

International Masonic Brotherhood Comes to La Mesa

La Mesa Masonic Lodge's sister Lodge was Acacia Lodge #8 of Tecate, Mexico. With Grand Lodge approval, each lodge tried to host the other once a year to confer a degree according to their respective Grand Lodge rituals. For over a quarter century, beginning in 1961 with the inaugural visit of Acacia Lodge #8 to La Mesa Lodge, these visits took place each year. In recent years, the increasing level of security at the border crossings has caused a cessation in these visits, much to the chagrin of the two lodges.³⁷

In a major event for San Diego Masonry and the La Mesa Lodge in particular, on June 26th, 1961, brother Masons from the Baja California area crossed the international border and traveled to La Mesa for a banquet and celebration of Masonic Brotherhood. They were escorted from the border to La Mesa by nine members of the motorcycle club of the Al Bahr Shrine. There were approximately 400 Masons assembled for the banquet and following ceremony (350 members from La Mesa Lodge, and about 60 brothers from Mexico). The guests were welcomed to La Mesa by City Councilman H. Vance Baker, a Brother of La Mesa Lodge. Mexican Freemasonry was represented by several leaders of Baja California Masonic Lodges, including Joaquin Aguilar Robles of Tijuana (Grand Master of Masons in Baja California), Jesus Gerardo, Mayor of Rosarito Beach, and Sostenes Gomez Bombat, Master of the Tecate Lodge. Additionally, members from Rosarita Beach, Ensenada, and Tijuana attended.



Figure 21 Leaders of Baja California Masonry arrive at La Mesa Lodge #407

³⁷ In 2006 the Grand Master of Masons in California declared the majority of Mexican Masonic Lodges, including Acacia Lodge #8, to be clandestine. Until this restriction is lifted, La Mesa Lodge is unable to renew its longstanding association with Acacia Lodge #8.





Figure 22 Most Worshipful Joseph L. Shell welcomes the Grand Master of Baja California



Figure 23 Banquet celebrating International Masonic Brotherhood



Figure 24 Brothers breaking bread together



Culminating an afternoon of brotherhood, on June 26th, 1961, Acacia Lodge No. 8, Tecate, Baja California, Mexico, with the approval of the Most Worshipful Alfred Breslauer, Grand Master of Masons in California and with the approval of the Grand Lodge of Mexico, opened their Lodge in our temple and conferred the Master Mason degree on three of their candidates. This was the first time in history that degrees had been conferred by Mexican Lodges in the United States.



Figure 25 Acacia Lodge #8 in the East at La Mesa Lodge #407



Figure 26 Acacia Lodge #8 in the South and West at La Mesa Lodge #407



A diploma commemorating the event was presented to La Mesa Lodge by the Worshipful Master of Acacia Lodge #8, Brother Sostenes Gomez Bombat.

