

Aleppo Oriental Band

THE PEARL

(With Apologies to John Steinbeck and All of the Oysters and Mollusks in the Sea)

By THE ORIENTAL BAND SCRIBE

HOW quickly the seasons pass as we already find ourselves at the end of the current year facing the prospect of a notorious New England Winter and the flight of snowbirds to warmer climes.

The year has not been the most eventful one but sometimes that is good. In our case it allowed us to sharpen our skills and tend to equipment matters.

On July 23, 2009 we welcomed Noble **Ronald J. Henderson** to our fold as a new member. Ron was a candidate at the June Ceremonial and was impressed with our performance at that event and felt that we might be a fun and interesting Unit to join. We all laud his intellectual acuity and perceptive abilities, concur with his assessment, and looked forward to his participation with us which commenced with his attendance at our Annual Summer Outing in Gloucester, Massachusetts (which was well attended) on August 15, 2009 and at the Marlboro Parade on September 7, 2009.



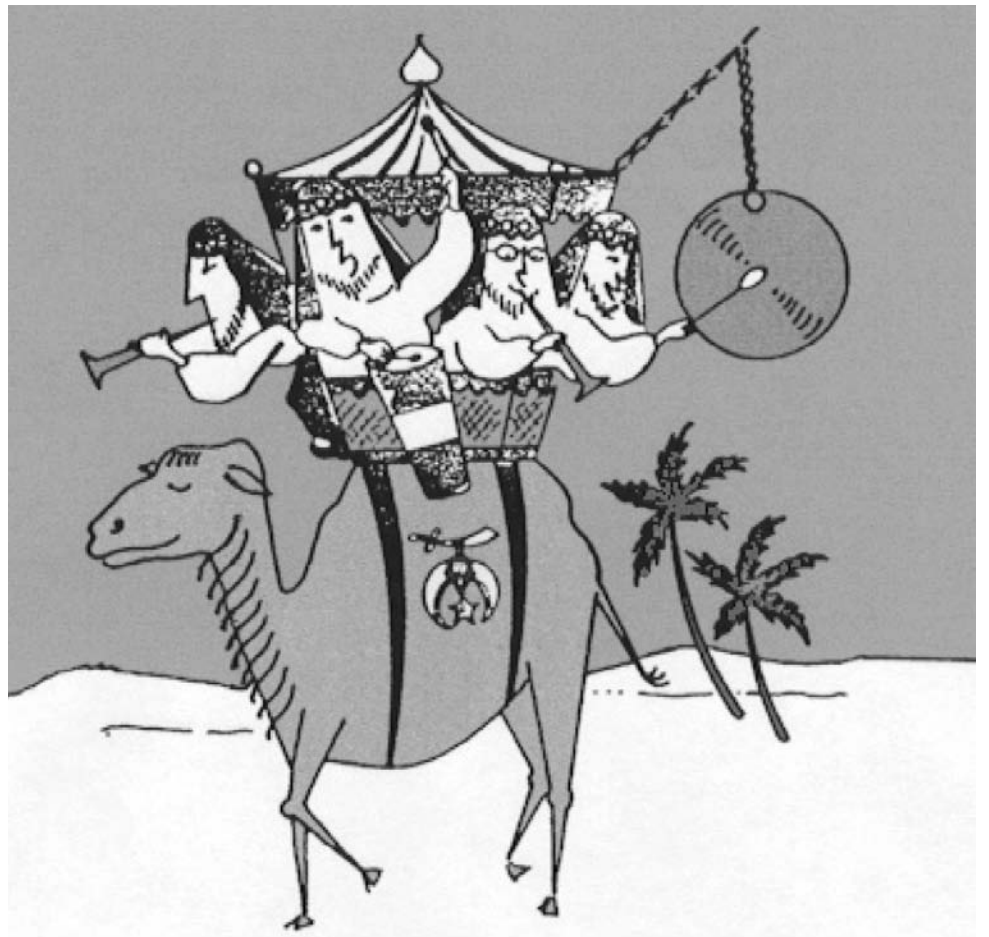
Nick Markos (left) and Tom Short enjoying themselves at the Annual Summer Outing.

Ron Henderson (at the Annual Summer Outing with John Kelley behind him and Bob Haley in the background).

We participated in the Fall parades and events and had an enjoyable time at them. Repairs and maintenance done to our float over the summer contributed to a large turnout at each event and a satisfied audience. We have left some additional work to be done to the float next summer.

We defended our Northeast Titles in Burlington, Vermont and were delighted to see increased competition amongst the Regional Oriental Bands. Strong competition generally makes for a better product - unless you are a domestic car manufacturer (in which case you seek out government bailouts and exploit arcane and abstruse bankruptcy procedures - would that we all could be so rewarded for our bad conduct - and hope that you can disprove the wisdom of **Abraham Lincoln**)!

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From left to right are: Ron Henderson, Rob Johnson, Art Fink, Al Richards, Jim Harvey, Tom Short, Jack Zimmerman, and Fred Pouliot at the Marlboro Parade on September 7, 2009.

Scribblings of the Scribe

So what is the story of "The Pearl" all about? It is a novella (short novel) by John Steinbeck written in 1947/8 which serves as a parable and discourse on the fundamental nature of society and mankind. As a parable it is open to many interpretations and the broad scope of the topics it deals with contributes to a multiplicity of views and opinions one might have about it. Hence the cursory interpretation that is about to follow is subject to alternative views as well and that is readily acknowledged.

The story is one that incorporates elements of idealism, greed, societal and religious hypocrisy, contemporary and colonial discrimination, evil, corruption, deceit, hope, and despair - all part of the seedier side of civilization, such as it is, as a commentary on society and its components. It is remarkable that, though written some sixty years' ago, it can stand as a prophetic analysis of even today's society (and this from an author who looked to the past and so well gave us some of the most memorable descriptive tales of the Great Depression era including "Of Mice and Men" and "The Grapes of Wrath"). As a commentary, it deals with how evil, greed, and deceit contribute to corruption, the misplaced values one places on materialistic matters, and the dashing of hopes in a society even more particularly to the fundamentals of a capitalistic society. It arguably shows how material wealth can corrupt both the owner and those about him/her and how the manipulative side of society ultimately sets the stage for ruin and despair based on that corruption while laying the groundwork for an evangelical catharsis bathed in the vacuous promise of hope.

But, as a relatively recent well known philosopher would remind us, "When hopes and dreams are loose in the streets, it is well for the timid to lock doors, shutter windows and lie low until the wrath has passed. For there is often a monstrous incongruity between the hopes, however noble and tender, and the action which follows them. It is as if the ivied maidens and garlanded youths were to herald the four horsemen of the apocalypse." May we all take solace in the examination of that hope that has become a part of our recent society and that we find that it is not of such a hollow, petty, pernicious, and destructive nature. However, one must also wonder: if hope provided the remedy or salvation it promises then why does it have to spring eternal - once would be enough!

TAKE DUE NOTICE THEREOF AND RECALL THAT, THOUGH WE LIVE IN HOPE ... WE (ALL TOO OFTEN) DIE IN DESPAIR!

This past year saw us celebrate the 40th anniversary of some milestones of history including man's first landing on the moon - query: bearing in mind that the landing did not take place at the planned landing site, and without insinuating anything, who took the pictures of Neil Armstrong vacating the lunar module and climbing down the ladder to the surface of the moon for the first time - or, at least, how was it done?

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