

# Celebration of 50 years in Freemasonry for Barry Elman (Lodge of Israel 1502)

Firstly, Worshipful Master, may I thank you and the brethren of Lodge of Israel for inviting me to this special meeting this evening to share with you the Jubilee celebration of one of your members. It's one of the benefits of holding a senior position in the Province, to celebrate with a Brother as he reaches a milestone in his Masonic career. One of the definitions of a celebration is an enjoyable event that has been specially organised by someone because something pleasant has happened or because it is someone's birthday or anniversary. Tonight, it is to pay tribute to Barry Elman, Past Junior Grand Deacon of the United Grand Lodge of England, Past Senior Grand Warden of the Province of West Lancashire. I found it interesting to visit Barry recently at his home to have a chat and find out about what he's done in his life, and then I used that information to look into what was going on in his younger days, and it's sometimes easy to forget how much things have changed in the last 50 or 60 years, but also I'm usually surprised to see how often there is a parallel between those events and the things going on in the world today and so to begin tonight's tribute I would be grateful if our Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies would place our celebrant before me.

Barry, I begin your story tonight in the year of your birth, just before the start of the Second World War and take it through to the year of your initiation.

You were born Liverpool, just around the corner from here. Looking back to the 1930's, this was the first time a car had travelled at more than 300 mph. It was driven by Malcolm Campbell who went on to hold many speed records on land and water, eventually costing him his life. In the same year the Hoover Dam was completed and dedicated by President Roosevelt, the Sydney Harbour Bridge opened after almost ten years in construction and Al Capone was convicted for tax evasion.

Amelia Earhart made the first flight across the Atlantic by a woman and only the second ever solo flight. It took her 15 hours and 18 minutes, compare that to today's time of just under six hours, and at 2,026 miles it was the longest nonstop flight by a woman. She flew from Harbour Grace in Newfoundland to a farmer's field near Londonderry in Northern Ireland, only to be asked by the farm worker who was first to see her "have you come far?"

The British Broadcasting Company, the BBC, began its first experimental public television programming. The early programmes showed performances by dancers and musicians, athletic demonstrations and art showcases. As the technology advanced the official "BBC Television Service" went live just two months after you were born.

When you were only five years old Britain and particularly Liverpool, were ravaged by the Blitz, in one of the most intensive and prolonged periods of bombing during the war, causing heavy loss of life and a huge amount of damage, sometimes with whole streets destroyed. At that time your mother and sister relocated to stay with other members of the family who lived in Congleton. Your father remained in Liverpool and was a member of the Auxiliary Fire Service, later to be renamed as the National Fire Service. He probably had a riskier job than many of the forces as his job was to drive the fuel tanker that followed the fire engine to the scene of the fires, sometimes when bombs were continuing to fall. The fuel was used to top up the generators which pumped the water for the firefighters.

We've heard a lot recently about equality in the workplace for women, particularly that they should be paid the same amount as a man for doing the same job, but there were other differences in terms of employment between men and women. One was that until the Education Act of 1944 women teachers were not allowed to marry and if they did so they had to leave the profession.

Also, in 1944 the Pay-as-you-earn tax system came into being. Previously the government collected the tax that was due from the previous tax year. The new system meant that the government received the tax on money almost as it was earned.

Moving forward to the 1950's and 1960's, this signaled a big change in various aspects of life in this country and worldwide. In 1955 the first polio vaccine was developed by Jonas Salk and four years later the microchip was invented. In the early sixties the Beatles released their first single, Spiderman made his first appearance in the fantasy comics and the BBC broadcast the first episode of Dr Who with William Hartnell in the title role and just before the end of the decade, in the year that you were initiated into Freemasonry, the first manned Apollo space mission was launched.

And that brings me back to the reason why we are here tonight, to celebrate with Barry.

When we met at your house you were able to tell me about your mother and father. Your father was born in England, but his mother was Russian and the family had come to Liverpool from the Ukraine to escape the religious persecution that was ongoing in Eastern Europe when it was under the control of the Russians in the late 1890's. Your father became an upholsterer in Liverpool, the family consisting of your parents, an older sister, who now lives in Manchester and yourself. As a young boy you went to junior school and then on to Liverpool Institute for Boys, which now forms part of LIPA, the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts.

Once you left school you attended the Liverpool School of Pharmacy in Hope Street, the second oldest school of pharmacy in Great Britain. There you passed your final pharmacy exams which entitled you to pay your fees and become a Member of the Pharmaceutical Society and start work. Apart from a few locum jobs you did you moved to Brighton where you worked for David Ross who not only had a retail shops but ran a wholesale business. It was there that thanks to his teaching you learnt how to run the business side of the pharmacy. After Brighton you returned to Liverpool and having saved enough you bought your first shop in Rice Lane, followed by another in Halewood. One of your colleagues and friend from your younger days had also bought a shop in Crosby and decided to form a partnership and bought Greensill's in the Isle of Man, taking turns each year to go over to run it. The partnership bought two other shops in Liverpool and you had also developed the principle of bulk buying not only the sundries that you sold but also the pharmaceuticals for dispensing. This helped pave the way for setting up a wholesale arm of the business and distributing up to 300 other pharmacies around the city. You found that you enjoyed the wholesale part of the business and your partner, David Solomon, liked the retail arm and so the business was split equally and you further developed the wholesale side of things. You did buy some more shops but then sold those as you expanded the wholesaling part even further. You had built up a lot of contacts and by travelling around Europe, America and Africa made many more. As a consequence, you obtained the necessary export licenses from the government and the pharmaceutical manufacturers and became an 'international drug dealer', all completely legal and above board.

