

draft but may be quoted...illustrations are 1-16

## SOCIAL CAPITAL, BOWLING ALONE, AND THE FREEMASONS

Paul Rich *FRHistS FRSAnt*

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1. at start on screen



The Policy Studies Organization headquarters are in a historic building a few blocks from the White House, and we are always glad to welcome you. We publish 36 academic journals and about 160 books a year, along with hosting eight international conferences. A few here today will recall as ancient history that these international congresses, eight so far, began in Edinburgh years ago, and continue in Paris with the Policy Studies Organization and French Masonic organizations' support. They have demonstrated that studying fraternal movements and their connections with social capital is an international, research that is truly across borders. All of us have cause to be very grateful for the overwhelming hospitality we enjoy here in Paris, and to warmly thank our French friends for sharing the unique resources of this great city, and particularly for the extraordinary efforts of Daniel Gutierrez, executive director of PSO, and Pierre Mollier, whom we all view with so much admiration as a multi-talented amazing scholar.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre\\_Mollier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Mollier))

Looking ahead, there surely are many areas of research that should deserve our attention in years to come, decidedly so the compagnonnage, ably represented at our meetings by Jean-Michel Mathonière

( [https://www.amazon.fr/Jean-Michel-Mathoni%25C3%25A8re/e/B005LIFRVS%3Fref=db\\_s\\_a\\_mng\\_rwt\\_scns\\_sharebut](https://www.amazon.fr/Jean-Michel-Mathoni%25C3%25A8re/e/B005LIFRVS%3Fref=db_s_a_mng_rwt_scns_sharebut) )

And the gender aspects, which have been impressively marshaled for us this year by Cecile Revauger:((<http://revaugercecile.over-blog.com/>)

Latin America by Guillermo de los Reyes vice president of the PSO.

([https://www.uh.edu/class/spanish/faculty/delosreyes\\_g/](https://www.uh.edu/class/spanish/faculty/delosreyes_g/))

The origins of the English Craft have been impressively explored by Professors Andrew Prescott and Susan Sommers.

(<https://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/critical/staff/andrewprescott/#publications>. <https://www.stvincent.edu/directory/faculty-staff/faculty/susan-sommers.html>)

Central in importance to the congresses is the pertinence of the Enlightenment, a subject in which Margaret Jacob towers with her extraordinary work of such lasting influence.

(<https://history.ucla.edu/faculty/margaret-jacob-2>)

So many presentations at these congresses have been so noteworthy and full of promise for the future. Many others have made this so significant a gathering. Thank you all. I was asked for today to look back over our past congresses as to what they had involved. I did the work assigned me and want to discuss the years when we have met here as hedgehogs and foxes, and the directions that our fraternal research might take at future congresses

2.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e54emSMDyfk>

To be sure, Freemasonry in has dominated these congresses, and that is a reflection of its long history, the large archival resources, and the fact that it is a living institution. We do not think the topics discussed by the congresses are going to be the be all of academia, and we try to avoid the pitfalls of mono-causality in addressing concerns of the congress in our journal *Ritual*, to which we invite you to contribute:

3.

<https://www.rscsjournal.org/volume-8-number-1-spring-2021.html>

and the Westphalia Library of Freemasonry, chaired by Joe Wages. I'll just scroll down its recent titles;

4.

<https://westphaliapress.org/freemasonry-and-ritual-library/>

I wanted to dress appropriately but I could not find cufflinks that had both foxes and hedgehogs together, so I got sets of both and split them, fox on one cuff and hedgehog on the other

5.





The difficulties of the search for finding them together suggest how difficult it is to combine both virtues. My survey of the eight congresses suggests that over the years that they have hosted more foxes than hedgehogs, along with presenters who have managed to combine the best of both species. In *Future Babble: Why Pundits are Hedgehogs and Foxes Know Best*, Daniel Gardiner claims that of foxes, “They like complexity and uncertainty, even if that means they can only draw cautious conclusions and they have to admit they could be wrong. ‘Maybe’ is fine with them. But not hedgehogs. They find complexity and uncertainty unacceptable. They want simple and certain answers.” (*Future Babble*, Penguin, New York 2011, 88.)

We are not monomaniacs and we do not think that Freemasonry and fraternities should be the predominant focus of a university curriculum, but conversely, we believe our topics deserve more of a place in academia than they have had. I would like to challenge all of us here -- as you constitute collectively a unique group of scholars with enormous power to steer future work -- to help enlarge the scope and influence of our studies, urging relevance to many areas of research, I suggest in years ahead we need to try harder to be both foxes and hedgehogs.

