



# The Messenger

Published for the Residents  
Masonic Homes of California at Union City

## New Year's Reflections—Submitted by Bruce Rick



Shall we see it, loving Brothers,  
Ere another New Year's Day?  
Shall we join those loving others,  
Whom the past year tore away?  
Shall we change this toil and drudge,  
For the bright Celestial Lodge?

Shall we tread that one more station,  
Take that fast and best degree,  
Whose consummate "Preparation"  
Is to set the spirit free?  
Lay our bodies off, that then  
Souls unburdened may go in,

Shall we find beyond the river, —  
Shall we find beyond the tomb, —  
Those who left us, not forever,  
Left us till we, too, should come?  
Shall we learn the long-lost word  
That admits a man to God, —

Then, be zealous, loving Brothers,  
While your lives so swiftly tend;  
Emulate those faithful others  
In the prizes they have gained;  
O'er the river, on the shore,  
They are happy evermore, —

Toil, — your wages rich are ready;  
Bear, — your burdens all shall cease;  
Give, — however poor and needy;  
Pray, — and God will give release  
From this bitter toil and drudge  
To the bright Celestial Lodge

*-Rob Morris*



## JANUARY



## Annual Tree Lighting—Written by Jennifer MacRae, Admin. Assistant



The magic of the holiday season descended upon Masonic Homes as residents, staff and their families gathered for the much anticipated Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony marking the official start of the holiday season.

The event began with festive treats, pictures with Santa, and a musical performance from Gabriel's Trumpets. Drawings were held for residents and visitors, and fun was had by all!

As the clock approached the magical moment, we all made our way to the tree. This would be the first Tree Lighting on the Union City Campus for CEO Terry Quigley, who lit up the tree with assistance from Soledad Martinez and Resident Dawn Hicks. A hush fell over the crowd, the countdown began, the switch was flipped, and the beautiful tree lit up the night sky!





## Residents' Holiday Party

Written by Kim Hegg, Sr. Director of Events, Recreation & Volunteer Services

On Tuesday, December 12, the Masonic Homes welcomed Grand Master Sean Metroka and his wife, Margaret, Senior Grand Warden Garrett Chan and his wife JoMay, Ricky Lawler, Grand Lecturer, Narbeh Bagdasarian, Grand Orator, Tony Cimarra, AGL Division III and his wife Leila, Steven Yeffa, Grand Marshal, and members of the Masonic Homes Board to the annual Residents' Holiday Party.

The festivities began with a reception in the Sedam Auditorium, where guests enjoyed appetizers, specialty holiday cocktails, and holiday entertainment provided by the Dix Duo. Santa, accompanied by dignitaries, visited Lorber, Wollenberg, and Adams residents before heading to the Main Dining Room for dinner. Terry Quigley, President and CEO, welcomed guests, gave her remarks, and invited everyone to enjoy dinner.



Following a delightful dinner and fabulous conversation, Soledad Martinez, the Executive Director, recognized and introduced the Morrison Dining team, and Joseph Pritchard, Chief Operating Officer, introduced the staff. Tony Cimarra, AGL, introduced the Masonic dignitaries including Past Grand Masters Frank Loui and his wife Jeani, John L. Cooper III and his wife

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## Residents' ...Continued from page 3

Heather, and Jeff Wilkins and his wife Liz.

Most Worshipful John Cooper, PGM, was invited to the podium to introduce the Grand Master. John shared a few personal remarks about the Grand Master and then invited him to give his remarks.

Following the Grand Master's remarks, Terry Quigley presented Most Worshipful Brother Metroka with a pen, handcrafted by residents of the Masonic Homes from the great Oak tree that stood

at the entrance of the Home, as well as a gift to his wife Margaret.

Many thanks to all those who helped to make this evening a success—Morrison Living, the EVS team who rearranged the dining room, Jenn MacRae, Brenda Leon, Ranshu Malini, Shiela Tulabing, Irma Montes de Oca, Mary Henneuse, Luz Garcia, and James MacRae for being the photographer and A/V troubleshooter, and to all the Elves in The Pavilion, Wollenberg, Lorber, and Adams who spread holiday cheer to the residents! Thank you!



## Quotable

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## Love is in the Air—Written by the Lorber Recreation Team



One thing about the holiday season is that it gives us an opportunity to show our love and appreciation for those that we care about the most. Most say that the season of love falls during the month of February (because of Valentine's Day, obviously) but for the Norgaards, the season of love is all the time.

