

Information on the Benevolent and Protective Order of Reindeer

Compiled by Seth Anthony of the Virtual Museum of Fezology – Copyright 2011

Background: Communicated to Seth Anthony, Curator of the Virtual Museum of Fezology by Mr. Charlie Hall, Past Grand Director Elect of the BPOR. Mr. Hall resides in FL, but remains a member in NJ. Conversation occurred on September 30, 2011, around 9:30 AM and lasted for roughly a half an hour.

Organization History:

- First conference as Reindeer occurred in the Spring of 1923, with the first annual convention being held in September of that same year. Conventions have been held in September since that time. It was thought that the first Convention took place in Atlantic City, NJ, but it is now believed to have occurred in Newark, NJ.
- As of the date of the conversation, the Reindeer have approximately 500 members meeting in roughly 8 Lodges. They are located in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, and New Jersey.
 - Richmond
 - Norfolk
 - Baltimore
 - Another in Maryland
 - Delaware
 - Asbury Park
 - Another in NJ
 - Philadelphia
- Of those 500 members, roughly 400 are over the age of 65. The remaining 100 vary between 40 and 60.
- There is some movement for the group to try to start a college Lodge.
- The group still uses a ritual that is very similar to the Moose and the Elks, however it was written specifically for the Reindeer. However, this is discussion about relaxing the required use of the ceremonies and relaxing some of the Constitutional requirements on Lodges in an effort to gain membership.
- The group recently sold two of its buildings, leaving four currently in their possession. One is in Philadelphia, another in Asbury Park, NJ.
- The Lodge in Asbury Park is not regular in its reporting but remains active.
- Most of the historical documents and artifacts are housed in the Lodge in Philadelphia.
- The Reindeer also have a lady's auxiliary. It is not clear if the above numbers include members in this organization as well.
- The Reindeer used to support Sickle Cell Anemia research but have more recently moved to supporting the Covenant House, as it's a charity that is located in many of the cities where their Lodges are.

Officer Information:

- Local bodies are divided into Lodges for men and Chapters for women.
- Lodges are led by a “Director” while Chapters are led by a “Most Noble Queen.”
- The Grand Lodge / Chapter is not a state level body, but rather a national one, covering all of the remaining Lodges.
- The leader of the Grand Lodge is the Grand Director. Upon completion of a term as Grand Director, which lasts one year, the man becomes a Past Grand Director Elect. The title of Past Grand Director can be conferred as an honorary one.
- Any man who has served as a Grand Director, or has been honored with the title of Past Grand Director, may become a member of the Grand Director’s Forum. This group operates within the organization to advise the current Grand Director.
- The Chapter is led by the Grand Most Noble Queen. It is structured similarly to the men’s side of the organization.

Regalia Information:

- Officers of a local Lodge wear a maroon fez with a yellow tassel. It usually contains an embroidered or rhinestone reindeer along with the name of the city in which the Lodge meets.
- Officers of a local Chapter wear a white fez with a blue tassel. As with the men’s group, it bears a reindeer with information on which local Chapter the wearer is from.
- Upon being elected to the Grand Lodge, whether through election as an officer or conferral of an honorary title, the men’s fez changes to white. Once elected Grand Director, the man will wear a black tassel for the remainder of his career. If an honorary title was bestowed his tassel will remain yellow.
- Upon being elected to the Grand Chapter, whether through election as an officer or conferral of an honorary title, the women’s fez changes from white to blue. Once elected Grand Most Noble Queen, the lady will wear a black tassel for the remainder of her career. If an honorary title was bestowed her tassel will remain blue.
- The fezzes for the organization were originally made by a Mr. and Mrs. Lewis of Queens, NY. They were well known in the African American fraternal world and made fezzes and regalia for several organizations. Mr. Lewis has since passed on and his wife, Rita, is no longer in touch with the Reindeer.
- More recent fezzes have been produced by a regalia house in Philadelphia.

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