

DISASTER RELIEF HOW IT HELPS

By Richard E Fleteher, PGM VT. Executive Secretary, MSA

When a natural disaster occurs, the Grand Jurisdiction(s) affected may request the MSA to make an appeal for assistance to all U.S. and Canadian Lodges.

Our first disaster relief appeal was in 1923 to help the victims of an earthquake in Japan. Since that time more than 35 appeals have been made (see complete list on pages 7-8) on behalf of individual Grand Lodges.

We also funded Masonic Service Centers from 1941-1946. These Centers were places where servicemen and women could go and have "a little touch of home".

From these Service Centers evolved the Hospital Visitation Program which is still our major charitable endeavor.

When a disaster relief appeal is made, all of the monies received are sent, in their entirety, to the Grand Jurisdiction involved. No portion of donated funds is retained by the MSA for any reason whatsoever. All costs connected with the appeal are absorbed through our regular operating budget. All donated funds are given to help the recovery within the Grand Jurisdiction for whom the appeal was made. Also, every gift is acknowledged by the MSA.

We thought it might be of interest to our readers to be able to see some of the responses we have received from within the jurisdictions that have been helped.

1989 Hurricane Hugo

The damage caused by Hurricane Hugo in South Carolina has been reported very extensively. However, less well known was the damage caused in Puerto Rico. We did put out an appeal for both Grand Lodges. A letter from the Grand Lodge of Puerto Rico gives an account of the damages,

"St. Croix Virgin Islands. The whole Island was flattened by the Hurricane. The lodge was unable to work and dispensation was granted to remain dark until the end of the month of December 1989. All members of the lodge experienced a shortage of Food, clean, clothing and gas. Basic services such as water distribution, electricity and telephone service, all were broken down. Looting and vandalism were, in the early days, the order of business. At the present we are engaged in the reconstruction of all the homes of the Brethren. "

1992 Hurricanes Andrew and Iniki

An appeal was put out on behalf of the Grand Lodges of Florida and Louisiana for Hurricane Andrew and the Grand Lodge of Hawaii because of Hurricane Iniki. At the time the hurricane struck David K. Lindsey, Jr. was the Grand Master in Hawaii and we are quoting his words concerning the hurricane.

"Hurricane Iniki struck the Island of Kauai on September 11, 1992. The force of 165 mile per hour winds and the crashing surf combined to devastate the Island of Kauai. Never in the recorded history of Hawaii has a hurricane of such violent intensity struck our lovely Islands. Our main Island of Oahu sustained some damage but nothing of the magnitude suffered by the Island of Kauai."

Later, after funds had been sent to Hawaii and then in response to an appeal for the flooding in the Midwest, Kauai Masonic Lodge sent a contribution and also a letter from which we quote.

"When the Kauai Lodge in Hawaii was hit by Hurricane Iniki, the mainland lodges put their hearts together and sent us donations.

"This relief money helped the Brethren put their lives back together and for some it was all that they received, because the insurance company went broke."

Grand Master Richard Lynn of Florida had this to say about the disaster relief assistance:

"There was a small lodge in Homestead, Florida that received some damage but was not totally shut down. It had no power, it had no running water. But the day after the storm they served 2,000 hot meals to people who came into the lodge building. There were National Guard who had no food because they had not got their rations yet, there were policemen, there were farm workers; they were helped by the Masons and their families. Seven families lived inside the lodge room for two and a half weeks while they awaited a safe haven.

"The monies that were sent to Florida were spent on such things as a trailer for a Mother Advisor of a Rainbow Assembly and her daughters who were living in the back seat of a Toyota.

"Immediately we responded (with the assistance of Mahi Shrine) in gathering materials and distributing them in individual bags. Not only to Masons but to residents all over the Homestead and Florida City area. We distributed bottles of water, canned goods, tooth brushes, toothpaste, toilet paper, the things that they had totally lost. Over 2,000 bags were distributed in the first four days following the storm and in most cases the first people that some of the residents saw in their neighborhood, because they were afraid to leave their homes because of looters, were Masons carrying these bags."