On December 17, 2023, we were able to witness the renewal of vows for Gary and Norma Norgaard, making this their 54th wedding anniversary. Gary and Norma first met at Crocker Bank where Norma worked. She was the head banker and Gary's accountant. Norma's coworker originally had set up Gary with another friend in mind, but Gary and Norma had a spark! Their first date was at Benihana Restaurant. Norma had two vacations that year; one in March and one in December. Gary told her "We'll get married in December!" He figured she would forget about it when the time came, but nope!

They got married on December 16th and have since then celebrated every anniversary at the place where it all began, Benihana. The Norgaards were married on the Princess Louise in San Pedro Harbor circa 1969. They had their first renewal of vows at the Little White Chapel in Las Vegas, where they acquired another marriage license in Nevada. Their second vow renewal was on the "Big Hawaii Island. They both were in the Coast Guard and were attending a conference at the time. They had the ceremony going down the river where Elvis Presley made Blue Hawaii." And their 3rd vow renewal was at the Masonic Homes in Lorber with Chaplain Joel officiating and Lorber residents in attendance.

Gary wore a handsome suit and Norma a beautiful white blouse with pearls. The Lorber residents baked and decorated their wedding cake with love. A beautiful event for a beautiful couple. Here's to many more seasons of love!





# The Chaplain's Corner

by Chaplain Joel Ingram

## Revolves & Evolves

Once again, even though it's the start of a new year, I am going to refrain from writing about resolutions. Mostly because it's old hat, but also because my not doing so is one of my New Year's resolutions!

Instead of resolutions, I want to write about evolutions. Of course, the word "evolution" refers to something undergoing change. In many ways, this is

the exact opposite of another, similar sounding word, revolutions. That which revolves is stuck in place. Round and round but not moving forward.

It's unavoidable that life is filled with things that "revolve". Day follows day. Make the coffee, check the mail. Eat/TV/Eat. Day can follow day in very predictable ways. There's nothing particularly wrong with this, of course. There is often comfort in routine. No surprises. No uncertainty. No fear. No guesswork. But routine - or revolutions - have their pitfalls. They can lead to a sense of boredom, apathy, and mental stupor (you know, things you do without even thinking... and sometimes, caring).

As I think about life, it seems a perpetual challenge is to live through my "revolves" (my common things) and still manage to evolve (grow in some new way). The question is, how can this be done? I am not sure I have "the" answer, but two things came to mind as I thought about this.

The first is for me to find new ways to "do" my revolves (my common tasks). I once heard a psychologist talk about how grocery shoppers almost always go through the store in the same way. But, they added, if someone decides to shop in a different way (maybe turning left instead of right when entering the store), their brain actually experiences things differently and is challenged/stretched to pay more attention to what it is doing. In this way, a familiar task is done with new benefits (a challenged or exercised "brain muscle"). We can choose to grow while accomplishing other common tasks as well, I think. Maybe "achieve" the common task of eating by asking someone new (perhaps unknown to you) if you can eat with them at their table. With this, something new and good may happen; you might make a new friend, learn something new, or perhaps find yourself surprised to learn it's not so scary to ask to eat with someone you don't know. If so, someone "ring that bell"! We have a winner! You!

**Nothing exists without a purpose. Every experience you have in this lifetime was written for you to grow into the light you were meant to become.**

Suzy Kassem



## The Chaplain's... *Continued from page 6*

So much for our revolutions. What about evolutions. For this, I think we need to intentionally (and in ways meaningful to ourselves) set our eyes on goals or experiences that are NOT a part of our everyday routine. To put this in galactic terms, I can look for ways to spin around the sun (my common tasks) differently... and also, plan meaningful escapes to other parts of life's galaxy (evolutionary growth). It would be a shame to reach the end of 2024 only to realize I learned or experienced nothing new. My year would then amount to little more than sand through the hourglass.

No one has gone to the moon by accident. To bring an "out of my usual orbit" experience into my world, I have to identify something, make plans for it, and follow through on my intentions. So, in addition to my routine, I hope you (and I) will find something new (and perhaps even unexpected) to add to our 2024 journey. I think this is how we add "life" to living and prevent the revolutions of life from dominating our world.

However, you live your 2024, I pray that it will be rich, personally fulfilling and culminate in a better you and a better world around you.

*Until next month, Chaplain Joel*

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## Senior Center Citizens—Submitted by Zelma Campbell



At 71, George was told to make a new friend every 6 months or so to make up for the friends who may pass away. At 76, he was asked how this plan was working. "Okay," he said, "Except now I have too damn many friends!"

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Billie says when she was young, it was "Look, but don't touch." Now she says it's "Touch, but don't look."