Here is a sculpture on the campus of Princeton University called *The Hedgehog and the Fox*. It embodies Isaiah Berlin's use of the ancient saying, “a fox knows many things while the hedgehog knows one big

thing.” Keep in mind Berlin’s remark that, “...there exists a great chasm between those, on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision...and, on the other side, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory”. (Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, Princeton University Press, 2013, 2.) The sculptor Richard Serra is asking about our choices with his sculpture hedgehog and Fox on the Princeton campus.

6.

<https://artmuseum.princeton.edu/video/learn/richard-serra-hedgehog-and-fox>

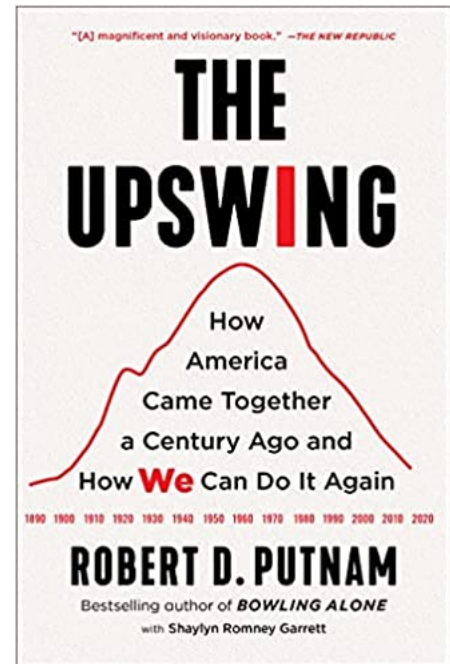
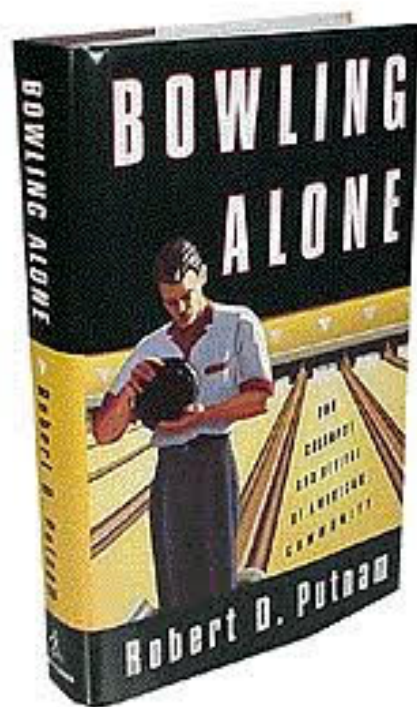
An [ancient Greek](#) poet first asserted that "a [fox](#) knows many things, but a [hedgehog](#) knows one big thing"). Famously Berlin used the idea to divide thinkers into hedgehogs, who pursued knowledge largely with a single theme, citing [Dante](#), [Hegel](#), [Proust](#), and foxes, including [Erasmus](#), [Shakespeare](#), [Molière](#), [Goethe](#),. I hope Berlin would have felt that most of us here today are trying to be both hedgehogs. and foxes

This approach to scholarship should of course be a two way street involving both those whose research involves ritualistic societies and those who have never considered them in depth. We need to prod those in other fields to pay attention to these matters that concern us, but we also need to demonstrate a greater view of our own subject. Too often Tolstoy and his *War and Peace* are discussed in the classroom with little regard to the pivotal role of Masonry, and Mozart's Masonic musical contributions get little explanation for concert goers. There is much to be gained by more sharing.

As an example of what has been too little discussed, take consideration of social capital that was fueled by Robert Putnam's famous book, *Bowling Alone*, and his recent reprisal *The Upswing*. I selected Professor Putnam’s work because it has been so much a part of social science discussion during the period since the inception of the congresses. He in respects has the popularity of a modern Alexis de Tocqueville. I was surprised how little it was mentioned in the hundreds of papers presented.



7.



*Bowling Alone* when it first appeared was often seized upon by Masons as evidence that lodges were a valuable component of democracy and their decline in America was a great loss, with membership shrinking from nearly four and a half million to less than one million and still descending. The discussion of Putnam as gone on in many places but in Masonic circles languished after the first surge of interest. Those of us who felt much more should be said on this have been lonely.

