

The Grand Master's Fair

By MARK STOUGHT

AFTER a one-year hiatus at the Shrine Auditorium in Wilmington as the Grand Master's Picnic due to construction at the Masonic Home in Charlton, the 30th Annual Grand Master's Fair returned to Charlton on June 10, 2007 – bigger and better than it was before. Perhaps the most notable thing about the Fair was how much more spread-out everything was, and how many more attractions and booths there were: with the completion of the new construction, the whole complex seems totally different.

There were enough attractions to keep anyone busy all day. If you showed up really early (or at least around 9 AM), the 15th District was serving pancakes and sausages. Then, you could wander around a little bit, and see the car exhibit nearby before getting into the booths and attractions proper, after stopping by to donate some blood (hopefully yours) at the Blood Drive, and maybe take advantage of the MYCHIP program booth for your children or grandchildren.

Not only were there booths run by the various districts, where you could buy food ranging from steak tips (claimed by the Fourth District to be the best in the state) and lobster rolls to chicken, fries, burgers, and sno-cones, but there were lots of rides for the kids, along with the requisite pretzels and fried dough, and of course, somebody sent in the Shrine Clowns! I'm not going to name names, because I'm sure I'll leave somebody out, but the more I've seen the Shrine Clowns as a group, the more I'm convinced they're one of the harder working groups in the Shrine, and they set a good example for the rest of us.

Some of the other attractions were a glider giveaway by the Eighth District, a raffle for a plasma TV (donated free of charge), and some opportunities to buy Masonic items and even regular crafts at booths set up by the community. Gluttony might be considered a deadly sin, but since all the profits are donated directly to the Home, there's certainly no harm in overindulgence for a good cause.

There was also a non-denominational service in the chapel (where the stained-glass windows will be installed), presentation of the colors, and a parade through the grounds by the Grand Master, Grand Lodge officers, and other dignitaries. The Masonic Leadership Institute also had a table set up to do interviews. Your intrepid reporter attempted to get into the program a second time, but is apparently too well-known to have been able to sneak by.

Officially speaking, the fair is really there for the residents of the Home, and it is part of our Masonic obligations to not forget our Brothers and their family members who are now at the Home after

their years of service to the Fraternity. That being said, the Fair is always a great opportunity to meet Brothers from across the state whom you may not have seen in a while, or meet some new Brothers you might never have met before. Given the wide range of attractions, the Grand Master's Fair also a great family outing; there are things to do for adults, for kids, and even for adults who are just big kids. Positive family involvement in events outside of Lodge meetings is very important for Masonry as a whole – it is these events that show the public charitable side of Masonry, and that bodes well for all the bodies, especially those who are interested in participating actively in charitable works – that's what the Shrine is all about.

The Grand Master's Fair was a smashing success, and from the after-event chatter, it's going to be bigger and better next year. There should be myriad opportunities again next year for both individual Nobles and Shrine Units to participate. The Lodges and Masonic Districts in this part of the state are where we draw our members from, and the Grand Master's Fair is probably the largest public gathering of Masons outside of Quarterlies, and is an opportunity to show the very visible activity and garner interest in what we, the Shriners, do.




GRAND MASTER of Masons, Most Worshipful **Jeffrey B. Hodgdon** and Aleppo Potentate, **Illustrious Albert D. Flight** at the fair.

ROLLO, Aleppo Clown, leads a horse to water with the assistance of Melha Shriners during the parade at the Grand Masters fair




CHILDREN BEAT the heat and engage in some abstract art at the drawing booth at the Grand Masters Fair.

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LEGAL LINES

By Ludwig Alban, Esq.




We have previously written about changes in the federal Deficit Reduction Act as it relates to Medicaid and return to that subject as Massachusetts is a leader among states enacting the required changes especially as Massachusetts has done so with a most restrictive interpretation of the law. The revised MassHealth eligibility rules greatly effect long term care planning and makes it very difficult for the elderly to pass on their estates to future generations. MassHealth has made a significant change in determining eligibility by increasing the look back. For transfers made on or after February 8, 2006 from thirty-six months to sixty months. This delays the beginning of a penalty period for transfers of assets. Previously the penalty period would begin the first day of the month in which the transfer occurred. Under the new rules, the penalty period does not begin until the date the person has spent down to eligibility for MassHealth coverage for long term care services. Massachusetts also requires that during the penalty time period for an applicant to spend down their countable assets to \$2,000.00, their nursing home care cannot be paid from another source. If, for example, family members pay for nursing home care, the time for the beginning of the penalty period will be reset. The effects of these rules will be felt mostly on people with low or moderate incomes. Wealthier seniors and families will be able to cover their necessary costs and wait out the transfer penalty time as persons with enough funds to cover five years of care would be able to transfer their assets above this amount and wait out the look back period. Persons with less funds who still wish to transfer assets should look into purchasing long-term care insurance to cover them during the five year time period that they could be ineligible for MassHealth coverage.

These new rules are very complicated and are still being interpreted by the Massachusetts Office of Medicaid. Some of the interpretations the Massachusetts Office of Medicaid have made seem to conflict with the federal law and most likely will lead to litigation. Although there is still some uncertainty in this area of law, planning strategies are still available whether in advance or when a family member requires nursing home care. This new five year look back and a new restriction on home equity (equity in your home over \$750,000.00 is now countable) makes advance planning the prudent thing to do.

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