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Joe claims he's a weightlifter every time he stands up.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Old Jokes for Old Folks—Submitted by Diana Swing

A man was turning 100 years old, and a young reporter had been invited to the celebration.

"Sir, all my readers are going to want to know the secret to your long life," the reporter said, adding: "Please tell me how you managed to live long?" "Well, it's like this, sonny," began the old man. "I got married right after I turned 21. The wife and I did not believe in divorce, and we decided early on that if there were ever an argument between us, the one who lost would take a good long walk until they figured out what they had done wrong, and were sorry.

"Yep, I suppose I would have to credit 79 years of nearly daily long walks to my good health and long life".





ARRIVING FROM...  
✈️ RICHMOND, CA



The Masonic Homes extends a warm welcome to our new resident and family member, Edward "Don" Whitcomb. Originally from Richmond, CA, Don moved here from Folsom, CA and brings a wealth of experiences. As a former Installer/repairman for Pacific Telephone (later Nokia), he's a devoted family man, proud father of three, devoted grandfather to 8 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren. He has a passion for golf and travel, with the Grand Canyon holding a special place in his heart. Don's first impression of the Masonic Homes is that we're organized, and he's eager to explore woodworking and ceramics on our campus.

Don can be reached at A516, ext. 6389.



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Dennis Biondi  
Sponsoring Lodge: Old West  
No. 813  
City: Oaks Newhall  
Moved in: December 6, 2023

## *New Residents*



Patricia Crosby  
Sponsoring Lodge:  
Golden Rule  
No. 479  
City: San Jose  
Moved in: December 7,  
2023

Since the last update there have been seven Blue Box Cards submitted as of December 14, 2023. There was one compliment in the most recent submissions. A resident has stated that “all of the Dining Room staff are caring, kind, and loved and appreciated. He does have a few favorites that he wants to make a special shout out to. Thank you for your excellent service, Zina, Makala, Miguel, and Judy.” And kudos to all of the great members of the Dining Room staff for your commitment to our residents!

In the blue box there were seven concerns and/or suggestions/requests submitted:

- ◆ Concern: “The canteen ceiling needs months-old spider webs removed.”
  - ◆ **Remark:** This concern has been forwarded to the Housekeeping Director so that he can assign this task.”
- ◆ Concern: “The scheduled entry for residents for breakfast lacks supervision, causing a disorderly process. The previously posted schedule is no longer being displayed.”
  - ◆ **Remark:** There is not a set time for seating for breakfast, only a start and end period. People may come and go any time within that window. This concern has been forwarded to the Dining Room manager so that he can monitor the situation at the start of the breakfast period and make changes as needed to make the process go more smoothly.
- ◆ Concern: “There is an issue with the temperature of breakfast items. Some items meant to be hot are consistently served cold, negatively impacting the dining experience.”
  - ◆ **Remark:** This concern has been forwarded to the Director of Dining Services so that it can be addressed. I encourage the concerned resident who submitted this card to speak directly to the Dining Services staff about which items specifically are the issue, so that it can be addressed more quickly.
- ◆ Concern: “The food quality is not good – a given. However, an even worse problem is Morrison Management of the Servers. Recent changes include shortening the work hours for servers. This is resulting in some of our best servers leaving for jobs elsewhere. They have also decreased the number of servers at some meals. ½ hour later – not leaving time to set up the Dining Room. Even worse, this AM one server was required to serve out the buffet line – leaving one to cover seated ordering people, serve coffee, (not enough coffee pots any more for tables to have a pot on the table for multiple diners.) Morrison needs to get their act in gear -or- their contract needs reviewing to replace them. The line in the breakfast meal took 20 minutes to reach the food. People with bus pick-up to Dr. appointments were late!! Dining Services is getting out of hand! HELP!!”
  - ◆ **Remark:** This concern has been sent to the Dining Services Director and Dining Room Manager, as well as MHC Administration for review and discussion.



