

Statistical Evaluation of Grand Masters Classes (One-Day Degree Conferrals)

Paul M. Bessel, June 19, 2001

Introduction

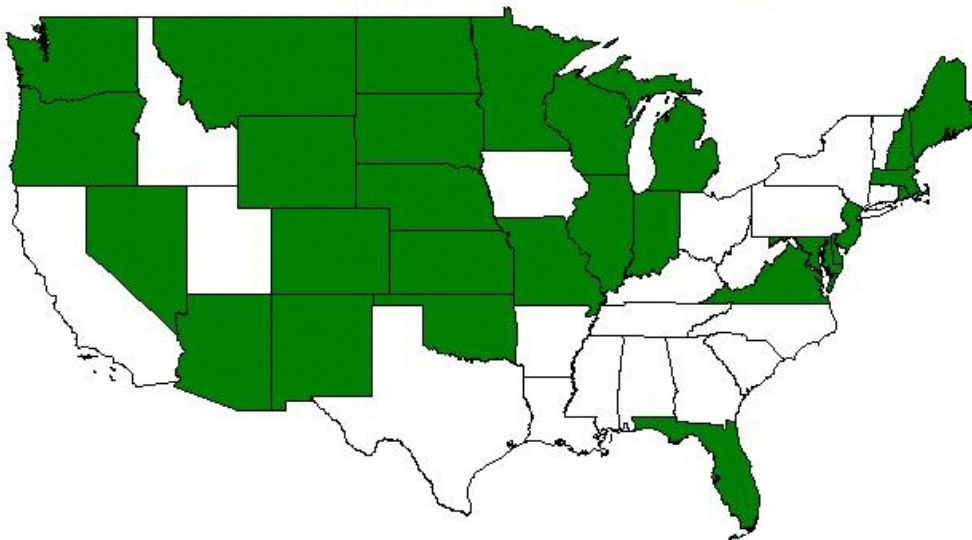
In 2000, the Grand Master in Washington D.C. requested a evaluation of "Grand Masters Classes," a term that refers to the events that have been sponsored by almost all Grand Masters in Washington D.C. since 1992, in which degrees are usually conferred on classes of candidates who receive some or all of their Craft degrees from Friday evening through Saturday evening. Instruction is provided between each degree in the modes of recognition, and a Table Lodge is held at the end of the Grand Masters Class to welcome the new Brethren.

Grand Masters Classes in D.C. and Similar Events in Other Jurisdictions

The Washington D.C. Grand Master in 1992, Jerold J. Samet, instituted the idea of a Grand Masters Class to confer the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason degrees on large numbers of candidates together, in a 2-day (Friday evening through Saturday evening) degree conferral. This was the first time this idea was used in the United States, at least in recent memory. In a little more than nine years, this idea has been used by more than half of all the Grand Lodges in the United States. Grand Master Class type degree conferrals have been used in at least the following 31 Grand Lodges:

Alaska	Indiana	Montana	Oregon
Arizona	Kansas	Nebraska	Rhode Island
Colorado	Maine	Nevada	South Dakota
Delaware	Maryland	New Hampshire	Virginia
District of Columbia	Massachusetts	New Jersey	Washington
Florida	Michigan	New Mexico	Wisconsin
Hawaii	Minnesota	North Dakota	Wyoming
Illinois	Missouri	Oklahoma	

31 U.S. Grand Lodges that Have Used 1 or 2 Day Classes (including AK & HI)
based on information available to Paul M. Bessel as of April 27, 2000



However, it appears that most Grand Lodges have implemented this idea of One-Day Classes or Conferrals or “All the Way in One Day” in the same manner in which the Scottish Rite degrees are conferred, with one candidate going through the degrees while all the others in the class sit in an auditorium and watch what the candidate is doing and going through. It should also be noted that some other jurisdictions have some differences, sometimes only providing “Classes” for those who have already received their Entered Apprentice degree in the traditional manner, or sometimes only for those who have not advanced beyond that degree. Also, some jurisdictions have only held one or a small number of one day classes and apparently do not intend to continue to have them, or to only do so once in a while.

Washington D.C. is unique in having had Grand Masters Classes every year except one since 1992, seeing that all candidates are clothed in the traditional manner of conferring the degrees, and insuring that all candidates experience all the same things they would go through in a traditional degree conferral, the only differences being that they are receiving their degrees in the company of a large number of other candidates and they are receiving them in a short (Friday through Saturday) period.

