



**The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free  
and Accepted Masons of Virginia**

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**Committee on Masonic Education**

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**Lodge Presentation Program Paper**

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**General Douglas MacArthur  
The Man, the Freemason, the American Hero**

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General of the Army Douglas MacArthur's Masonic experiences, like his military experiences, were quite exceptional. He played an important role in helping Freemasonry in the Philippines and was the key figure in restoring Freemasonry to Japan. Tonight's program will focus on the General's Masonic history and briefly summarize his amazing military career of more than a half century.

Douglas MacArthur became a Freemason while serving as Field Marshall of, and Military Advisor to, the Philippine Army. As you might suspect, the General was not an ordinary candidate when, for the second time in the history of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines, Grand Master Samuel Hawthorn exercised his prerogative to make MacArthur a "Mason at sight."

On January 17, 1936, in the presence of over six hundred Master Masons, who watched in the breathless silence of a crowded hall, General Douglas MacArthur received the degrees. He was visibly moved throughout the ceremony. The Entered Apprentice Degree was conferred by Past Grand Master Frederick H. Stevens, immediately followed by Past Grand Master Francisco Delgado conferring the Fellowcraft Degree on MacArthur, and then Most Worshipful Samuel Hawthorne raised General MacArthur to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason. Following the ritual, the Brothers welcomed the prominent American General and, at the same time, paid homage to his father, a respected Brother, General Arthur MacArthur.

After being raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason, Douglas MacArthur affiliated with Manila Lodge No. 1 and on March 13, 1937, joined the Scottish Rite. He was elected Knight Commander Court of Honor on October 19, 1947 and later coroneted 33° at the American Embassy in Tokyo. He was a life member of the Nile Shrine Temple in Seattle.

General MacArthur's greater service to Freemasonry came after he accepted the unconditional surrender of the Empire of Japan aboard the Battleship Missouri in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945. General MacArthur was subsequently appointed Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers in Japan by President Truman, who instructed the General: "*You will exercise your authority as you deem necessary to carry out your mission. Our relations with Japan do not rest on a contractual basis, but on unconditional surrender. ... Our authority is supreme.*"

MacArthur and his headquarters staff, many of whom were Freemasons, helped design and implement new democratic governmental processes that would facilitate Japan's rise in the post World War II economy. To this end, the General's staff drafted a new constitution that renounced war and militarism. It provided for women to vote, and in the April 10, 1946 general election, more than thirteen million of them registered to vote.

The new constitution became effective on May 3, 1947, and henceforth, the Emperor could act only on the advice of his ministers. The new constitution also guaranteed human rights and instituted a land reform program that purchased, sold, and redistributed 4.6 million acres so that 89% of the land was operator owned. MacArthur gained in popularity, and he was affectionately known in Japan as the Gaijin Shogun, Japanese for the Foreign Commander.

Freemasonry had been banned by the Emperor under the Meiji Constitution, which was in effect from November 29, 1890 until May 2, 1947. The return of Freemasonry to Japan came about by a most unusual route, and it was guided by some unusual advocates. You might say it came by way of Pearl Harbor. Here is what I mean.

Despite the fact that there had been several Pearl Harbor investigations, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson felt that the reports he had received about the surprise attack of December 7, 1941 had so many gaps and unanswered questions that he decided to commission a completely new report. He reached out to a young lawyer from the Judge

Advocate General's office to conduct a special investigation, with full authority to question under oath anyone, ranging from enlisted personnel to the Chief of Staff. The man chosen for this task was none other than Major – and Brother – Henry C. Clausen. If the name seems somewhat familiar to you, it is probably because Brother Clausen subsequently became the Grand Master of Masons in California and from 1969-1985, he was the Sovereign Grand Commander of Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States.

Brother Clausen described himself as a civilian lawyer in an Army uniform, because he was not given any of the special training that Army officers usually receive. Pursuant to his orders, Major Clausen traveled over 55,000 miles and obtained affidavits from almost one hundred men. Included among those he interviewed, were General MacArthur and the General's chief of intelligence, Major General Willoughby, both of whom were extremely cooperative.

At the end of his investigation, he submitted an 800 page Top Secret Report to Secretary Stimson, which revealed a failure by the United States to exploit intelligence it had obtained prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor. His formerly classified activities on this assignment were detailed in his book, "*Pearl Harbor Final Judgment*," which was published in 1992.