- ◆ Concern: “The food is getting worse and worse. The bratwurst was nothing more than a hot dog cut in half.”
  - ◆ Suggestion: “Please have the supervisors eat at least one meal every day. Help us please.”
    - ◆ **Remark:** Thank you for voicing your concern and providing a suggestion. Both were sent to the Director of Dining Services and MHC Administration for review and discussion.
- ◆ Suggestion: “This concerns only the buses used by the Recreation Department. The bus I rode in today was set up for an extra 5 or 6 wheelchairs. I’m asking for only 1 more wheelchair spot. It would only mean losing 1 double seat, instead of 12 seats there would be 10 seats, but there would be 3 wheelchair areas. The storage and “walker” area would be the same if not a bit larger. Now I was told that losing a row of seats would mean less room for the walkers and storage, this is wrong. Now, I didn’t actually do the math but looking at the wheelchair numbers in the dining room and the numbers used in the auditorium, etc. I think that the ratio between the people with walkers and the independent residents compared to the wheelchairs is not being considered.”
  - ◆ **Remark:** This suggestion has been sent to the Senior Director of Recreation and Events as well as MHC Administration for review and discussion.
- ◆ Suggestion: “In addition to the note I sent previously (see above), since we have a lottery for the people with wheelchairs, why don’t we have a lottery for people with walkers giving more room for the people who are independent?”
  - ◆ **Remark:** This suggestion was sent to the Senior Director of Recreation and Events and MHC Administration for review and discussion along with the one above.

Thank you very much for continuing to use this communication tool, especially for any safety related issues. Please keep the cards coming!

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**Thank You!**—Written by Mike McComas, FS/EVS Admin. Assistant



On behalf of the Facility Services team, I would like to send our heartfelt thanks to all our Residents for your generous Holiday Gift that we received last month.

Serving our residents is a reward all in its own, but your kind gesture during the Holiday Season brings joy to every one of us. Thank you.

## Spotlight on the Masonic Homes Way-By Joel Ingram



This month we are celebrating the contribution to our Home by a staff member who is known by most, if not all of you. Rio Castillo has been an employee since June of 2018. And yet, because he does so much for staff and residents on a daily basis it seems like he's been helping around here forever. While the work he does contributes to all FOUR of our Masonic Homes Way Pillars (Safety, Personal Connection, Experience and Efficiency), we're going to focus on that last one for lack of space.

Whether a piano needs moving, a sound system set up, or a resident needs to move to a new apartment, Rio is ready and will not only to help, but do so in a way that makes it all take place better. When asked what makes Rio an excellent team member, his co-worker said, "Rio is great because he just gets it done. For example, on Veteran's Day, we needed things set up and really needed Rio's help.

It was his day off, but he made it his "day on" and came in and made it happen." We don't want to make that a regular thing. We want Rio to get the rest and relaxation he well deserves, but we appreciate the attitude and assistance he brings to all that he does around our home. For this and so much more, Rio – YOU are our Masonic Homes Way Employee of the month! Thank you for all that you do!







The integration of digital assistants among senior citizens marks a transformative shift in empowering their daily lives. These smart technologies transcend the

realm of gadgets; they are a gateway to independence, connectivity, and enriched experiences.

By embracing digital assistants, you gain access to a wealth of resources that streamline tasks, facilitate communication with loved ones, and offer personalized assistance tailored to your needs. Whether it's setting reminders, accessing information, or connecting through voice-activated communication tools, these assistants serve as invaluable companions, fostering a sense of autonomy and engagement for our elderly population.

More than just technological convenience, the adoption of digital assistants among you is a pathway to social inclusion and improved well-being. These tools mitigate isolation by fostering connections and enabling seniors to actively participate in the digital sphere. They bridge generational gaps, offering opportunities for learning and growth while ensuring that our residents remain integrated and valued members of an increasingly tech-centric society.

If you have an Alexa, give it a try and say “Alexa what's for lunch, or Alexa what are the activities today?”

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## **Golden Pillar Award Winners**

Written by Joseph Pritchard, Chief Operations Officer

The Masonic Homes team and its residents perform miracles every day. We all take the time to improve someone’s life by saying “Hi, how are you doing?” and actually waiting for the response. By running to an alarm and helping solve a problem, or taking the time to pick up a piece of trash and throwing it in the bin, we all take actions to make this Home a better place. We do this because it makes an impact. We are making the world a better place for ourselves, our team members, and the residents. Thank you, all, for being part of our amazing community!

This past December, the Union City leadership team held our quarterly all-staff meeting, called News on the Hill. Staff members gathered together to decorate human Christmas trees (no humans were harmed during this presentation), learn

## **Golden Pillar...** *Continued from page 12*

about upcoming changes, win prizes, and, importantly, recognize our quarterly Golden Pillar Award winners. The Golden Pillar Award places special recognition on staff members who have made a memorable difference in the lives of their peers and the residents they serve. They make a difference by adhering to the Pillars of the Masonic Homes Way: Safety, Personal Connection, Experience, and Efficiency. Here are our winners!