Possible Benefits or Problems with Grand Masters Classes

Grand Masters Classes or One-Day Classes or similar ideas are, to say the least, very controversial among Masons and Masonic leaders. Some of the pro’s and con’s that have been expressed include:

The classes bring into Masonry some candidates who would otherwise not be able or willing to join. But are these the type of men we want? Or, are some of them exactly the type we want, but who simply do not have the time to go through the degrees in any other way? And is there evidence that men get something more from the traditional degree conferral than from the Grand Masters classes?

The classes apparently help increase our membership numbers. But is this valuing quantity over quality? Or, do we have any basis to assume we get higher quality men from the traditional degree conferrals than from the Grand Masters classes? Or, don’t we want men who are willing to commit the time to go through the degrees slowly? But are some men who do not enjoy “slow degrees” just as good, if not better quality Masons?

The classes are said to help us obtain men who are busier than most in their careers, and younger, too. But should we want to attract younger men, who might not be mature enough to value Masonry? Or, don’t we need younger, more professional men if Masonry is to survive in the future? But should we ignore this point, and if Masonry cannot survive in any other way than by having One-Day classes then we should “go down with our flag flying high,” doing everything the traditional way and possibly losing all our membership if that is our fate?

Some of those who support or oppose Grand Masters classes say some of these things, many of which are subjective and not subject to objective analysis. However, many make statements about supposed “facts” that can be checked. The purpose of this report is to provide facts, not to attempt to evaluate any of the subjective opinions of those on any side.

Analysis of Data

No matter what an analysis shows about Grand Masters Classes, those who advocate continuing them

and those who advocate killing the idea can both claim to find proof of their claims.

If we find that many of our new members are coming through these classes, it could be argued that this proves how useful they are, or it could be argued that this shows that too many lodges are “taking the easy way.” If we find that many lodges are continuing to confer the degrees in the traditional manner in addition to the Grand Masters Classes, some could say that this proves that lodges still learn how to do their own degrees, or it could be argued that this proves that lodges do not need to have Grand Masters Classes. If we find that many of those who received their degrees in Grand Masters Classes became active in Freemasonry this could be proof that men who go through their degrees in this method are just as active as those who receive their degrees in the traditional manner, or it could be argued that this proves only that we are desperate for people to take leadership roles in the Craft and will pressure anyone into taking them.

So, there is probably no way to convince those who support Grand Masters Classes that they are not successful, and there is probably no way to convince those who oppose these Classes that they are proving to be successful.

Still, information and facts are always useful to have, so it is worthwhile to analyze the information we can about the results of Grand Masters Classes.

In Washington D.C., Grand Masters Classes have been held as shown in the following chart:

Membership Year	Dates of Membership Records	Grand Masters During this Time	Dates of Grand Masters Classes	Number of Candidates Raised
1992	Oct 1992 - Sep 1993	Samet & Adams	Nov 13-14, 1992	113
1993	Oct 1993 - Sep 1994	Adams & Jenkins	Nov 5-6, 1993	46
1994	Oct 1994 - Sep 1995	Jenkins & Smith	Oct 28-29, 1994	50
1995	Oct 1995 - Sep 1996	Smith & Chaney	Oct 27-28, 1995	57
1996	Oct 1996 - Sep 1997	Chaney & Drechsler	Nov 8-9, 1996 & Jun 16 & Sep 12, 1997	58
1997	Oct 1997 - Sep 1998	Drechsler & Brown	none during this period	0
1998	Oct 1998 - Sep 1999	Brown & Frederick	Nov 13-14, 1998	53

Membership Year	Dates of Membership Records	Grand Masters During this Time	Dates of Grand Masters Classes	Number of Candidates Raised
1999	Oct 1999 - Sep 2000	Frederick & Hatefi	Nov 5-6, 1999	27
2000	Oct 2000 - Sep 2001	Hatefi & Berning	none - Hatefi did not have a Grand Masters Class, and Berning has scheduled his to take place after this membership year ends (Oct 2001)	0

From the 1992-1993 membership year through 1999-2000, 934 Brethren were Raised, with 404, or 43%, Raised in Grand Masters Classes, and 57% raised in the traditional manner. The range of those raised in Grand Masters Classes each year was from 55% to 37%.

