

Dr. William Russel Pellow, BA, DDS

Grand Master 1987 – 1989 of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of
Canada in the Province of Ontario



Photo from the Grand Lodge

(1930 – 2018)

Prepared by V.W. Bro. Marshall Kern.

“Overalls to Scrubs” is Dr. William Pellow’s autobiography. He explains “You must retire to something and not from something. Retirement comes in two phases, the psychological and the economical. ... Writing this book helped me get over the psychological hurdle of retirement.” His book of over 400 pages was published in 2004. He gives this concise description of his life apart from Freemasonry:



Ontario Masons

“William Pellow was born in 1930. He grew up and received his preliminary education in Chapleau, Ontario, a terminal for the Canadian Pacific Railway; half way between Sudbury and Thunder Bay in Northern Ontario. In 1953, he built and operated a fishing and bear and moose hunting camp on the Chapleau River. He sold this business to attend University. Dr. Pellow received a Bachelor of Arts, Queen’s University 1960, Doctor of Dental Surgery, University of Toronto 1964. He taught at the University of Toronto and the University of Western Ontario, over a span of ten years. He built a medical-dental clinic building and operated a fifteen chair dental practice in London, Ontario.

Dr. Pellow sold his practice twice. Retired December 31, 2001.

In 1955, married Leitha Robinson (1931 – 2006) and they had three children. Kimberly a teacher at Albert College, Arden (1963 – 2021) a mother of two fine children Mark and Christine. (Son) Robin William Jackson deceased April 4, 1997 at age 30.

In 1975, bought a 39’ CPR caboose and built a recreation room around it at poolside to accommodate the caboose as an integral part of the family home. His office and recreation room were developed around a railroad theme. The children’s playroom in his office was an authentic locomotive cab of a diesel yard switcher.

Dr. Pellow and his family retained a few acres of land, once part of Pellow Cottages on Jackson Lake, Chapleau, Ontario, Canada and built a summer home.

Grand Master of Masons, Ontario 1987 – 89, Membership 80,000. Potentate, Mocha Shriners, London Ontario 1998, Membership 4500. Thirty Third Degree Mason 1988. He is holder of several awards and honours of recognition in North America. Dr. William Pellow was a guest speaker in several jurisdictions in Canada and United States. He was responsible for standardizing The Logo for Masons in Ontario and creating the lodge identification standard signs and the Masonic community entrance signs in Ontario.”

To expand on this short sketch of his life, it should be noted that Bill Pellow started working in the age of steam locomotives on the CPR when he was twelve. He spent 20 years with CPR (1942–63) becoming a locomotive engineer in 1953 on the White River–Chapleau–Cartier sub-divisions. During the next decade he was both a railroad-man and owner-operator of a hunting and fishing business.

In his autobiography, Dr. Pellow explains his challenges in the Chapleau High School, and even more so with earning his undergraduate degree at Queen’s University. He had entered Queen’s University in 1948 and finally graduated in 1960 after completing many extramural courses (meaning distance-learning by correspondence). While his original purpose was to earn a B.A. degree and move up in management at the Canadian Pacific Railway, a discussion with a Superintendent forced him to

seriously reconsider his future. With the encouragement of his wife, Leitha, he applied for Dentistry at the University of Toronto. He was accepted and entered the Dental Faculty in the fall of 1960.

In 1964, after earning his Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from the University of Toronto, he moved to London where he practiced dentistry. From his experience building and running a hunting and fishing camp, he branched into real estate, becoming President of Pellark Inc., a land and property development company. Dr. Pellow also taught at the University of Toronto and University of Western Ontario Dental Faculties. He was a member of local, provincial and federal dental societies and held offices in a number of dental bodies.

Dr. Pellow married Leitha Robinson in 1955. She predeceased him, dying in 2006. They had a son, William Robin Jackson Pellow who drowned at home in 1997 when he was 30. Dr. Pellow and his wife had two daughters, Kimberley Anne and Arden Linda. Arden married and raised two children; she died in 2021.