1993 Midwest Flooding

An appeal went out on behalf of six Grand Lodges: Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota as a result of severe flooding encountered during the summer months of 1993. Saline Lodge #226 of St. Mary's, Missouri wrote the following letter which we quote in part.

"Saline Lodge #226 A.F. & A.M. opened a relief center in the basement of the lodge on July 30, 1993 for the benefit of all flood victims of the area which included residents of St. Mary's, Missouri and Kaskaskia Island, Illinois. This center remained open until September 4, 1993.

"Storage was provided in the basement for furniture and belongings of flood victims prior to and after the opening of the relief center. The lodge was contacted by a local bank requesting permission to set up a portable banking facility on lodge property. As a result a mobile banking unit was based in the lodge parking lot.

"This center provided relief in the form of canned goods, cereal, soda, bottled water, dog and cat food, diapers, personal items such as combs, shampoo, toothpaste and toothbrushes, soap and deodorant. Milk, bread, eggs and ice were provided daily, as these items could not be obtained locally from any other source. When the flood waters started to recede items necessary for clean-up such as boots, shovels, mops, etc., were provided as needed."

The intent of quoting from these letters is to give Masons an idea of how the monies that are given to these appeals are actually used. There are many more letters that were received and we can assure you that the uses of the funds are many and varied. The letters we have used are simply to illustrate how some lodges and Masons have responded to critical need. They are representative of all of the great work done by Masons in helping to overcome adversity.

When you have an opportunity to read the many letters that come with the checks, you have a very wonderful feeling toward the Fraternity. It is a pleasure to be a part of this kind of outreach.

The concluding pages of this Short Talk Bulletin are a summary of all the Disaster Relief Appeals that have been put out by the Masonic Service Association.

Summary of Masonic Relief

- Japanese Earthquake Relief 1923 \$1,577.25
- Florida Hurricane 1926 114,236.97
- Mississippi Valley Flood 1927 608,291.91
- Puerto Rico Hurricane 1928 86,316.58
- Florida Hurricane 1928 107,622.14
- Kentucky Flood 1937 33,771.01
- Austrian Relief Fund 1938 5,202.36
- Chilean Earthquake 1939 7,387.27
- Philippine Relief Fund 1945 46,798.46
- Ecuador Relief Fund 1949 20,734.51
- Manitoba Relief Fund 1950 19,210.44
- Holland Relief Fund 1953 29,985.32
- Tamaulipas Relief Fund 1955 18,024.42
- Miscellaneous Relief 1958 1,000.00
- Chilean Relief 1960 11,436.75
- Cuban Relief 1962 54,718.90
- Louisiana Hurricane Relief 1965 59,395.54

- Italy Flood Relief 1967 20,008.68
- Mississippi Relief 1969 87,367.33
- Peru Relief 1970 19,220.82
- Philippine Flood Relief 1972 5,960.00
- Nicaragua Earthquake Relief 1973 13,696.60
- Honduras Relief 1974 7,320.00
- Guatemala Relief 1976 66,130.26
- Mississippi Flood Relief 1979 80,560.63
- Dominican Republic Disaster 1979 32,859.55
- Chilean Earthquake 1985 36,927.00
- Florida Hurricane 1985 20,244.00
- Mexico Earthquake 1985 6,220.00 Colombian Earthquake 1988 100.00
- Chilean Flood 1988 32,500.00
- South Carolina Hurricane 1989 243,325.00
- Puerto Rico Hurricane 1989 45,625.00
- California Earthquake 1989 62,000.00
- Philippine Islands Flood 1991 30,500.00 Florida Hurricane 1992 279,750.00
- Louisiana Hurricane 1992 243,150.00
- Hawaii Hurricane 1992 76,900.00
- Iowa Flood 1993 126,600.00
- Illinois Flood 1993 103,775.00
- Missouri Flood 1993 88,225.00
- Kansas Flood 1993 47,850.00
- Nebraska Flood 1993 47,825.00
- South Dakota Flood 1993 46,650.00

Total 3,096,999.70

- Masonic Service Centers 1941-1946 1,538,334.42
- European Masonic Relief 1946-1955 206,780.51
- Hospital Visitation Program 1946-1993 11,644,956.00

Grand Total 16,487,070.63