Thus, we have a wonderful opportunity in Washington D.C. to analyze the effects of Grand Masters Classes, since they have been conducted for a longer continuous period than anywhere else, there is a significant number of men who have become Masons in the same area, in the same lodges, using both the Grand Masters Classes and the traditional raising method, and it was possible, although it did take a great deal of extra work and research, to obtain details about each of the almost-1,000 men who became Masons in both methods during this time. Thus, without planning it that way, in Washington D.C. we find a good basis for a scientific comparison between the effects of Grand Masters Classes and traditional raising methods, including a control group of almost equal numbers.

Dates of Membership Year	Dates of Grand Masters Classes	Number of Candidates Raised in GM Class	Number of Candidates Raised in other ways	Percent of all New Masons who were Raised in GM Classes
Oct 1992 - Sep 1993	Nov 13-14, 1992	113	93	55%
Oct 1993 - Sep 1994	Nov 5-6, 1993	46	78	37%
Oct 1994 - Sep 1995	Oct 28-29, 1994	50	56	48%
Oct 1995 - Sep 1996	Oct 27-28, 1995	57	69	45%
Oct 1996 - Sep 1997	Nov 8-9, 1996 & Jun 16 & Sep 12, 1997	58	45	56%
Oct 1997 - Sep 1998	none during this period	0	82	0%

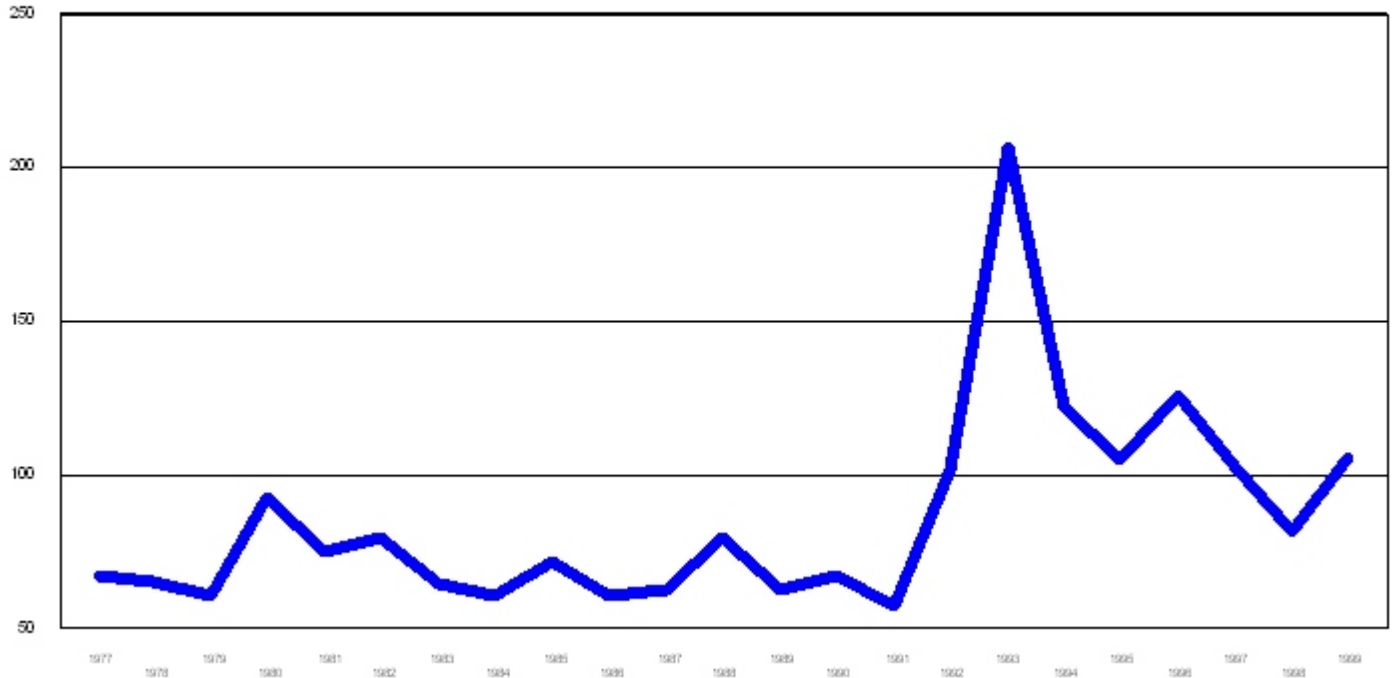
Dates of Membership Year	Dates of Grand Masters Classes	Number of Candidates Raised in GM Class	Number of Candidates Raised in other ways	Percent of all New Masons who were Raised in GM Classes
Oct 1998 - Sep 1999	Nov 13-14, 1998	53	53	50%
Oct 1999 - Sep 2000	Nov 5-6, 1999	27	55	33%

Question — Have the Grand Masters Classes had any significant impact on membership?

