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*—excerpt from The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill, by William Manchester*



## The Toast

A Program of Events to honor Sir Winston Churchill  
on the Auspicious Anniversary of his Birth.

*Sir Winston Churchill Lodge #351  
A.F. & A.M. of Minnesota  
Adopted in this form, 2009, updated 2022*

This document contains the order of events, forms and language used in a Toast to Churchill's Immortal Memory. This ceremony reminds us of honor given to other noblest heroes of the British Pantheon: Shakespeare, the Bard of Stratford ("To the Bard!"); Admiral Lord Nelson, the Hero of The Line ("To Nelson, and those who fell with him!"); and the Poet, Robert Burns ("To the Wee Poet!"). Churchill stands with them. As written, the ceremony includes notes for timing of dinner, additional speeches, and a simple closing.

The script for the evening begins after this page.

## Order of Events

- Gathering Hour, 6:00 PM
- Lodge Stated Meeting, 7:00 PM
- Call to Remembrance (Opening), 8:00 PM
- Churchill, Forged into Manhood, 8:05 PM
- Churchill, the One, Indispensable Man, 8:15 PM
- Churchill, Our Patron and Example, 8:25 PM
- The Toast, 8:29 PM
- Dessert, and Afterglow

## 🌀 Gathering Hour

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*Advise participants to gather at approximately sixty minutes before the appointed hour of the toast, at the appointed venue.*

*Churchill was born at 1:30AM on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1874. In the US Central Time Zone, (-6 hours GMT during the winter months) the actual birth anniversary at that time of year would occur at 7:30PM on the day prior, that is, November 29<sup>th</sup>. Convenience would allow the Master to declare the toast on either the 30<sup>th</sup> or the 29<sup>th</sup>, at his option. But a 7:30PM order to “raise your glasses, (ladies and) gentlemen” is the preferred hour.*

*[In 2022 we will time the Third Toast to occur at 8:30PM, due to timing.]*

*Guests may enjoy dinner or appetizers before the Toast, or the lodge may declare a more formal meal with the toast to occur mid-course - at the Master's option. Whether formal or informal, a cordial welcome is most important: the officers should be present to greet and attend to guests as they arrive.*

*Lest memory fade, this script was written as a group effort. The general format, the concept for the event and the script was developed by Thomas Jackson. Jason Berger wrote the first toast. Paul Hardt wrote the second toast, and Jackson wrote the third toast; each borrowing in turn from Churchill's writings, or Manchester's, or those of other historians. A Prophet said, “There is nothing new under the sun.” Thus we expect time, place and talent will inspire further evolution of the Toast program; future readers may reuse the Birthday Toast script and may edit it at will. Your future mention that this event was originated by the group of us from Churchill Lodge, in Minnesota, in 2009, with instructions how to reach us at [www.ChurchillLodge.org](http://www.ChurchillLodge.org), is all we ask.*

## ☞ The Opening

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**Toast Master** Brethren and friends, welcome.

This day in late November in the waning of the year, for some, hints at what lies ahead: Winter. Bleak days and cold nights. We watch the Sun flee from us as dark days grow to be their longest.

Yet as the writer Albert Camus said, “In the midst of Winter, I discovered there was in me, an Indomitable Summer.” So too, the World discovered, in anticipation of its need, a great soul born this day, in England, in 1874. A child of English and of American parents, Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, later to be named Prime Minister, twice, and in 1954 honored as Sir Knight of the Order of the Garter, England’s highest honor. Made an honorary citizen of these United States -- also Cuba, interestingly – Yes, Churchill was born this day. In meeting and defeating the darkness the World endured in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, this unforeseen child was to grow up to become the one, indispensable man.

I do not think it out of place speaking of the baby Churchill. In fact, he often remarked that he noticed that all newborn babies tended to look like him.

My friends, we are met to honor Sir Winston Churchill on his birthday. For this we have a very simple ceremony.

Three of us have prepared short remarks which will be followed by a toast. Mine will conclude at 7:29, at which point I will recite an old poem written to honor our Brother Churchill. With the completion of that toast, or “health” the formal events of the evening will be at an end.

Churchill was born during the reign of Queen Victoria, at the height of Britain’s Empire. An aristocrat, and son of England, he would know that, noting our previous metaphor, “the sun never sets upon the English Empire.” And thus when Winter came, Churchill instinctively knew that the Sun still shone upon blessed England, no matter how dire the situation, how bleak the hour.

It is instructive to ask, as a young man, what lessons of character forged our Patron?

To give us a glimpse, I ask Bro. Joey Torkildson to stand, for Sir Winston. Joey?

First Story  
Joey  
Torkildson

Good Evening.

