

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 seat W Bro John Copple PPJGW, on the chair on floor of the lodge before me and ensure that he is comfortable.

So let us think back to 1941 and what was happening in the world, well the third year of World War II has started, and the year would see some momentous events:

The Andrews Sisters recorded what became a big hit for them, the Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress to support the lend-lease plan to help supply the Allies. In an address to Congress President Franklin Roosevelt expressed the general world aims of the United States as these "Four Freedoms": of speech and expression; of worship; from want; and from fear.

Adolf Hitler ordered forces to be prepared to enter North Africa to assist the Italian effort, marking the establishment of the Afrika Korps.

US vice admiral Bellinger warned of an assault on Pearl Harbour.

US President Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated for his 3rd term. It was the first time any US president had been elected for more than two terms.

The US War Dept. formed an all-black flying unit that achieved fame as the Tuskegee Airmen. On June 20 the Tuskegee program officially began with the formation of the 99th Fighter Squadron at the Tuskegee Institute. Their 1st mission was in June 1943. African Americans were barred from the Air Corps until this year, and then were shunted to all-black squadrons.

The SS Politician wrecked off the coast of the Isle of Eriskay in the Hebrides. It carried some 20,000 cases of whisky, which the natives hid from customs agents. The story was told in the 1947 book "Whisky Galore" by Compton Mackenzie. The book was made into a film in 1949.

The SS Gairsoppa was torpedoed by a German U-boat. The British ship was carrying some 219 tons of silver when it sank in the North Atlantic some 300 miles (490 km) off the Irish coast. Of the 85 people on board, only one survived. In 2011 Florida-based Odyssey Marine Exploration confirmed the identity and location of the ship. In 2012 Odyssey Marine Exploration said it had succeeded in removing about 43% of the insured silver so that means that 57% is still missing.

The Italian fleet was routed by the British at the Battle of Matapan off the coast of Greece. More than 2,000 Italian sailors died, and five Italian ships were destroyed. Mavis Batey (1921-2013) of British intelligence had decoded a message that signalled the attack three days earlier.

There was a German air raid on Liverpool.

Glenn Miller and His Orchestra recorded "Chattanooga Choo Choo" for RCA Victor. It became the first gold record in history.

The German submarine U-110 was captured at sea by the Royal Navy, revealing considerable Enigma material. Enigma was the German machine used to encrypt messages during World War II and having this material helped shorten the war.

Rudolf Hess, a deputy of Adolf Hitler, parachuted into Scotland to see the Duke of Hamilton on what he claimed was a peace mission. Hess ended up serving a life sentence at Spandau prison until 1987, when he apparently committed suicide.

Joe DiMaggio started his 56-game hitting streak.

The German battleship Bismarck sank the British Dreadnought HMS Hood in the North Atlantic. 1416 died with only three survivors.

The German battleship Bismarck was sunk off France by British naval and air forces with a loss of more than 2,100 lives. British ships rescued 4 officers and 106 of the crew.

German troops invaded Russia and thereby violated the 1939 Russo-German non-aggression pact. Under the codename Barbarossa, Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the largest invasion of another country in history.

The 900-day Siege of Leningrad by German forces began during World War II. The Siege of Leningrad, 400 miles northwest of Moscow, took place with Germany spread along a 2,000-mile front. It led to the death of at least one million Russians from starvation and disease. Leningrad has since been renamed to St. Petersburg.

In Ukraine some 33,711 Jews of Kiev were killed over 2 days before Yom Kippur in the ravine at Babi Yar by the Nazis. Heinrich Himmler had sent four strike squads to exterminate Soviet Jewish civilians and other "undesirables." Over the next 2 years some 100-200 thousand more people, mostly Jews, were killed at the site.

The first British SAS operation, planned to see troops parachute deep behind enemy lines and destroy German and Italian aircraft at two airfields in Libya, took place. Strong winds and driving rain caused chaotic conditions, with several soldiers becoming injured as they attempted to parachute and one plane shot down, killing 15 troops and the crew.

Japan launched an aerial attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbour, the home base of the U.S. Pacific fleet, and forced US entry into the war. Long aware that a Japanese surprise attack on the naval base at Pearl Harbour could precede war, U.S. authorities were still woefully unprepared when 363 Japanese fighters, dive-bombers and torpedo planes sunk or damaged eight battleships and three light cruisers, destroyed 188 planes and killed 2,400 men in just over two hours. The Battleship Arizona lost 1,177 men. An estimated 900 were entombed in the sunken ship. 429 people aboard the battleship Oklahoma were killed as the ship capsized. The US lost 19 ships, 140 aircraft and 2,300 lives. In all 2,403 people were killed and 1,178 were wounded; 187 planes were destroyed and 159 damaged. The Japanese lost 29 planes and 5 midget submarines. The next day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt denounced December 7, 1941, as a "date which will live in infamy" as he asked Congress to declare war on Japan.