Some say Grand Masters Classes simply take men who would have gone through the degrees in the traditional manner, and thus there is no long-term effect on membership.

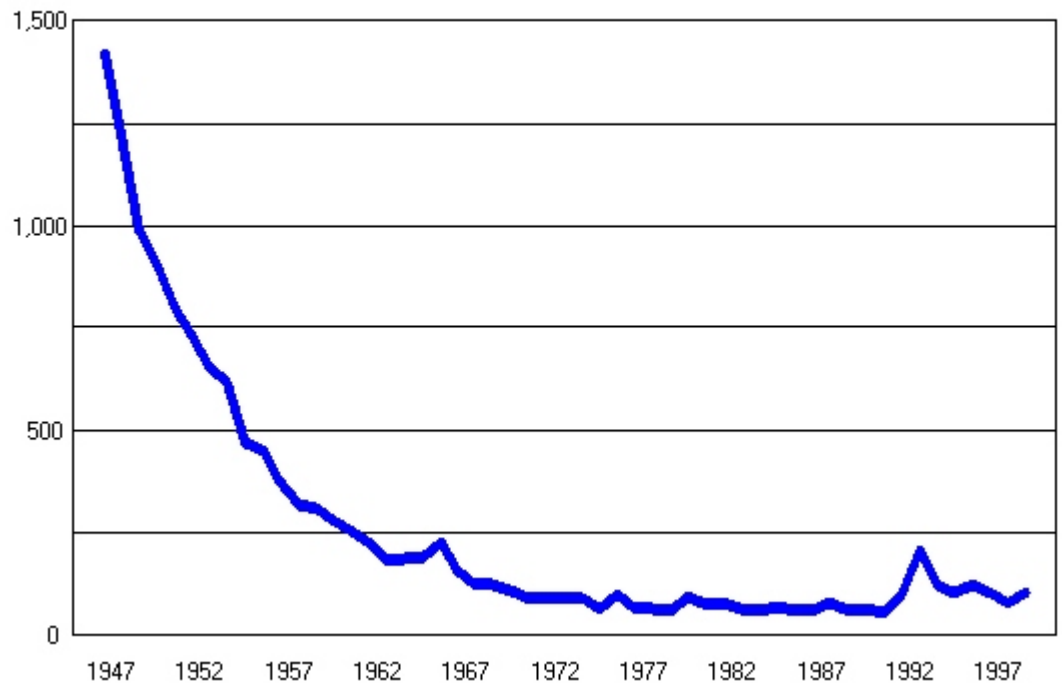
Since 1947, Washington D.C., and every other U.S. jurisdiction, has had a long term decline in number of Raisings, as shown by the following chart. **After a decline of 45 years, starting with the 1992-1993 membership year in Washington D.C., the number of Raisings greatly increased, and has remained at a higher level.**

Masons Raised in the Grand Lodge of DC 1977-1999
GM Classes Began in 1992 and Have Continued Each Year Since Then