Some call this, “Churchill’s Great Escape”

I was intrigued by the story I am about to tell you because Churchill became a sort of “Action Hero” long before television. Before our modern era, when men and women carefully craft their images to fit the global medium. Our Brother Winston was the *genuine article*, and this was his first of many great adventures.

Having come in third in a race for the Oldham seat in Parliament at age 24, young Churchill looked about for some other opportunity to advance his career. On October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1899, the Second Boer War between Britain and the Boer Republics, or Dutch Afrikaners, broke out and he obtained a commission to act as war correspondent for the Morning Post with a salary of £250 per month. After some weeks in exposed areas he accompanied a scouting expedition in an armored train. This train was thrown off the tracks by a Boer ambush and explosion. Churchill, though not officially a combatant, took charge of operations to get the track cleared and managed to ensure that the engine and half the train, carrying the wounded, could escape. His actions later led to speculation that he would be awarded the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest award for

gallantry in the face of the enemy, but this did not occur. At the time, Churchill, was not so lucky and, together with other officers and soldiers was captured and held in a POW camp in Pretoria, despite the fact that he was a non-combatant. In his book, *London to Ladysmith via Pretoria*, a collected version of his war reports, he described the experience:

**“I have had, in the last four years, the advantage, if it be an advantage, of many strange and varied experiences, from which the student of realities might draw profit and instruction. But nothing was so thrilling as this: to wait and struggle among these clanging, rending iron boxes, with the repeated explosions of the shells and the artillery, the noise of the projectiles striking the cars, the hiss as they passed in the air, the grunting and puffing of the engine—the poor, tortured thing, hammered by at least a dozen shells, any one of which, by penetrating the boiler, might have made an end of all—the expectation of destruction as a matter of course, the realization of powerlessness, and the alternations of hope and despair--all this for seventy minutes by the clock with only four inches of twisted iron work to make the difference between danger, captivity, and shame on the one hand--safety, freedom, and triumph on the other.”**

Immediately, he began closely monitoring the guards and realized that there was a gap in their routine when no one was watching the 10-ft. wall surrounding his building. So, Churchill decided to make a break for it. But first, he needed to settle some accounts. Being the gentleman that he was, he paid his bill with the Boer shopkeeper who'd sold him tobacco, and he wrote a note of thanks and apology to the Boer Minister of War, who had befriended him. Only then did he scale the wall.

Churchill managed to escape from his prison camp, resulting in a long-running criticism and controversy as it was claimed that he did not wait for his partner Haldane and another man who had planned the escape, but who were unable, or unwilling, to risk slipping over the fence when Churchill did. Once outside the Pretoria prison camp Churchill travelled almost 300 miles (480 km) to the Portuguese colony of Lourenço Marques in Delagoa Bay. Churchill ran to a nearby villa, where he waited until he was able to hop on a passing train. For several more days, he followed the rail lines, sleeping in ditches, stealing food where he could, and fishing newspapers out of trash bins to read about the manhunt pursuing him. He was aided by an English mine manager who hid him down his mine and smuggled him onto a train headed out of Boer territory.

Well. His escape made him a national hero for a time in Britain, though instead of returning home he rejoined General Buller's army on its march to relieve the British at the Siege of Ladysmith and take Pretoria. This time, although continuing as a war correspondent, he gained a full military commission in the South African Light Horse Brigade. He was among the first British troops into Ladysmith and Pretoria. He and his cousin, the Duke of Marlborough, were able to advance ahead of the rest of the troops in Pretoria, where they demanded and received the surrender of 52 Boer prison camp guards.

In 1900, Churchill returned to England on the *RMS Dunottar Castle*, the same ship on which he set sail for South Africa eight months earlier. Churchill stood again for parliament in Oldham in the general election of 1900 and won. After the 1900 general election he embarked on a speaking tour of Britain, followed by tours of the United States and Canada. Coupled with his writings in 1900 to 1901 he earned in excess of £10,000, a princely sum at the time.

The fact that the adventures he described sometimes did not happen *exactly* the way he related them didn't seem to bother anyone. William Manchester wrote: 'Virtually every event he [Churchill] described in South



Africa, as in Cuba, on the North-West Frontier, and at Omdurman, was witnessed by others with whom recollections were consistent. The difference, of course, lay in the interpretation.'

In the course of this adventure, we could see the many facets of his character; **Determination** to overcome his electoral loss; **Courage** to take charge and save lives in the face of enemy fire; **Resourcefulness** in eluding his captors, and unswerving **Dedication** to aid his countrymen by returning to face and ultimately defeat those who had been his masters. Above all, I would give a toast to his **Audacity**.