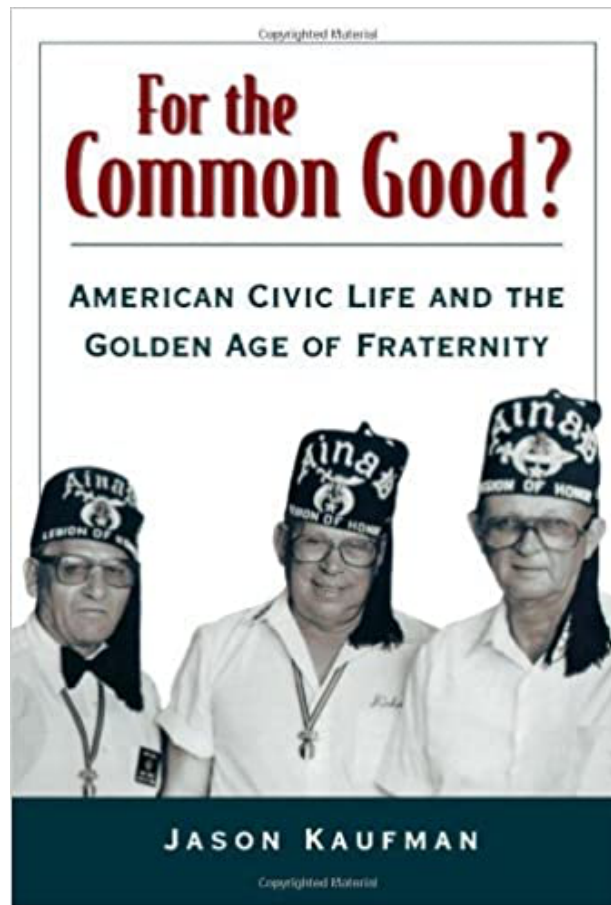
Certainly, by calling attention to the contributions of voluntary groups to social capital and to the sense of community, Professor Putnam performed a service, but he created questions in *Bowling Alone* that should have been more explored when he implied the decline in fraternal bodies was something of a recent crisis. Actually, a very substantial decline in fraternities started in the 1920s, which Putnam's own data showed but which he does not consider fully. (*Bowling Alone*, Revised Edition, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2020, 54-55)

Dr. Brent Morris was an exception to this lack of serious consideration by Masonic scholars and described this decline In his

book *A Radical in the East*. He records Odd Fellow membership in 1920 in America at 1,760,000 and in 1930 prior to the effects of the Great Depression at 1,316,000. The Knights of Pythias had 811,000 members in 1920 and 543,000 in 1930. The Masons momentarily bounced back in numbers after World War II, and Dr. Morris suggests that it is somewhat due to the membership being more open to working class membership: "...certain fundamental changes seem to have occurred in the membership of the Craft. At the same time, status seekers had abandoned lodges for ever more exclusive domains, such as country clubs. Into this vacuum moved a new class of initiate, no less sincere or principled than his earlier brothers, but slightly lower on the socioeconomic status; the working classes replaced the professional and business classes...yesterday's Masons are now in a country club." (S.Brent Morris, *A Radical in the East*, Westphalia Press, 2022, 20.)

Even while contradicted by his own sources, Professor Putnam asserts there is a recent crisis. He is somewhat of a hedgehog, convinced that our troubles are thanks to self-love, the deification of Me. To this hypothesis, fraternal scholarship can provide a valuable gloss based on its own troubles, one that has largely not been provided. I offer this as an example of how wider issues like this could be discussed by us in future congresses, applying specific research. With exceptions, contentions about a collapse of community were lightly investigated by Masonic scholars at the time. Moreover, social capital is not necessarily a good thing. Those within may be intolerant of those without. It fell to a non-Mason, a Harvard sociologist Professor Jason Kaufman to examine the situation critically in his book *For the Common Good?*.

8.



As his book title implies, Professor Kaufman was totally unconvinced that groups like the Masons were beneficial to democracy. Professor Kaufman writes, "Fortunately the decline of American associationism can be at least partly explained by the fact that contemporary Americans are increasingly more comfortable in associating with those of different ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds than they once were. Americans did not stop caring about their communities when they stopped clubbing together...the more we become a nation of equals, the less we need to be a nation of joiners." (Kaufman, 194. Putnam would disagree. See *Bowling Alone*, 355.)