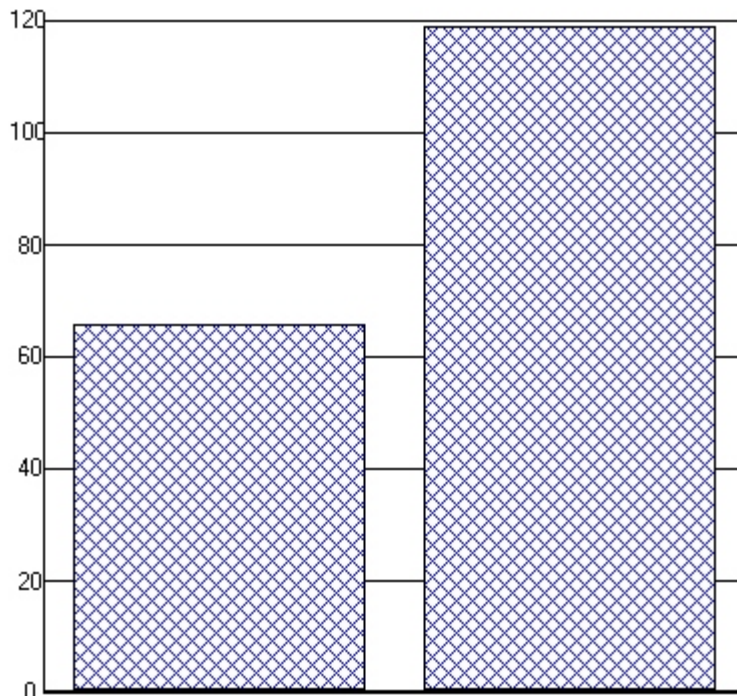


Since 1992, the number of Raisings has remained significantly higher than it was before. **The average number of Raisings in Washington D.C. in the 8 years before there were Grand Masters Classes was 66, and since then it has been 119, almost double.**