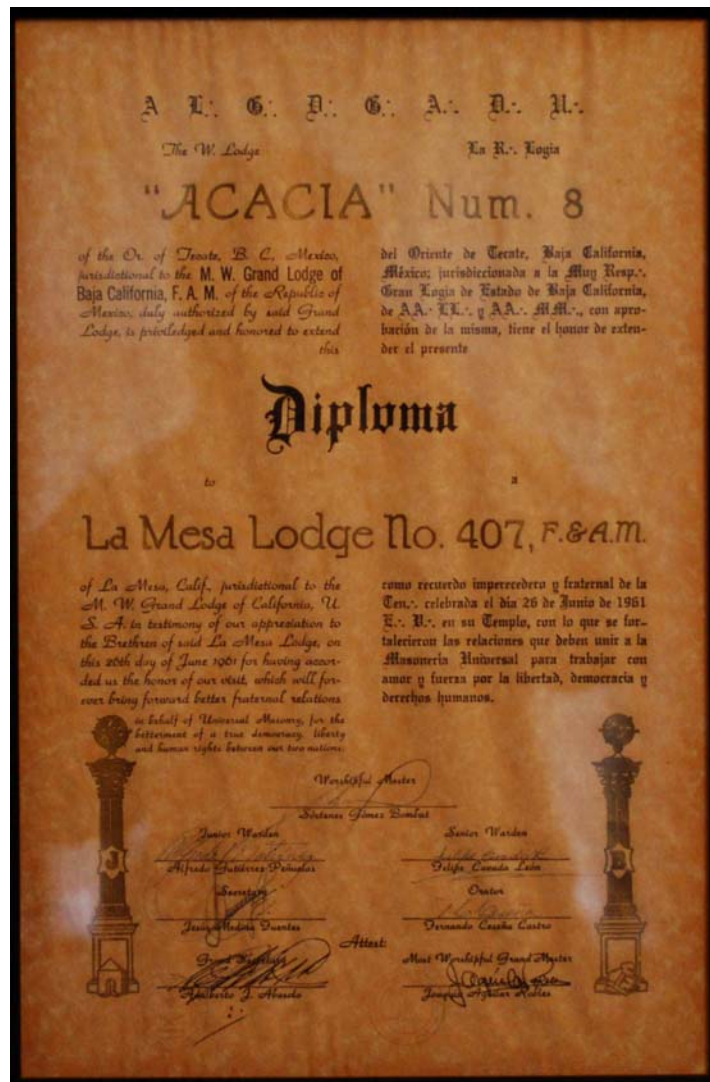


Figure 27 Diploma presented by Acacia Lodge #8

In 2003, Worshipful Fillpot reminisced about the event:

"It was not an easy event to get started. John Heap, one of my officers had visited Tecate and suggested that we invite them to La Mesa as a gesture of fraternal friendship, across the border. At a stated meeting we voted to request permission from Grand Lodge, allowing them to put on a third degree in La Mesa Lodge. To follow protocol we submitted our request to our Inspector, who forwarded it to the Senior Inspector in San Diego, who said "No, you are too busy with degrees". At that time we had degrees on every Monday and



Thursday nights; four candidates per night for First Degree, five candidates for Second Degree and two candidates for Third Degree.

"When I reported this to the lodge, John Haslam said, as the master it was my duty to get this before the Grand Master. I had no idea of how to handle this. Fortunately, I received a phone call from Superior Court Judge Joe Shell, Past Grand Master, who said the Grand Master was coming down to Coronado for a school dedication. He said "since you are President of the San Diego County Masonic Officers Association, I want you to be the acting Grand Sword Bearer and please pick him up at the airport and take him to Coronado, where I will meet you". So I had the opportunity to explain our request to Grand Master Alfred Breslauer. He approved and said he was meeting the Grand Master of Baja California that evening and would discuss it with him.

"The night Tecate Lodge made its visit (June 29th, 1961) they had 60 members crossing the border. Included were the Mayors of Tecate, Tijuana, and Rosa Rita Beach, along with the Governor of Baja California who was the Grand Master of Baja California. They were escorted from the border by nine members of Al Bahr Shrine motorcycle club, dressed in white and gold uniforms with a red fez. They were led by a California Highway Patrol car driven by Captain Casey Horde of La Mesa Lodge. Greeting them upon their arrival with a battery of three times three were 340 masons in white aprons lining both sides of Date Street."





Figure 28 Joseph Shell, Past Grand Master of California and Joaquin Robles, Grand Master Baja California



Figure 29 Acacia Lodge #8, Tecate, Baja California

Over the years, the La Mesa Lodge maintained a program of annual visitations to our Brothers in Tijuana and Baja California. In 1969, the officers and many members of the La Mesa Lodge visited Acacia Lodge, and in the first occasion of



a Lodge in the Grand Jurisdiction of California doing so, opened as a California Lodge and conferred the Third Degree upon Brother Raney.³⁸

Present for this event were the Inspector of the 638th Masonic District of California, Worshipful John Mikol, as well as the most venerable Joachin Robles, Past Grand Master of Masons in the Grand Jurisdiction of Baja California, Mexico; the Venerable Silverio Romero, Masonic Inspector in Baja California, Mexico, the Venerable Aljandro Robles Ibarra, Master of the Acacia Lodge, and Worshipful Tom Owen, Master of La Mesa Lodge.

The Brothers over the years have participated in several visits to orphanages in the Tecate area to help the less fortunate. These visits have served to cement the bonds of brotherly love, relief and truth that hold all Masons together on the level.



Figure 30 La Mesa Brothers working at a Tecate Orphanage

³⁸ La Mesa Lodge #407 Trestleboard, November 1969.





Figure 31 Our Friends in Tecate and their home

Again, continuing the longstanding tradition of fraternal ties with our brothers in Baja California, the Lodge visited Acacia Lodge #8 in Tecate in June of 1986 and marked twenty-five years of fraternal visits between the two lodges. The brethren of Acacia Lodge presented a program to honor the Saints John, and marked the occasion with a testimonial.



Figure 32 Testimonial Marking 25 Years of Visits