At the urging of my Stanford colleague, Seymour Martin Lipset, I did reply critically to *Bowling Alone* in the *Annals* of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. An abstract summarizes: "Robert Putnam has suggested that membership in American voluntary associations has declined in recent decades. This contention has been challenged by various writers. The historical evidence indicates that associations come and go, reflecting changes in society. Using specific examples to prove there is a malaise that threatens democracy is a risky business. Some associations have simply failed to meet the needs of a better-educated, more discriminating public and have paid the price. A Darwinian process of selection goes on all the time among the many thousands of American groups. Different kinds of voluntarism are constantly being invented. For example, the Internet and



World Wide Web have created a whole new voluntary world, which is just beginning to find its voice."

9.

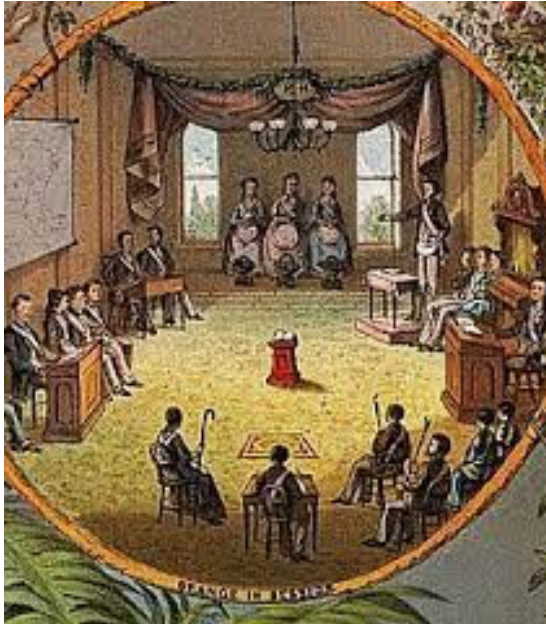
## **American Voluntarism, Social Capital, and Political Culture**

Paul Rich FRHistS *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol. 565, Civil Society and Democratization (Sep., 1999),

To emphasize then, the predominant Masonic reaction to *Bowling Alone* has been ironically to accept it as an endorsement of fraternal societies and an explanation for Masonic decline as originating from a general malaise that has overcome America. The willingness to use Professor Putnam's view of the growth of selfishness as it effects Freemasonry is more subjective than his many graphs suggest. The fact that women now can have careers instead of being in bridge clubs is hardly a loss. Is bowling a loss that joining internet groups does not compensate for. This is a debate close to some of the topics we research. The paucity of serious Masonic consideration of his thesis underlines the need for our giving attention here to what is happening outside our specialized scholarship, for us to be both foxes and hedgehogs.

Professor Putnam made little use of research on fraternities. In gathering his statistics he treated the American orders of the Shrine and Eastern Star as separate movements, when to join the Shrine, one must be a Mason and men who join the Eastern Star must be Masons and women who join must be related to a Mason. The decline portrayed in his statistics was thus given a triple boost as far as Masonry was concerned. As for another of his examples, the Grange, it was started by Masons for people in rural farming areas and with the extinction of many family farms and growth of vast agribusiness, the rural population steeply decreased. There simply were fewer people who could join.

10.



In my American Academy reply in the *Annals*, I stressed the rise of associations that have occupied space that the failing groups have yielded. As an example, take Putnam's mentioning a falling off in juvenile baseball supporters without crediting the enormous explosion in the numbers of soccer or European style football enthusiasts, which has given rise to the phrase Soccer Mom for the staggering number of women organized in clubs to support children's teams, with all their social activities.

11.

[https://www.amazon.com/Soccer-Leopard-Mothers-Day-T-Shirt/dp/B09WJNSDV1/ref=sr\\_1\\_4\\_sspa?keywords=soccer+mom+shirts+for+women&qid=1653007124&sr=8-4-spons&psc=1&spLa=ZW5jcnlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUFISk1SQzQ0N01CTjgmZW5jcnlwdGVkSWQ9QTA5NjM1MDgyNFIUMURCNFhQQzBKJmVuY3J5cHRIZEFkSWQ9QTA1MTg5MzkyUkFVTzQ0MkY4Q1NQJndpZGdlE5hbWU9c3BfYXRmJmFjdGlvbj1jbGlja1JIZGlyZWN0JmRvTm90TG9nQ2xpY2s9dHJ1ZQ==](https://www.amazon.com/Soccer-Leopard-Mothers-Day-T-Shirt/dp/B09WJNSDV1/ref=sr_1_4_sspa?keywords=soccer+mom+shirts+for+women&qid=1653007124&sr=8-4-spons&psc=1&spLa=ZW5jcnlwdGVkUXVhbGlmaWVyPUFISk1SQzQ0N01CTjgmZW5jcnlwdGVkSWQ9QTA5NjM1MDgyNFIUMURCNFhQQzBKJmVuY3J5cHRIZEFkSWQ9QTA1MTg5MzkyUkFVTzQ0MkY4Q1NQJndpZGdlE5hbWU9c3BfYXRmJmFjdGlvbj1jbGlja1JIZGlyZWN0JmRvTm90TG9nQ2xpY2s9dHJ1ZQ==)