Getting back to Brother Clausen's interview with General MacArthur, after about an hour, when the discussion about Pearl Harbor came to an end, the General kept Major Clausen in his office for another hour talking about the Craft. Brother Clausen, in his book, recounted the experience

this way: General MacArthur talked about how to expand in the Far East the moral principles of Freemasonry. The General believed that every dictator in history has tried to put Freemasonry out of business because the Masons believe in freedom. MacArthur was positive that Hitler had poisoned the minds of the Japanese against the Masonic Order for this very reason, and he was going to make sure such provisions were eliminated from any future constitution – which he did.

Major Clausen, for his part, commented to the General about the plight of Freemasonry in the Philippines. He noted, talking about Manila that *“we have a Lodge not far from here. ... They don’t have any pencils. They don’t have any paper. The Japanese confiscated everything. Would there be any objection, General to my using the military mail to send over some implements that are used to start up the Masonic Lodge, items such as rods, Bibles, and so forth?”* *“Absolutely not,”* MacArthur said. *“I’m a Mason; my G-2 Willoughby is a Mason. We’ll make arrangements for you.”*

In his book, Clausen tells us that, *“Willoughby went overboard. He told me to send anything I wanted. The Masons in Washington thought I was nuts, but I managed to get everything that was needed and MacArthur was also instrumental in getting the confiscated Masonic property in Manila and also in Japan returned to the Masons.”*

After the War, and with General MacArthur’s support, Masonic activities were resumed. During a ten-year period from 1947 to 1956, sixteen Lodges were founded. Eventually, Masonic membership became

available to Japanese nationals, and in 1950, seven Japanese men, including five members of the Diet, the Japanese Parliament, were initiated.

On June 2, 1954, Most Worshipful Worshipful Brother Schetelig, Grand Master of Masons in the Philippines, accompanied by his Grand Secretary, Grand Marshal, and Grand Chaplain flew to Tokyo and instituted the District Grand Lodge of Japan. Additional Philippine, American, English, and Scottish Lodges were formed, and in 1957, the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Japan was founded. Today, there are more than one hundred fifty Lodges in amity under the Grand Lodge of Japan, and the value of the assets of the Grand Lodge is more than \$50 million dollars.

During the Korean War, General MacArthur became involved in a dispute with President Truman over strategy, and when he was relieved of his command, Emperor Hirohito came to visit him in sorrow and disbelief, with tears in his eyes. The Nippon Times wrote that “the good wishes of eighty three million Japanese people” would go with him. Another newspaper wrote that the General was a noble political missionary who gave the Japanese people much more than material aid and democratic reform but rather a new way of life and the freedom and dignity of the individual. Millions of Japanese people lined his route to the airport in order to say sayonara to the man who had lifted them out of their post-war despair and destitution.

General MacArthur spent most of his return flight home from Japan writing his speech to Congress in which, on April 19, 1951, he famously

stated: *“I am closing my 52 years of military service. When I joined the Army, even before the turn of the century, it was the fulfillment of all my boyish hopes and dreams. The world has turned over many times since I took the oath on the plain at West Point, and the hopes and dreams have vanished, but I still remember the refrain of one of the most popular barrack ballads of that day which proclaimed most proudly that ‘old soldiers never die; they just fade away.’ And like the old soldier of that ballad, I now close my military career and just fade away, an old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the light to see that duty.”*

After his second retirement from the Army, he addressed several groups on the subject of Americanism and Freemasonry, and he defined Freemasonry for his audiences, as follows: *“It embraces the highest moral laws and will bear the test of any system of ethics or philosophy ever promulgated for the uplift of man...its requirements are the things that are right...including the doctrine of patriotism and brotherly love, enjoying sentiments of exalted benevolence, encouraging all that is good, kind and charitable,... and its restraints are the things that are wrong, reprobating all that is cruel and oppressive. Its observance will uplift everyone under its influence...to do good to others, to forgive enemies, to love neighbors, to restrain passions, to honor parents, to respect authority, to return good for evil, not to bear false witness, nor to lie, not to steal – these are the essential elements of the moral law.”*

And so I would conclude by noting first, that General MacArthur’s unwavering support for Freemasonry was based upon his fundamental respect for its teachings, and second, that in keeping with his genuine

feelings for our Fraternity, he acted decisively to help both Philippine and Japanese Freemasonry.