### **Rose Bautista-Argamosa**



Rose works as a housekeeper and has created strong bonds with many of the residents who have the pleasure of working with her. She provides “perfect” services, as described by one of the residents. She is consistent and always takes the time to talk and connect with her residents. She ensures that the resident rooms are clean and safe, while keeping a smile on her face, a positive attitude, and care in her heart.

This is a powerful way to earn a Golden Pillar Award. Rose performs on a high level on a day-to-day basis. This type of excellence demands recognition, and I am so honored to work alongside someone of Rose’s ability and passion, and someone who so richly deserves this Golden Pillar Award.

### **Raquel del Real**

Raquel has helped run the operations for the Laundry Department. Raquel was nominated by one of her fellow colleagues who recognized her work ethic and focus on efficiency. Raquel takes the time to ensure that all the necessary supplies are available for her team. She is incredibly efficient in managing inventory and making sure that no one is lacking the proper item they need to do their job safely and effectively.

She is always willing to step in to help her team where needed. She offers support when asked and is known for proactively finding ways to make the job easier for her peers. Raquel is a great leader and amazing team members.

Being recognized by a fellow staff member is always invigorating. It means that someone who knows you dearly has taken the time to recognize and appreciate you. It’s their way of saying, “You are amazing!” And they are right! Congratulations to Raquel for winning the Golden Pillar Award!







### **Emily Mobley**

Emily was nominated not for one instance of compassion, but for a long-term commitment to making life better for the residents of the Masonic Homes. Emily's number one priority is to ensure that each resident is safe. She ensures this by focusing on what she can do to make life comfortable and enjoyable for every resident. The only way she can provide this amazing experience is by creating a powerful personal connection with the residents she supports. Emily makes moments special by being thoughtful and compassionate in her service.

In her nomination form, it was noted that Emily holds true to the values that we hold dear here at the Masonic Homes. And while she is not a Mason, Emily believes in

relief and truth. She upholds those values and creates a profound difference in the lives of all who live and work at the Home. This Golden Pillar Award is a small token in recognition of her dedication and passion!

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## **Creating Memories...**

Written by Christina Drislane, Director of Connected Living & Memory Care



Childhood is full of magical characters—Jack Frost, the Easter Bunny, the Man in the Moon, and many others.

Adults may smile to themselves as they remember their excitement when the tooth-fairy left a coin for them when they were six years old. All these memorable characters can be the starting point for sharing fond stories of childhood magic. Santa Claus, however, has the special gift of being able to reach across time to bring adults to that special place of wonder. Ben Harris graciously brought that wonder to the residents at the Wollenberg/Pavilion holiday party when he donned the costume and holiday spirit this year. Santa presented each resident with a Christmas stocking of goodies, shared his generous smile, and took many pictures. Ben, along with lodge officers, residents in independent and assisted living, and caring staff created a beautiful holiday event. Residents sang carols from songbooks, shared food and hot cider, stories of snow-days, and the magic of this “wonder-full” season.

# Birthdays, Weddings, Anniversaries, & In Memoriam



## Resident Birthdays

Pat De Young	1/1
Dorthy Hollomon	1/3
Doug Field	1/4
Edward Whitcomb	1/6
Larry Sadler	1/8
Goodie Wixson (100 yrs.) Suzie Hawes	1/16
Gene Goodman Bill Hems	1/20
Leonard Froomin Paula Ketels	1/22
Timothy McKinney	1/23
Pat Gates	1/25
Phillip Smith Linda Biancalana-Church	1/27



## Resident Anniversaries

Resident	Ann. Date	Years
Dick & Barbara Sullivan	1/1	33
Orrin & Jeanne Benedict	1/5	5
Bob & Ginger Huber	1/5	5
Norman & Jessy Rushing	1/9	53



*Mike & Sally Sander's Wedding Anniversary celebration on November 24, 2023!*

## In Memoriam



Shirlee Warren  
January 21, 1926—  
December 1, 2023



Margaret  
Cunningham  
August 10, 1925—  
December 5, 2023

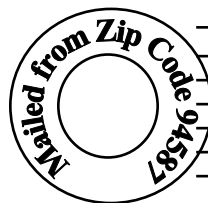




# The Messenger

Masonic Homes of California

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Wishing you a  
Happy New Year  
and blessed year  
ahead. May  
God's light  
guide your way  
in 2024.

**Address Service Requested**

**The Messenger** is published monthly as a vehicle of communication and entertainment for the residents and staff of the Masonic Homes at Union City with a focus on sharing information about residents, Home activities, and items of interest to the Masonic Family.

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*Mission: "Together we create meaningful life experiences that make a profound difference."*

***The Pillars: Safety, Personal Connection, Experience & Efficiency***

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