At the time, in the *Washington Post*, Robert Samuelson joined me in firing back, which annoyed Professor Putnam enough that he mentions it in the second edition of *Bowling Alone*. In the Post, Robert Putnam complained:

"Political scientist Robert Putnam of Harvard has had a good run. Once an obscure academic, he wrote a 1995 article that made him a minor celebrity. President Clinton borrowed his ideas for speeches. Putnam argues that civic life is collapsing - that Americans aren't joining, as they once did, the groups and clubs that promote trust and cooperation. " This undermines democracy, he says:

"Guess what. It's mostly bunk. Although Americans may be sour, the reason is not that civic life is vanishing...

Here are some raw participation rates for 1974 and 1994:

**Political clubs:** 1974, 4.5 percent; 1994, 4.7 percent.

**Sports clubs:** 1974, 17.9 percent; 1994, 21.8 percent.

**Hobby clubs:** 1974, 9.8 percent; 1994, 9.2 percent.

**Fraternalities:** 1974, 4.7 percent; 1994, 5.7 percent.

**Professional groups:** 1974, 13.2 percent; 1994, 18.7 percent."

<https://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS234/articles/samuelsan.htm>

As for the importance of numbers of members viz Masonry. would you suggest that the French Academy needs not forty immortals but 4 million? This year in Ohio:

12.

## Welcome Brothers: GL of Ohio Raises 780 in Statewide One Day Class



This Ohio example was not one of the "all the way in one day" initiations that have been popular where all 32 degrees are conferred. At least in this instance it was the first three degrees and the occasion when candidates went from entered apprentice to the 32nd degree in a day, Brent Morris comments are important as they suggest that rather than the Putnam view of a mass psychological shift from altruistic community mindedness to selfish individualism, there are other forces at work in the decline of American Masonry:

Now we have Putnam's new book, *The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again*. For blacks, women, sexual minorities, indigenous people, in short, a majority of Americans, there was not any coming together a century ago and there is no desire to repeat those days. Putnam only briefly acknowledges this contradiction. I don't think anyone can sustain the argument that 100 years ago American society as a whole was enjoying a golden era. Moreover,

Putnam 's remarks about the Masonic decline that figured more prominently in the first book, have fallen by the wayside, or become much less central. His generalizations about the downward course of fraternities remain, but in his new book, Putnam adds as evidence for the decline of community spirit the prevalence of self-help books and of the use of iPhones to take selfies. Are people buying books about how to paint their kitchen and bake bread or taking selfies really displaying selfishness? (*The Upswing*, 194) Does a turn to selfishness explain Masonic decline in America? The limited criticism of Professor Putnam's assertions are missed opportunities for American Masonic scholarship.

We could look at the papers of the congresses that foxes predominate, and admit they were specialized, but that is not a grievous sin. Arlette Farge writes in *The Allure of the Archives*: "The desire to understand in a demanding one and there as many allusions to tear down as there are requirements to fulfill." (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2013, 95.) A personal anecdote comes to mind. As a young undergraduate at Harvard, I found myself in the library elevator one day with Arthur Schlesinger Jr. one of the country's best-known historians. I rashly thought this was my opportunity, so I asked him, "Professor Schlesinger, what can we prove with history." Silence. He got out on his floor and as he walked away, he said, "little things, little things". I realized that the little things are the bricks with which we construct great edifices; we need to hunker down on specifics which will either prove or disprove the larger assertions.

And in future congresses we must try harder to link more with our colleagues in other fields. In fairness to Professor Putnam, he does acknowledge that "Debates about the waxing and waning of 'community' have been endemic for at least two centuries...We seem perennially tempted to contrast our tawdry todays with past golden ages." (*Bowling Alone*, 24-25)

I think hedgehogs and foxes can complement each other, and so can disciplines. But in reading as many of our past papers as I could, I felt we need to have more vigorous debate while at the same time retaining our civility. Please expect when we next meet to find some panels with vigorous opposing views. This kind of confrontation can happen. At the congress in Edinburgh in 2009, commemorating Robert Burns, I found myself on the front page of the *Sunday Times* challenging the display of an apron allegedly belonging to Burns as well as a supposed Masonic poem by him:



13.