DC Grand Lodge - Number of Masons Raised each year

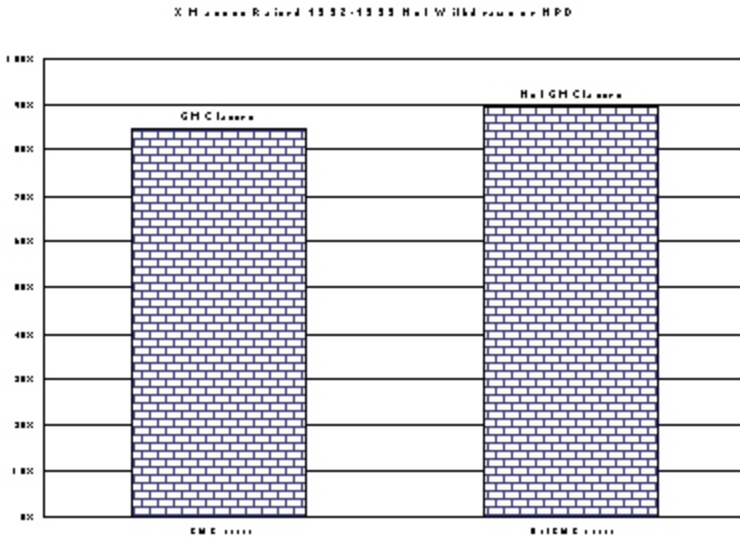


Average # of Raisings
8 Yrs before and since GM classes



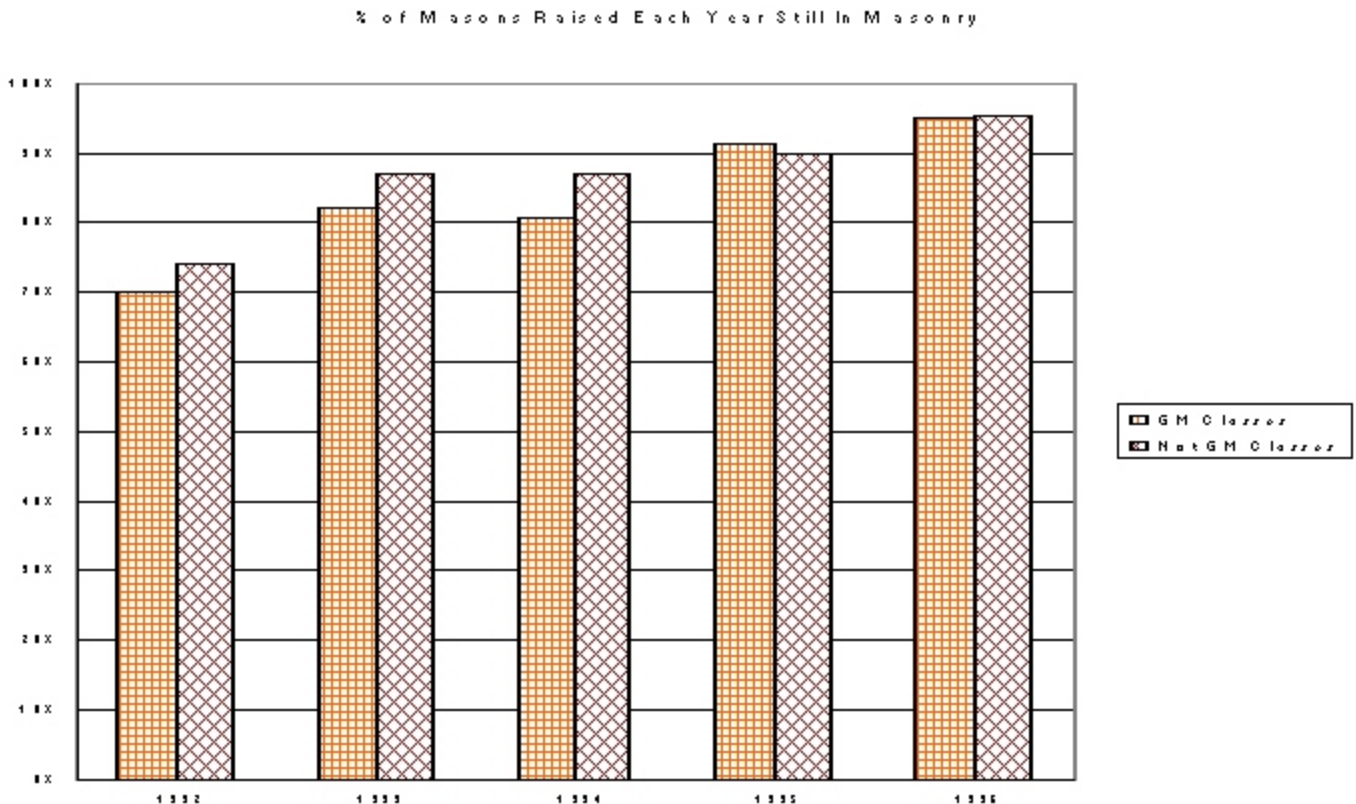
Question — Have those who received degrees in Grand Masters Classes remained in Masonry or dropped out?