The Pellow family were members of the United Church.

M.W. Bro. Pellow died on May 20, 2018, in London. M.W. Bro. William Russel Pellow is interred at Chapleau Municipal Cemetery beside his wife Leitha. A large black monument notes his rank in York Rite, Scottish Rite, and Shriners, as well as being Grand Master.

A portrait of M.W. Bro. Pellow as Grand Master is displayed in the Chapleau Masonic Hall, home of Lorne Lodge No. 622.

Masonic Career

Mr. William R. Pellow was initiated into Lorne Lodge No. 622, Chapleau, on November 18, 1954. This was followed by Passing and Raising in quick succession. His progression as a Lodge officer was interrupted by his education. After settling in London, Dr. Pellow affiliated with Ionic Lodge No. 716, London, in 1966 and served as WM of Ionic Lodge No. 716 in 1972.

He was elected the District Deputy Grand Master of London East District in 1976. The Grand Lodge Advisory Committee on Lodge Buildings included a comment in their 1978 Report that R.W. Bro. Pellow had submitted sketches of each lodge building in his district, showing every room in the building, pointing out the various deficiencies and how they can be corrected.

In 1980 he was appointed to the Board of General Purposes and later elected in 1982 to the Board, serving on several committees including Masonic Education.

M.W. Bro. Pellow was elected the Deputy Grand Master in 1985. He presented a paper titled “Freemasonry and Youth” at the All Canada Conference. During his time as Deputy Grand Master he was elected to a six-year term on the Commission of Recognition of the Grand Lodges of North America. This led to his leadership of the Commission.

Then he was elected as our 63rd Grand Master for the 1987 – 1989 term.

Grand Master Pellow was grateful and humbly delighted to receive honorary membership into the following lodges: St. John's Lodge No. 20, (London, London East District), Kilwinning Lodge No. 64, (London, London East District), St. John's Lodge No. 209a, (London, London West District), Seymour Lodge No. 277, (St. Catharines, Niagara A District), Mount Olivet Lodge No. 300, (Thorndale, London East District), Humber Lodge No. 305, (Weston, Toronto 2 District), Middlesex Lodge No. 379, (Ilderton, London East District), King Solomon's Lodge No. 378, (London, London West District), Temple Lodge No. 597, (London, London East District), Mount Dennis Lodge No. 599, (Toronto, Toronto 2 District), Lorne Lodge No. 622, (Chapleau, Algoma East District), Delta Lodge No. 634, (Toronto, Toronto 6 District), Centennial Lodge No. 684, (London, London East District), Universe Lodge No. 705, (Toronto, Toronto 4 District), Heritage Lodge No. 730, (Cambridge, Waterloo District), Ionic Lodge No. 716, (London, London East District), West Gate Lodge No. 734, Streetsville, (Toronto 1 District), and London Daylight Lodge No. 735, (London, London East District).

He was the recipient of Masonic honours from sister Grand Lodges including the Henry Price Medal (Grand Lodge of Massachusetts), the Pierpont Edwards Medal (Grand Lodge of Connecticut), the Erasmus James Philips Medal (Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia), the Jeremy L. Cross Award (Grand Lodge of New Hampshire) and was named an Honourary Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Saskatchewan.

In the York Rite he was a member and Honourary Past First Principal of St. John's No. 3, London, and Past Grand Sojourner of Grand Chapter. He is a recipient of the Order of the Purple Cross of the York Rite Sovereign College of North America (1990). He is a member of the Scottish Rite and was coroneted as an Honourary Inspector General 33° in 1988.

While still studying dentistry he became a member of Rameses Shrine, Toronto, in 1961. After settling in London, in 1966 he affiliated with Mocha Shrine, where he served as Potentate in 1968.