Some very famous people were born in 1941 including, Bob Dylan the musician, Richie Valens the singer, Ann Margaret the actress, Alex Ferguson the football manager, Neil Diamond the singer, Otis Redding the singer / songwriter, Linda McCartney the author / photographer, Faye Dunaway the actress Jesse Jackson the American activist / politician, Dame Vivienne Westwood the fashion designer, Placido Domingo the opera singer and probably the most famous of them all John Copple.

John was born on late December 1941 at 1 Wilton Grove, Old Swan, Liverpool 13, an end terrace, two up two down house, to his parents Tom and Nellie. John's father Tom was a coalman and wagon driver whilst his mum Nellie was a housewife. John was the couple's second child, as they also had a daughter and older sister to John called Doris who was nine years older at the time of his birth.

John's birth came during World War II and 5 months before, Liverpool would be targeted by the German Air Force in the May blitz offensive. John commented how lucky he was to have not recalled the blitz and being in his own little shelter. Talking of shelters, John recalls that there were two concrete Air Raid shelters in his road, and he can remember these, not during their wartime use, but later when he and his friends used to play in them after the war.

Wilton Grove was off Rathbone Road that runs from Old Swan to Wavertree, and Binns Road was the next road after Wilton Grove. Binns Road would play a large part in John's formative years, in so far as his sister Doris worked in the Meccano Factory which for many years was located there. Doris would come home for her dinner break as they lived so close to her work and would always have bits of Meccano, Dinky toys, or Hornby trains for John in exchange for him allowing her to read his comics.

John started his education at St Mary's Church of England located in Rathbone Road, about 500 yards from his home, first the infants and then the juniors. John tells me that he enjoyed school even though he was never top of the class with his lessons.

John won a scholarship to go to the local Grammar School though, so in his words he must not have been that thick. John attended Holt High School in Childwall, until at the age of sixteen with just one GCE in History, he left to enter the world of work and he told me that it was not a lot to show for five years of study but overall, he enjoyed senior school and made new friends.

He was never a sports orientated person during his early years growing up but reckons that he was built for comfort as opposed to speed. He enjoyed field sports and says that he wasn't bad at throwing the javelin and playing Rugby and after a fashion, he also enjoyed tennis in the summer.

He attended his local Church during his youth and attended the 35<sup>th</sup> Wavertree Boy Scouts, eventually rising through the ranks to be Troop Leader recalling carrying the flag proudly at the monthly Church Parades.

In his early 20's he tried Judo at the YMCA, in Mount Pleasant but this was cut short due to a shoulder injury.

After leaving School John started work with the Booth Steamship Company in the Cunard Buildings as an export clerk in the Forwarding Department in 1962. He recalls that his first wage was the princely sum of three pounds and ten shillings a week, plus the additional luxury of luncheon vouchers.

John remained with the Booth Steamship Company until 1992, he said that he never envisaged on his first day that he would be there some thirty years later. John informed me that he really enjoyed the work, maybe too much in his own words, as it took over a lot of his life and time. However, having started as an Export Clerk he rose through the stages of Office Manager, local Director, Group Director and finally Managing Director of the company.

In 1962 John changed his job to join a small Shipping and Forwarding Agency, H.V. Cowen & Co. Ltd. They also had a London office and head office in Hull and he finally ended his business career with Yeoward Shipping Services retiring in 2007 at the age of 66.

John likes to think that he put a little back into the local shipping fraternity; he served on the local committee of the Institute of Freight Forwarders and spent a year as vice-chairman, and on the local committee of the Institute of Export for several years ending up as its chairman. John was also a member of a club of likeminded shipping people that raised money for local charity. The group was called the Curley Wee club and was named after a well-known cartoon strip in the Liverpool Echo. John told me that they used to hold their meetings in the Pig & Whistle Pub over a glass of the local brew.

Turning to John's family life he met a young lady called Lilian (Lil) and after a short courtship they were married at All Saints Church, Stoneycroft, Liverpool on 11th September 1971 when he was 29. Their first home was a three-bedroom terrace house off Edge Lane, Liverpool opposite the old bus sheds. John and Lil were blessed with a son Steven who was born four years later in April 1975.

John and Lil moved a couple of years later from Liverpool 'over the water' to Upton, in the Wirral where he has been ever since. Whilst here they were also blessed with a daughter Jayne who was born in April 1978.

