



S.K. Harold Elwell
R.:E.: Grand Commander
2024-2025

A lifelong Connecticut resident, Hal grew up in Harwinton, the third of five children of Albert and Ina Elwell. Albert was a jack of all trades, employed at various times as an auto mechanic, manager of a machine shop, welder, and construction ironworker. Ina was an almost stereotypical 1950's housewife – managing the home, planning and preparing meals, bandaging cuts and bruises suffered playing outdoors, cleaning, mending, reading bed time stories and making sure everyone was where they were supposed to be, mostly on time. She was a cub scout den mother, and girl scout assistant. The family loved traveling and being outdoors, so spent many weekends and summer vacations camping all around New England, and several winter vacations driving to Florida for a few days of sunshine there. One of the most memorable and inspiring trips was in the early 1960's, traveling cross country for most of the summer. Mom, Dad and four of the five kids living out of a Volkswagen Microbus as we saw and visited more places in that month and a half than many people see in a lifetime – Niagara Falls, the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone Park, the petrified forest, Mount Rushmore and many more. The things that were learned together on that trip have lasted a lifetime. How do six people in a confined space for weeks not get on each other's nerves? They do, but you learn to adapt and respect each other's wishes. Opinions matter, but not all decisions are made democratically. We learned things like just how big Texas really is, and that it's not a good idea to ride directly underneath the open sun roof for the last couple of hours approaching El Paso. The old bus didn't have a gas gauge – only a "reserve tank" of gas that would take you about 30 miles if you exhausted the main tank. You had to keep track of your mileage and fill up about every two hundred miles, or depend on finding a gas station within 30 miles of flipping onto the "reserve", not a guarantee in Arizona, New Mexico, and Nevada at the time. There weren't many Volkswagen dealerships around, so when the odometer cable broke the kids honed their map reading skills, figuring out what

was the last town we could stop in to refuel, until we found a dealership in Salt Lake City. Somewhere along the way it also came to pass that “Don’t make me stop this car” was not an idle threat.

Albert and Ina lived another four decades in Harwinton, watching the family grow as all five of their children graduated college, wed, and began families of their own. Albert passed in 2003, and Ina followed in 2007 after sharing their love and wisdom with their 13 grandchildren and welcoming the first five of their still growing brood of great grandchildren. Their house was always filled with brothers, sisters, and cousins, spending time, and making memories with Gram and Gramp. Their dedication to each other, and their unwavering support of, and willingness to sacrifice for, every one of the family members has been a stellar lesson in leading by example.

After graduating first in his class at Lewis Mills Regional High School in Burlington Hal received a National Merit Scholarship which he used to attend the University of Connecticut (two years at the Torrington Branch and two years at Storrs) and earn a Bachelor of Science degree in secondary mathematics education. Hal and his high school sweetheart Karen married between his junior and senior year of college and have been together for over 50 years. Upon graduation from UConn he taught in the mathematics department of Bacon Academy in Colchester Connecticut for several years, before deciding on a career change and coming to Waterbury to work for Lux Time in their data processing department in 1977. Lux’s decision to move their operations to Tennessee in the 1980’s led to Hal joining Colonial Bank of Waterbury’s programming staff and beginning a thirty plus year association with the banking industry and information technology. He has been a Programmer, Senior Developer, Systems Analyst, Project manager, Team leader, and finished his career by coming full circle and serving as a client training instructor, showing customers how to use company tools to produce their own interfaces to the proprietary system. Shortly after coming to Waterbury, Hal and family became members of First Congregational Church of Waterbury, beginning an even longer association which lasts to this day. Over the years Hal has been a Sunday school teacher, cook, Trustee, Deacon, van driver, Moderator, lay worship leader, Bible Study coordinator, search committee chair, Zoom manager during the pandemic, and is now the treasurer of the church and serves on its Pastoral Relations Committee. In addition to his church involvement, while his three children were growing up Hal joined the Overlook Community Club and helped coach in its sports association and became a Cub Scout and Boy Scout leader. In 1990 he was named the Bank of Boston Connecticut Volunteer of the Year, using the stipend provided to help fund the local scout troops. He also was a member of REMCO (a civil preparedness / emergency operations organization) and the Waterbury Auxiliary Police. Always interested in history, for over thirty years Hal has belonged to the Eighth Connecticut Civil War Re-enactment group where he has participated in reenactments from Massachusetts to Georgia. The group also provides entertaining and educational programs to local schools and other groups and has recently published a book documenting the history of the 8th Connecticut using letters and original source material gathered from the 1860’s veterans and descendants over the years. While planning, managing, and participating in a weekend reenactment /

presentation in conjunction with the Railroad Museum of New England in 2002, their director of special activities noticed Hal's beard and offered him an opportunity to portray St. Nicholas on their Christmas trains. Some beard coloring and padding were required, but since then Hal has become their head Santa, organizing a cast of dozens for the train while also visiting churches, community groups, and lodges bringing the Christmas spirit to many each winter.