As Grand Master



M.W. Bro. Pellow began his first Grand Master's Address with the challenging question "Why are we here?" He provided the answer "We are here to pay tribute, to tender our regrets, to express thanks, to listen, learn and be educated, to be entertained, to reveal efforts of our labours, to recommend and instigate our programmes, we are here to motivate and foster enthusiasm. We are here to perpetuate Masonry."

The remainder of his Address fulfills each of those aspects. He elaborated on the cautious steps being taken by the staff of our Grand Lodge to bring in computers to the office. He described the many newsletters and means of communication from his office, from the Board of General Purposes, and from the Grand Lodge Office, intended to inform, educate, and entertain Masons.

M.W. Bro. Pellow explained that until that year there had been many different styles, forms, and colours for the Square and Compasses logo. It was now standardized, and he challenged everyone to display it with pride.

Membership retention received attention from Grand Master Pellow. A Mentors Programme begun under M.W. Bro. Copeland had demonstrated its value and became mandatory. Guidelines were prepared and distributed to all lodges outlining a sequence of steps to be taken to reduce the nonpayment of dues with subsequent demits and suspensions. In a similar vein, M.W. Bro. Pellow opposed the offering of honorary memberships in lodges without proper funding. He refused to accept Honorary or Life Memberships into lodges unless such membership was properly funded.

Four Grand Lodge publications were approved including The Grand Lodge Memorial Service which includes cremation services, and a section of advice for organizing a memorable service. Other publications included the "O" booklet to be given to a petitioner for membership, and an updated Charity Pamphlet. The fourth was a compendium to assist Masons in leadership positions to plan lodge functions, prepare a yearly agenda, and aid in administration of the lodge.

Grand Master Pellow launched a successful campaign to raise \$1 million. The money supported an education program to combat the scourge of alcohol and drug abuse among the youth in society.

Noting that the opportunities for the Grand Master to recognize meritorious service by Masons were limited to making an appointment to Grand Lodge Rank, M.W. Bro. Pellow introduced the Grand Master's Meritorious Award. It allowed the Grand Master to outstanding Masons who have "proven to be exceptional in devotion, loyalty, zeal and assiduity in both Masonic and community circles." Two awards were announced in 1988. Five awards were presented in his second year as Grand Master.

M.W. Bro. Pellow enthusiastically pushed for a number of administrative changes. These included transition to universal June installation dates in lodges, correcting the abbreviations of Masonic titles and rank, discouraging the use of the word “Temple” in favour of calling our buildings a “Lodge”, and an entire restructuring of the Grand Lodge committee organization.

He concluded his Address with the same words he used to conclude many presentations at other meetings: “We may not have it all together, but together we have it all.”

As Past Grand Master

M.W. Bro. Pellow is remembered in Chapleau by a bursary sponsored by Lorne Lodge No. 622. The Dr. William R. Pellow Bursary was started in 1988 when M.W. Bro. Pellow was Grand Master. The bursary was established to provide funds for graduating students from Chapleau's high schools to assist in furthering their educations. Donations to the bursary fund continue to be received from members of the Masonic Fraternity, alumni of Chapleau High School, and ex-Chapleauites. M.W. Bro. Pellow actively supported the bursary for many years.

In announcing the passing of M.W. Bro. Pellow, Grand Master M.W. Bro. Paul E. Todd described M.W. Bro. Pellow as a true “son of the North”. He went on to say that “Dr. Pellow’s commitment to Freemasonry and his desire to place our public persona in the best light possible were the legacies of his service.”

Sources:

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- (5) Reynolds, John W., (2012) *An overview of some significant or interesting contributions during the terms of the Grand Masters of the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario, revisited* ‘The Architect’ December 2012
- (6) Pellow, William R. (2004) *Overalls to Scrubs*, Aylmer Express, Aylmer ON. Used by kind permission of the publisher, received May 2024.
- (7) *The Ontario Masonic Blue Book*, Published and Edited by David Hauraney, Print Master, Etobicoke, 2000.
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- (9) Broomhead, J.R.; personal communication 2024.
- (10) Family information confirmed on Find-A-Grave.com, accessed 2024