Some say that men who receive their degrees quickly will not have any strong bond to Masonry and will drop out in a much larger proportion than those who receive their degrees in the traditional manner. Again, statistics can be measured objectively to determine if this is what has happened.



As shown by the chart on the left, **the proportion of men who were raised in Washington D.C. since 1992 and who are still Masons** (not having dimitted or been dropped for non-payment of dues — deaths are not counted as that is involuntary), **is just about the same for those who received their degrees in Grand Masters Classes as for the others — 84% and 89%.** To see if this was a statistical accident, an examination was made of those who were raised each year, to see what proportion of men in each category are still in Masonry.

As shown below, it appears clear that men who receive degrees in Grand Masters classes are not significantly more or less likely to remain in or drop out of Masonry.

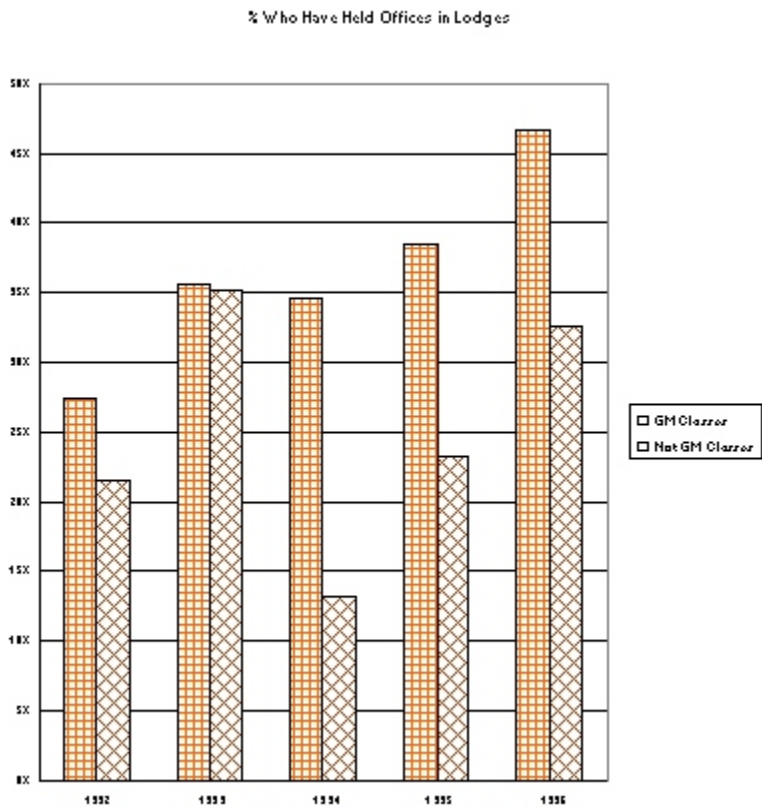


The percent of Grand Masters Class men who have dropped out of Masonry since 1992 has ranged from 30% of some classes to 5% of others. The percent of men who received their degrees in the traditional manner in the same years has ranged from 26% in some years to 5% in others. (What is significant is not the difference, which hardly exists, but the fact that almost $\frac{1}{3}$ of those who became Masons in Washington D.C. as recently as 8 years ago, using any method to become Masons, have already voluntarily dropped out of Masonry. Research by Bro. John Belton in England indicates that this is the trend throughout the English-speaking Masonic world.)

Question — Even if those Raised in Grand Masters Classes remain in Masonry, are they active or just Masons in name only?

One of the questions that is sometimes asked is whether those who have obtained their degrees in Grand Masters Classes have been active. This is usually expressed by those who claim: “Men who get degrees in one or two days won’t care about Masonry and won’t be active members,” and by those who say, “Men who go through Grand Masters Classes will be just as active as those who obtained their degrees in other ways.” Recognizing, again, that no matter what the facts show, those who support one side or the other will undoubtedly claim that their side’s case is proven, it will be useful to see what the facts show.

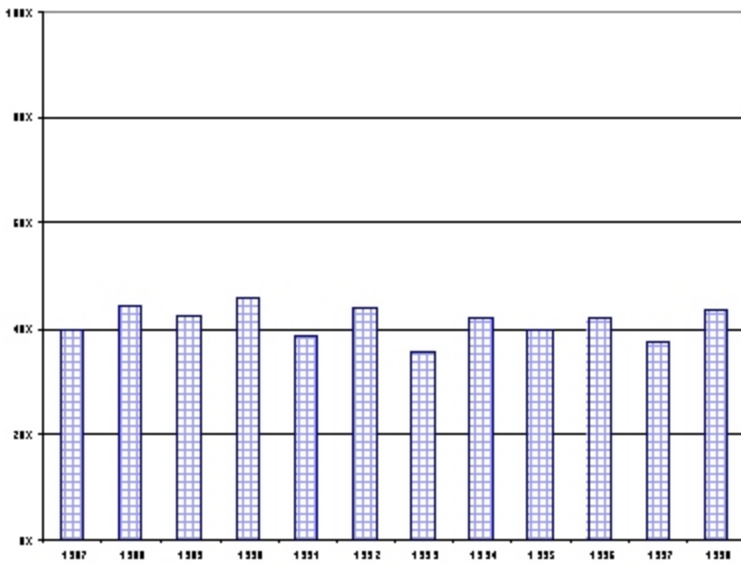
Those who received degrees since 1992 in Grand Masters Classes, and in the traditional manner, again appear to be approximately equal in terms of their participation as Lodge Officers and active members of their Lodges and Grand Lodge. If anything, in certain years the proportion of Grand Masters Class men who are active in Lodges is significantly higher than that of men who went through the degrees in the traditional manner.



Question — Does the existence of Grand Masters Classes cause Lodges to do less Degree work themselves?

Some say that one of the harmful effects of Grand Masters Classes is that they cause Lodges to do less degree work, relying instead on the short degree work.

