

Good evening brethren.

I have had the enjoyment of attending many celebrations over the last 16 years as a member of a Group Executive, but it is certainly one of the special privileges of an Assistant Provincial Grand Master to be invited to take part in the celebration of a brother's special anniversary.

Brethren it is said that the greatest happiness a man can have is to you know that he is loved, and the very fact that there are so many brethren here this evening who have made the journey to take part in this evening's celebration only serves to reinforce that statement and shows the high regard that our celebrant is held in.

But to do that I must first tell you (as if you didn't already know!) who that person is. Brother Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies can you please place Kenneth Myers PPGSuptWks, on the floor of the lodge before me and ensure that he is comfortable.

In 1938 people around the world were watching the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party in Germany and thoughts turned to the potential for a second world war, so soon after the Great War of 1914 to 1918 the so called 'war to end all wars.' It was also a year in which some very famous people were born, in the persons of Kenny Rogers the country singer, Bill Withers the soul singer, Jack Jones the jazz singer, Connie Francis the country singer, Kofi Annan the politician and Secretary General of the United Nations, Evil Knievel the daredevil, Terry Wogan TV and radio host and of course maybe the most famous of them all Kenneth Myers (prefers to be known Ken) on the 14th April 1938, to parents George and Ethel

Ken's father George was a process worker and his mother Ethel an office support worker at Berry's Tools. Some of you will remember that it was the family business of Sid Berry a former Chairman at Widnes Masonic Hall. Ken was of course a twin and his brother Dennis who is also a long-standing member of Victoria Lodge No.4629 and the who was for many years the Lodge Organist. Dennis of course will celebrate his forty years as a freemason on the 20th May 2022.

Ken attended Chestnut Lodge School between the age of five years and seven years, before attending Simms Cross Junior School in Widnes town centre between the age of seven years and 11 years. Once Ken turned 11 years of age, he attended Fairfield High School in Peelhouse Lane, Widnes until he was 15, when he left to take up employment at West Bank Power Station for a year.

At the age of 16 Ken decided to accept an apprenticeship in Plumbing with Bill Isherwood Ltd., who at the time was based in Beaconsfield Road in Widnes. As part of his training Ken attended night school at Widnes Technical College, Kingsway where he mixed working and studying until the age of 21 years of age when he became a fully qualified Plumber.

At the age of 16-19 like many men of that age he went to Local Dance Halls like the Scala in Runcorn, The Mersey View in Frodsham and the Everite and Queens Hall in Widnes.

It was not long before Ken met a Girl called Margaret. Their first meeting was "Brief Encounter" during an "Excuse Me" Quickstep which was very popular at the time. It did have its advantages and disadvantages, if you fancied a particular girl, you could tap the male she was dancing with, on the shoulder and take over the dance. Popular but not without its problems.....Ken was happily dancing away with Margaret only to be tapped by another man himself.....Unperturbed Ken continued to Dance round the Halls and met Margaret again and struck up a firm relationship.

In 1959 at the age of 21 years Ken joined the 1st Battalion of the Kings Own Royal Border Regiment and was initially posted to Fulwood Barracks, Preston for twelve weeks Basic Training. He was subsequently posted to Barnard Castle Durham to complete his training. This was part of his two years National Service from 19 November 1959 to 19 November 1961.

Just before Ken went abroad with the Army on 2July 1960 he and Margaret married at Halton Church, Runcorn. They initially lived with Margaret's mother as Margaret's father had passed away in 1958.

His first posting took him to the jungles of Cameroon where he spent nine months hacking his way through the bush as part of a then Peace Keeping Force. This would have been a bit of a shock no doubt to Ken a lad from Widnes. Cameroon at that time was split in two parts, one being governed by the French and the other the UK.

The country was strategically placed between West and Central Africa so was plagued by terrorists on the French side and National Liberation Insurgency on the UK side.

On 1 January 1960 Cameroon broke away and became an independence state meaning Ken and other support Forces could return home to Runcorn. He returned on the advanced party on 9 May 1961. The Regiment being replaced by the Grenadier Guards. Ken was not over impressed with the country describing it as nothing but jungle and mosquitos but fortunately had one month's leave on his return.

On returning home he was posted back to Barnard Castle, Durham. In November 1961 he finished his army career and returned to Widnes and resumed his plumbing job with Bill Isherwood Ltd. Ken would later leave Isherwood's and take up employment with another local firm, J T Stanistreet Plumbers where he stayed for 2 years.