Hal came to Masonry rather late in life as there are no ancestral ties to the craft. His involvement began, due in large part to some of his other activities and the serendipitous meeting and continued crossing of paths with well-established Masons. His interest was initially sparked by a neighbor who talked of many of the Masonic happenings that he was involved in, while zealously guarding the "secrets" of his lodge. Meanwhile, Hal's Civil War and Boy Scout paths intersected when a Scout in his son's troop undertook the restoration of an abandoned cemetery (where several Civil War soldiers were buried, including one from the Eighth Connecticut). Coincidentally, several Mason's became involved with the project since the Eighth Connecticut soldier had been a member of Harmony Lodge. This strengthened Hal's connection to the Brothers of Harmony and led to other cooperative efforts, such as the restoration and rededication of the Civil War Monument on the Waterbury Green and participation in the Memorial Day parade and various patriotic ceremonies. Finally, in the company of a friend and fellow reenactor who was convinced that Masonry would be a worthy and exciting new adventure, he petitioned and was initiated a Brother of Harmony Lodge #42 of Ancient Free and Accepted Freemasons and raised as a Master Mason in March of 2009. He was content to watch from the sidelines for a time, all the while becoming more familiar with and impressed by the Brotherhood. In 2011, Hal accepted the appointment to the office of Tyler, and by 2018 had progressed through the line to become Master of the Lodge. Hal's older son Matt joined the Brotherhood in 2012 and also began to work his way through the chairs. Without any pre-planning, as Hal approached the East, Matt was sitting in front of him, first as Senior Steward to Hal's Junior Warden, Junior Deacon to Hal's Senior Warden and finally on up to Senior Deacon while Hal was Master. One of Hal's proudest moments was when Matt's turn as Master came around, he continued the family tradition by appointing Hal as his Chaplain. Hal was later appointed to the Waterbury Board of Masonic Relief, which in 2022 became a part of the Grand Lodge Almoner's program, and Hal has been Harmony's Almoner since that point.

Feeling comfortable in the lodge, enjoying the fraternal fellowship, and truly seeking more light in Masonry, Hal began exploring the appendant bodies of the York Rite and Scottish Rite in 2014, becoming a member of Keystone Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Meriden as well as the Valley of Waterbury and Lafayette Consistory. Consistent with an emerging pattern, Hal jumped in with both feet, volunteering, helping wherever needed, and eventually stepping into leadership roles. In the York Rite, he has served as High Priest of Keystone Chapter, Thrice Illustrious Master of Hamilton Council, Commander of St. Elmo Commandery, and has progressed through the Grand Commandery line to his present position. He is a charter member and Working Knight of the Nutmeg Chapel of St. Thomas of Acon, and was invited to join the York Rite College in 2015. In the Scottish Rite Valley of Waterbury he has been the Thrice Potent Master of the Doric

Lodge of Perfection, the Sovereign Prince of the Ionic Council of Princes of Jerusalem, and is looking forward to serving as the Most Wise Master of the Corinthian Chapter of Rose Croix. He is making his way through the line of the Lafayette Consistory, serving the valleys of Waterbury, New Haven and Bridgeport, and currently holds the position of 1st Lieutenant Commander. He is a Past Monarch of Zindah Grotto, and the current secretary / treasurer of Chapter 15 of the Masonic Motorcycle Club, International. For his efforts, and in recognition of his contributions, Hal has been honored by receiving the Harmony Lodge Robert S. Walker service award, the Frederick Lorenson Meritorious Service Award from the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasons, and the York Rite Sovereign College Service award.

In all things, Hal has felt and seen the hand of the Grand Architect of the Universe, protecting, guiding, and supporting him. It is through His Grace that the many blessings Hal has enjoyed have come. First and foremost, he is grateful for the blessings of family and friends. For the blessings of health and happiness and for the blessings of the ability to serve others. It is with great humility and the utmost faith in the Grand Architect and his plan, that Hal looks forward to the challenges, labors, and joys yet to come.