartered by the Grand Lodge of California on October 2, 1956, and was the second lodge to consolidate with Lodge Le Progres. During its 48 years of operation, Waikiki's membership had had its ups and downs but, in its last 20 or so years, the active membership declined steadily. The average age of the membership was increasing and many of its members moved to the mainland to retire, to be with children and grandchildren or just to escape the high cost of living here. A number of members had also moved to the Celestial Lodge.

By the year 2000, well over half of its members resided on the mainland and all but one of the remaining active members were Past Masters. Efforts to attract new candidates were largely ineffective and, during the last five years, Waikiki Lodge was forced to recycle its officers.

Worshipful Master Jeffrey A. Low felt this was unfair to the stalwarts, who were all Past Masters, and sent out a call to the membership for alternatives. The response was nearly unanimous – consolidate with another lodge. Honolulu Lodge and Lodge Le Progres responded to subsequent inquiries with interest. In 2002 Worshipful James Y. S. Chinn, the Secretary, passed away. Worshipful Low stepped down and was elected to replace him. Worshipful Low's successor was Worshipful Edwin Y.W. (Big Ed) Chun who was good friends with Fred Overstreet, Past Master of Lodge Le Progres, and over the next two years they engineered the consolidation of Waikiki Lodge with Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie. Waikiki Lodge closed its doors for the last time at the end of 2004.

We have reviewed the main events in the 179-year history of Lodge Le Progres de l'Océanie. Some of the names mentioned are familiar, some are not. But all have played a significant part in the building and sustenance of the Lodge. There have been 137 Masters including two kings, a Prince Consort, a governor and a judge.

But let's not forget the "common" man, the man in the kitchen and the man in the columns who's here just to be here and fraternize with his Brothers. Although our records are incomplete, we've managed to identify 422 of them from various sources. We know, for example, that about 100 of them are buried in Oahu Cemetery and we will be attending to their graves tomorrow to honor their memory. We haven't named most of those here tonight but they, too, deserve our remembrance – not as one who has passed on but as one who is essential to the vital fabric of our Lodge.

Once a year we hold an event called Ladies of Le Progres to honor those who support our Brethren, both at home and away. And we celebrate Christmas time for the children and Thanksgiving for the entire family. Maybe these could be considered "just the usual lodge events", parties or breaks from the lodge routine. But in reality they are remembrances, opportunities to stop and think about what these others mean to us and how we and they, together, are laying the foundation for tomorrow's lodge. Just as those who have gone before have laid the foundation for our labors, remember that we are laying the foundation for those yet to come.

And when we enter the Celestial Lodge, let us hope that we have done a good job – one that earns us the privilege of having future generations strew flowers, wreaths and evergreens upon our graves.