Ken having returned to civilian life after the army, it was only a short time before he and Margaret purchased their first home at Carlton Avenue, Runcorn in 1963. Moving in 1975 to Solway Grove, Runcorn and then in 1985 to present home in Weaverside Village, Runcorn.

Ken later set up on his own as an Independent Master Plumber for seven years before moving to work for Halton Borough Council as a Technical Assistant in the Environmental Health Department for two years. Ken then went to work as an Assistant Building Officer in the Clerk of Works Department attached to the Architects Department. It was whilst there that Ken managed the Mechanical Plant and HBC Buildings; he was instrumental in the improvement of HBC's houses fitting them out with central heating as many only had old solid fuel heating systems. In 2003 Ken left and continued working for another 12 months as a consultant for the local contractors on contract to HBC. He officially retired at age of 65 years.

Ken and Margaret were blessed during their marriage with two beautiful children Paul born in 1961 and Suzanne born in 1963.

Paul married Caroline his wife on 10 August 1991, and they provided Ken and Margaret with two grandchildren William born on 2 May 1995 and Suzanne born on 28 June 1999.

Suzanne married Alan her husband on 27 August 1983, and they provided Ken and Margaret with two grandchildren Christopher born on 18 September 1985 and Mark born 30 June 1988. In 2001 they moved to Atlanta in the Unites States of America to set up home. Over the years Atlanta was to become Ken and Margaret's favourite holiday destination visiting at least once if not twice a year.

Ken's wife Margaret took ill in 2016 and suffered a series of strokes which gradually got worse and sadly she passed away in 2017 after 57 years of marriage.

Ken has two lovely great-grandchildren that are his pride and joy, Theo who is two years old and Scarlett who is 19 months old.

In terms of hobbies, Ken has enjoyed crown green bowls, both indoor and outdoor playing at Runcorn Subscription Bowls Club and Kingsway Leisure Centre. He is also a keen Liverpool supporter and likes to go to matches with Christopher his grandson when over from Atlanta. When visiting Atlanta to see the family he often goes and watches Atlanta United play 'soccer' with his grandson, family and friends. He also supports Widnes Vikings RLFC.

Now let us turn to Ken's Masonic career. He was initiated into Victoria Lodge No.4629 at Widnes on 17 February 1972, his proposer was Eddy Carter and his seconder Maurice Antwiss. Can I ask our brother secretary to read a summary of the minutes of that meeting for us?

Ken was passed to the degree of a fellow craft on 21 September 1972 and raised to the sublime degree of a master Mason on 15 March 1973. Ken worked his way up the progressive offices of the lodge becoming its WM on 18 October 1981. After his year in office, Ken took on the role of assistant director of ceremonies for two years in 1982 and 1983, before becoming the lodge director of ceremonies in 1985, a position he held for 10 years.

On 1 October 1974, Ken was exalted into Bridgewater Chapter No.758 in the Province of Cheshire, working his way through the progressive offices before coming the first principal of the chapter on 1 December 1987. Once his year in office was complete Ken took office as the chapter director of ceremonies for two periods running first time for seven years from 2001 to 2008, and second time for two years from 2014 to 2016.

Ken was recognised by the Province of West Lancashire on 18 October 1990 when he was appointed to the rank of Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon and then again on 23 October 2003 when he was promoted to his current rank of Past Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works.

In the Province of Cheshire, Ken was recognised on 13 March 1993 in the Royal Arch with appointment to the rank of Past Provincial Assistant Grand Sojourner, and then again on 7 May 2002 when he was promoted to the very high rank of Past Provincial Grand Scribe Nehemiah.

Ken has always been a well-respected member and an excellent supporter of Victoria Lodge for 50 years and he can always be approached to offer guidance and advice to any of the brethren on any subject connected to Freemasonry and its various ceremonies. Ken has also served on the Board of Widnes Masonic Hall Ltd for seven years as a director bringing his skills to the benefit of all meeting at the hall.

I'm sure I speak on behalf of everybody present that we are absolutely delighted to see you here this evening to celebrate your 50th anniversary as a Freemason and even more so that you have allowed us to celebrate your special evening with you.

Ken such is the importance of your own golden jubilee that our Provincial Grand Master James Anthony Harrison has caused a certificate to be struck to mark this wonderful achievement which I shall now ask the group chairman Neil Pedder to read it.