**According to the Sunday Times (May 3rd, 2009), “Paul Rich, president of the Policy Studies Organisation in Washington, and a leading authority on Freemasonry, said he did not believe the Burns House Museum apron had been owned by Burns. Rich, who put his case at the conference in Edinburgh said he became convinced that it was a fake while researching a birthday speech about Burns for the conference. The apron is inscribed, ‘Charles Sharpe of Hotham to Rabbie Burns, Dumfries, Dec 12 1791’, but authorities on Burns say the poet was never known as ‘Rabbie’ during his lifetime.” Rich’s case is strong re the artifact.**

Of course the American Masons seized on this:

## 14.

### **Sir Knight Henry Kent, Robert Burns, and the Stolen Poem**

by Sir Knight Paul Rich

One of Brother Robert Burns (1759-1796) most recited works in Masonic circles, the poem "The Master's Apron", was actually written by an American Knight Templar.

If you are an active Mason, the chances are that you have heard "The Master's Apron" on many occasions:

Ther's mony a badge that's unco brow;  
Wi' ribbon, lace and tape on;  
Let kings an' princes wear them a' -  
Gie me the Master's apron!  
The honest craftsman's apron,  
The jolly Freemason's apron,  
  
...Be he at hame, or roam afar,  
Before his touch fa's bolt and bar,  
The gates of fortune fly ajar,  
'Gin he but wears the apron!  
Arise your friendly ranks alang!  
Guidwives and bairnies blithely sing  
To the ancient badge wi' the apron string  
That is worn by the Master Mason!

These aspersions I cast on the apron and poem might well have had me thrashed by an indignant Scot. Fortunately no less than the Lord Elgin, past Grand Mason of Scotland, thoroughly agreed with me and produced another apron which he sponsored that did belong to Burns;

15.

The gathering coincided this year with the 250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns, currently being celebrated all over Scotland as "[The Homecoming](#)", and there were many papers that explored Burns' life, works, and connection (both real and imaginary) with Freemasonry. The spirit of Burns was immediately called to mind, as the 11th Earl of Elgin helped to open the first day's session with the display of the Masonic apron of Burns, accompanied by a piper. (Paul Rich's paper on Friday discussed the controversy over competing Burns aprons, and comes down in favor of the one presented by Lord Elgin as the authentic one). Lord Elgin, Andrew Douglas Alexander Thomas Bruce, is a direct living descendant of Robert the Bruce, and served as Grand Master of Scotland between 1961 and 1965. He serves as the head of the [Royal Order of Scotland](#).

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One easily could dismiss me, but could not disagree with the 11th Lord Elgin, who is also Earl of Kincardine, and Chief of the Bruce Clan, as well as Knight of the Thistle. When he entered the congress accompanied by his piper blowing a very loud bagpipe and with what he agreed was the genuine apron, I can assure you I was relieved. He is still with us, in his 99th year. Next to the Queen and Prince Charles, he is the senior Thistle, the premier order of Scotland. Here are the Queen, the Princess Royal, and Prince William, a future king, and the late brother Prince Philip at a Thistle service.

16.



So, you see ritual prevails and the congress can offer some adventure. What I hope is that in the future the congresses can offer some excitement.

In *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, Professor Erwin Hargrove writes, "Good judgement required balancing opposite approaches and accepting the elusive nature of predictions. Foxes were more likely to be self-critical. And yet such open-mindedness was a limitation for the foxes. They could see too many variables and become uncertain and confused...the hedgehogs hit more home runs than the foxes, who, one might say, hit more singles and doubles." (Hargrove/Vanderbilt, 2020, 3). My assignment of reviewing our past congresses leads me to say that in years to come we can continue to be foxes but add a dash of hedgehog, relate our work more to larger issues, and continue to advance -- as you have done in the past in your discussion of volunteerism and the lodges. Thank you for your wit your wisdom and friendship.

Note: Margaret Jacob on looking at the draft has very useful ideas and says, "Another direction your intervention could take would be to pose the question of why did versions of the "old charges" turn up in certain places and dates, and not in others. So my notion would be to raise questions that can best be answered by a combination of the two approaches."