**First Toast** To Audacity!  
**Joey**  
**Torkildson**

**Toast Master** [*Pause here until 7:15*]  
Winston Churchill's character in action is well known to us here tonight. His timeless words are as applicable to us today as they were then, uttered as the balance of light and darkness, freedom and tyranny hung by a thread.

Joey told us a story of how Churchill's character was formed.

I now ask Wor. Scott Hughes to come up for our second story and toast, on the subject of Churchill's character as it was exhibited during the Battle of Britain. He agreed to regale us with some of Churchill's own words of courage and comfort in those dark times.

**Second Story  
Scott Hughes**

As I was thinking about what I would say tonight in honor of the birthday of our Patron, Sir Winston Churchill, a radical thought came to me: what would our world have been like, if Winston Churchill had not been born?

How would we have fared, during those fateful years between 1939 and 1945, if the people of the world had not heard these words:

**“Never give in, never give in,  
Never, never, never, never—  
In nothing, great or small, large or petty—  
Never give in, except to convictions of  
honor and good sense.”**

Or how would history have turned, if Americans had not heard these words:

**“We shall not fail or falter; we shall not  
weaken or tire. Neither the sudden shock  
of battle, nor the long-drawn trials of  
vigilance and exertion will wear us down.**

**Give us the tools, and we will finish the job.”**

How would the history of civilization had been impoverished, if the people of the world had not heard these words:

**“We shall not flag or fail...We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God’s good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the Old.”**

Yes, brothers and friends. It is almost impossible to think of the middle years of the 20th Century, and think of them with no Winston Churchill. Few people in the history of the world could be called irreplaceable. Yet the Masons of this lodge, supported by

all who would dare to read the unvarnished, awesome and ennobling history of Western Civilization, would agree that Brother Winston Churchill comes as close as any human can, to be considered unique and irreplaceable.

Brethren, I note that that in nearly all of Brother Churchill's public pronouncements, in all his long life, it was Masonic ideals of integrity, fortitude, and charity, which animated his words.

So, brothers and friends, when we face our difficulties and challenges, let us be inspired by Bro. Churchill's exhortation to the British and the people of the world:

**“What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States,**

including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'”

Second Toast  
Scott Hughes

Brothers and friends, to OUR finest hour.

Toast Master

The hour draws nigh.

Third Story

Churchill inspired his nation to greatness. But there was greatness there, waiting to be nurtured, to be pressed into service. He was the one who reminded Englishmen, and all the West, of what we all strove to protect when we labored to save our civilization.

The lesson I would draw from his time to today, is that a free society can never become complacent, can never forfeit its guard, without risking the future. For there are always villains who would take everything away from us.

Churchill knew the threat from fascism, the heavy boot of state control; *and fascism exists today*. Churchill knew the threat from militant

and fanatical religions, *and I need remind no American they exist today*. Churchill knew the threat from self- or national-delusion. Of appeasement, denial, lack of preparation – and he fought to turn England from an embrace of that perilous and ultimately self-destructive course, to a vigorous, clear-eyed and confident response to evil. May *we* heed his warnings, too.

The historian, William Manchester, wrote about Churchill's fight against the appeasers, those deluded souls, in his book, "The Last Lion," saying:

**"Their end came when the House of Commons, in a revolt of conscience, wrenched power from them and summoned to the colors the one man who had foretold all that had passed, who had tried, year after year, alone and mocked, to prevent the war by urging the only policy which would have done the job. And now, in the desperate Spring of 1940, with the reins of power at last firm in his grasp, he [Churchill] resolved to lead Britain and her fading empire in one last great struggle worthy of all they had been and meant, to arm the nation, not only with weapons but also with the mace of honor, creating in every English breast a soul beneath the ribs of death."**

And so, on the day, hour, and minute of Churchill's birth, I wish to propose a Toast, in the form of a poem:

Third Toast  
Thomas  
Jackson

**To Sir Winston Spencer Churchill,  
the Last Lion, he was named.  
Wresting power from the feckless,  
and the Clarion from the shamed  
He taught us; led, inspired us,  
"Shoulder on, boys!," he exclaimed; thus  
by Fortitude, Bravery, and Honor,  
was the Scepter'd Isle sustained.**

**May his memory and example,  
lead us to greater still, works  
of noble English courage, for  
the West needs heroes;**

**and ever, ever, ever will.**

To Sir Winston Spencer Churchill

Huzzah! Huzzah! Huzzah!

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We'll see you at next year's Toast.

*[Cede podium to the Master, who will conclude the event after his remarks. If preferred, he may offer a "9 O'clock toast to our departed brethren, at the stroke of that hour.]*