Jayne and her partner Gary provided John and Lil with two grandchildren, Caitlin born in January 1999 and Christopher born in April 2008. They live locally in the Beechwood Estate, Birkenhead about three miles from John, and he says that he is so lucky to see them all regularly. Steve still lives with John in Upton, but unfortunately Lil died in May 2013.

Over the years John has had several hobbies which have included playing darts for a couple of Pub teams. Being from a football mad city, John tells me that he was brought up, like his dad and uncles, supporting the greatest team in the world 'Everton'. John went to watch Everton play a few times with his dad and uncles when he was growing up but did not start going regularly until about 1962. John says that he and his mates started travelling to away games as well as the home ones. He says that he was fortunate enough to see the World Cup games played at Goodison Park in 1966 and also got to Wembley to see Everton win the FA cup in the same year.

It is a few years now since John gave up his beloved Season Ticket, but he still listens to the games on the local radio and watches them on television. As Alan Ball once said, 'when Everton touched you it was for life'.

John still maintains his other hobbies which are collecting Military Cloth Badges and listening to and collecting CD's and Vinyl of Country Music. In speaking with John about his hobby in relation to military insignia it started when he was working in the cotton exchange and one of his colleagues used to disappear at lunchtime. John being the inquisitive type followed him to Billy's Military Shop on Manchester Street and discovered that he was a collector of military insignia and badges. So, John started collecting metal cap badges, shoulder titles and dog tags for British Army Regiments, but once he discovered cloth badges from the Canadian military units his collecting took a new direction and over the last thirty years, he has collected over 9,000 cloth military badges from all over the world.

John is a member of a couple of Badge Collectors Societies both here in the United Kingdom, who meet four times a year near Shrewsbury, but also across the world. John corresponds with friends and fellow collectors

both in this country and as far as France, Israel, and the United States of America. John says this hobby keeps his mind active.

John let us know turn to your Masonic career, you told me that you always wanted to know more about Freemasonry, probably because there were so many myths about it and there was nowhere to find any answers. Unfortunately, none of John's relatives, as far as he knows, were Freemasons. So, when a couple of John's shipping friends mentioned about Freemasonry, he asked a lot of questions and showed some interest.

John was initiated into the Lodge of Tranquillity No 3877 at the Carlton Masonic Club, Eberle Street, Liverpool on Thursday 2 November 1972. His proposer was John Jones and his seconder Bill Martin.

Bill is still a member of the Lodge and was a steward on the night of John's initiation. There are also other active members of the Lodge present tonight when John was initiated, and they are Alan Carter who was junior warden and Alan Sale who was also a Steward.

John was passed to the degree of a fellow craft in 1973 and raised to the sublime degree of a master Mason in 1974 and he rose through the progressive offices of the lodge and was installed as WM on Tuesday 12 October 1982. The ceremony took place at Woolton Hall as the Lodge had just moved to the new venue from Hope Street. John also served the Lodge as its WM for a second time being installed on Tuesday 13 October 1992.

John has served the Lodge of Tranquillity as its Group Representative from October 1987 to October 1999, its Assistant Secretary from October 1994 to October 1996. John also served as the Lodge Secretary from October 1996 to October 2022 (last month) when he retired after 26 years in the office. John tells me that the introduction of Hermes played a large part in his decision years along with the need for the younger members of the Lodge to become more involved in the day to day running of the Lodge.

John's services to his Lodge were recognised by the Province of West Lancashire when he received his first appointment to Provincial Rank as a Past Provincial Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies on the 18 October 1991. John was subsequently recognised by the province with a promotion to the very high rank of Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden on the 5th October 1999.

John was exalted into the Royal Arch in Red Triangle Chapter No.3844 on Friday 15 April 1983. John progressed through the junior offices up to and including Second Assistant Sojourner. However, John found that due to work commitments he could not attend meetings for a few years as he had a part time job as the Main Agent for Littlewoods Pools, so my Thursday and Friday evenings were taken up with this role. Once John finished with the Littlewoods Pools, he started to attend the Chapter regularly again but decided that with his commitments to the Lodge of Tranquillity he did not feel that he could take on any extra ritual workload in the Chapter. John is still a member of the Chapter and attend regularly.

In 1984 John joined Sincerity Mark Lodge No.327 meeting at the Masonic Hall, Wallasey, but resigned after a couple of years.

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.

John such is the importance of your own golden jubilee that our Deputy Provincial Grand Master in Charge Very Worshipful Brother Philip Harry Gunning has caused a certificate to be struck to mark this wonderful achievement which I shall now ask the Group Chairman John Murphy to read.....