

Mansfield Township Masons offer insight into their inner circle

Posted by

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CATHY MILLER//

SPECIAL TO THE WARREN REPORTER Mansfield Masonic Lodge recently held a ceremony installing new officers for 2009. Pictured above, Worshipful Master Michael Iannitelli, right, kneels at the altar and places his hands on the Bible to take the oath of office, which is administered by Master of Ceremony James Taylor.

MANSFIELD -- Wearing an honorary top hat and formal tails, Worshipful Master Michael Iannitelli stepped onto the raised wooden dais to address members and visitors at the onset of the annual Installation of Officers ceremony. Mansfield Masonic Lodge #36 officers were escorted into the inner meeting chamber one at a time -- each dressed in dark tuxes and some draped with jeweled neckwear and symbolic aprons.

The Mansfield Masons recently opened their doors to family, friends and fellow Masons from around the state for a rare glimpse at the annual ceremony installing officers who will serve as their leaders in 2009. Prominent on the wall of the Lodge's inner meeting room is a plaque bearing the Square and Compass emblem, known world-wide as the organization's symbol for "character, charity and brotherly love" which is the foundation of Freemasonry.

"It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this annual installation of officers," Iannitelli said.

"This will allow family and friends some insight into the inner workings of the fraternity."

The lodge's inner meeting room is furnished with intricately carved wooden chairs with red velvet backs and cushions. Lodge officers reside in certain chairs, which are placed strategically around the room at cardinal direction points, depending on their position. Following ancient Masonic ritual, the Mansfield Masonic Lodge, like other lodges, was constructed using the four cardinal direction points of north, south, east and west, which have powerful symbolic implications to the Masons. The walls are also lined in wood and the center of the room is dominated by a heavily carved wooden square alter table bearing a large open bible surrounded by tall candles resting on wooded pillars.

The solemn installation ceremony itself is also steeped in ancient tradition using time honored vows, the same of which were uttered by thousands and thousands of "brothers" before them over the ages during similar ceremonies held throughout the state, country and world.

District Deputy Glenn Wilson, Sr. served as Grand Marshall for the Mansfield Installation. Mansfield Masonic Secretary James Taylor served as Installing Master, reciting the 90-minute ceremony entirely from memory, clearly delivering each melodious word Shakespearian style.

Wilson escorted each officer into the room, where they were administered the oath of their particular position and received either jeweled neckwear or other symbols such as a baton, sword or rod.

Mansfield Masonic Lodge officers installed for 2009 are: Iannitelli, Clifford Silverthorn III, Dale Bamford, Robert Feilbach, Taylor, William Guiles, Dwayne Dolly, Thomas Hallowell, Bryan Cyphers, William Ackerman, George Murphy, Steve Seidler, Russell Finken and Carl Bartron.

"My brethren, as this lodge has been formed and perfected in so much unanimity and concord, so may it long continue," Taylor said. "May kindness and brotherly affection distinguish your conduct as men and as Masons."

Iannitelli was sworn in for his sixth term as Worshipful Master, the highest office held in the lodge.

Wilson presented Iannitelli with "symbols" of his office, which are emblematical of true Masonic life -- the Holy Bible; the Square; the Compass; the Rule; the Line; the Book of Constitutions; the Warrant; and the By-Laws. Each holds specific meaning in governing the position of Worshipful Master.

Iannitelli was then entrusted with the Gavel, which is a potent emblem of Masonic authority.

"Brethren behold your, Master," Taylor then announced. "Master, behold your brethren."

After which, other officers and members at the ceremony stood to honor the 2009 Master with a succession of three claps and a pause, repeated three times. The large Master's chair sits to the east.

"I knew someday I would be here and one day I would be wearing the hat in the lodge. I've enjoyed every minute. I encourage everyone who has not sat in the east to try it," Iannitelli said to his newest officers, Lodge members and visitors. "I'm sure with everybody's help and accomplishments we're going to have a great year."

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