The business continues to this day although you only play a small part in keeping an eye on things in a consultancy basis.

By this time, you had already met Jane, the girl who was to become Mrs Elman. As part of the retail and wholesale business you often had visits from the representatives of the pharmaceutical companies and one day a rather lovely young lady, working for Smith and Nephew came calling. Three years later you were married in Liverpool and set up home, first in Childwall and then in Woolton. You had two children, both boys, one who works in the petrochemical industry and the other is in Information Technology. One lives abroad with his wife and children, the other, also married with children lives nearer home. Sadly, your wife died very suddenly some time ago and left a big gap in your life but you have been helped greatly by your many friends in Freemasonry and I know you will be forever grateful to them for their help and support.

Outside your career you are a keen yachtsman and have a 34-foot Bermudan sloop moored in Liverpool Marina. You have sailed this to the Isle of Man and to North Wales and if anyone is interested in joining Barry, I can tell you that he's actively recruiting for new crew members. Sadly, the pay is only in the amount of fun and enjoyment you get from it, but I'm told that that makes it more than worthwhile.

During the last 20 or so years you have taken to writing and performing plays. This began with the Mark Festival at the turn of the century when you arranged a murder mystery weekend away and decided with Ed Williams to write your own murder story. It was so successful that it was repeated the following year and became an annual event, going to different hotels each year and changing the type of plays you put on, from murders to light-hearted plays, sometimes with a music and singing included. I'm told they were very popular and well received and plenty of money raised for charity.

You do look the part as a thespian with a very distinguished head of hair but just to go back to your early pharmacy days that wasn't always the case. When you were in Brighton the owner had knocked through the upper floors above three adjoining shops to make large storage area but he was a bit stingy with the lighting and there was only one bulb which meant lots of dark shadowy areas. You came down from the storeroom one day wiping something off your head only to find you were covered with spiders webs and tiny red spiders which were biting all over your head. This was quite sore and itchy and a few days later your hair started to fall out until it had almost all gone. The local doctor suggested application with Gentian Violet, a bright purple liquid that stained everything. You ended up walking around Brighton looking like a punk with a purple head and at that time you were going out with a girl who had, as was in fashion at the time, blue dyed hair. Fortunately, the hair gradually grew back, perhaps better than it was before. You have also been a member of Walton Rotary Club and you are a member of the tour guide team at Princess Road Synagogue.

But we're here to celebrate your 50 years in Freemasonry and so should turn back to 1969 when you were initiated into Lodge of Israel No.1502. The Lodge met at Hope Street but had to relocate temporarily into the annex of Greenbank Drive synagogue after the fire in Hope Street.

Your interest in Freemasonry had come from your observations during your time working in Sussex. The two pharmacists you worked with often had gentlemen calling on them and obviously not in connection with the pharmacy. You asked about them and learnt that they were Freemasons in the same lodge as the pharmacists. From your conversations thereafter you felt that this was something you'd like to be involved in and so when you returned to Liverpool you approached your brother in law and he proposed you into this lodge and your cousin seconded you for membership. You achieved the masters chair in March 1980 in Masada Lodge and again two years ago in Lodge of Israel. You were a Founder of Masada Lodge and a member of Quingenti, having received your first appointment in Provincial Grand Lodge as a Steward in 1986. You were promoted to Past Provincial Senior Grand Deacon four years later and in 1993 you were appointed to a second acting rank as Provincial Senior Grand Warden by the Provincial Grand Master at the time, Kenneth Edward Moxley. You received appointment in Grand Rank as Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies in April 1997 and promotion to Past Junior Grand Deacon 12 years later.

You are a member of the Royal Arch through Menorah Chapter and Provincial Grand Steward's Chapter of West Lancashire in which you were first principal in 2008. You hold Provincial Rank as Past Provincial Grand Scribe Nehemiah. You are also a member of the Mark Degree, Royal Ark Mariners and Order of Secret Monitor.

You also gave of your time to serve on the Committee of Liverpool Masonic Hall Ltd and were its Chairman and Director for 12 years.

I would now be grateful if David Kemp, Group Vice Chairman for the Royal Arch would assist me by reading the Jubilee certificate.

Barry, you have contributed to Freemasonry not only by giving a lot of your time to help with fund raising for charity but also by contributing to the work here at Hope Street and in the Province in acting ranks in the Craft and Royal Arch, and you have certainly got a great deal of pleasure and enjoyment from all that you have done and so it is a great honour and a privilege to say to you, Barry, thank you for all that you have done and congratulations on achieving 50 years as a Freemason and we all look forward to seeing you enjoy many more years as a member of this great order.