D.C. Lodges Confering Degrees in Traditional Manner each year

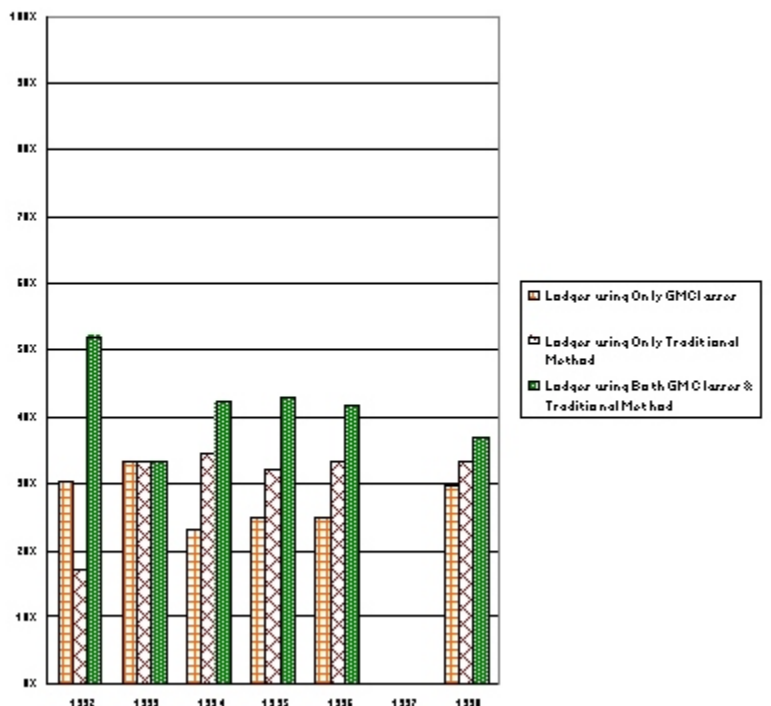


The percent of Washington D.C. Lodges that have used the Grand Masters Classes, and that have used the traditional method, has remained about the same every year since Grand Masters Classes have existed. Also, in every year since the first Grand Masters Class, the percentage of Lodges using traditional methods of Raising has been higher than those using the Grand Masters Class. **During the years before Grand Masters Classes were used, and since, the percent of lodges in Washington D.C. that have conferred degrees in the traditional manner has ranged each year from 35% to 45%, with no change since**

1992 when Grand Masters Classes began.

Looked at another way, the chart at the right shows that since 1993, after the first Grand Masters Class, each year 25% to 33% of our Lodges the percent of Washington D.C. Lodges have used *only* Grand Masters Classes for Raisings, while 32% to 35% have used *only* the traditional method, and 37% to 43% have used *both*. **In each year, most Lodges use both methods, and more use only the traditional method than use only Grand Masters Classes.** Most Lodges thus find it useful to have both of these methods available to them, and **the existence of Grand Masters Classes is not causing a decline in the number or percent of**

% of Lodges Using Either GM Classes or Traditional Method or Both



Lodges that use the traditional method of Raising new Brethren. Grand Masters Classes supplement the traditional method, allowing a larger number of men to become Masons than had done so in the past.

Conclusions

First, to facilitate future evaluations of Grand Masters Classes, it would be helpful if Grand Lodges would **maintain files containing:** (a) Dates and other details of each Grand Masters Class (or whatever it is called in each jurisdiction), including numbers of those receiving each degree; (b) Names of each candidate receiving each degree, and each one's lodge, age, and profession, plus the average age and range of ages of men in each Class, and similar information about those who receive their degrees during the same years in the traditional manner; (c) Details about the Masonic offices or other indication of involvement of each Mason who received his degrees in the Grand Masters class, as well as details about if and when each one dimit, is dropped for non payment of dues, or dies, and similar information about those who receive their degrees during the same years in the traditional manner

As for the substantive questions presented, some Masons will never support Grand Masters classes and will hope they will be abolished. Some equally good Masons feel these classes are good methods to bring new men into the Craft, and some other Masons see some value in both arguments or do not think it matters much whether or not we use Grand Masters classes, perhaps feeling that what really matters is not how men are made Masons, but what we do to teach them Masonry after they become Brethren.

Still, some wonder if we should continue to use Grand Masters classes. An objective evaluation of the data has to conclude that the statistics in Washington D.C. prove that since 1992, when Grand Masters Classes began:

1. The **number of Raisings** of new Masons in our jurisdiction each year has **increased** significantly over the number before then, and this increase is steady and continuing.
2. Men Raised in Grand Masters Classes and those Raised in the traditional method **remained in Masonry** (did not dimit or stop paying dues) in about **equal proportions** each year.
3. Men who become Brethren in Grand Masters Classes and those Raised in the traditional method are also **roughly equal in the proportion who become active Officers** or are otherwise active in their Lodges or in the Grand Lodge. If anything, Grand Masters Class men seem to be more active in their Lodges and Grand Lodge than those in the other category.
4. **The same number and percent of Lodges continue to do degree work in the traditional manner each year**, and to use Grand Masters Classes each year, without any decline in traditional degree work. Most Lodges use both the Grand Masters Classes and the traditional method.

In short, it is reasonable to conclude that the **Grand Masters Classes are a useful tool for some lodges and some men, and at the same time there are some who prefer to use the traditional degree methods or a combination of the two. There is no evidence that proves any of these choices are harmful to Freemasonry.**