

Alvin Lou Copeland

Grand Master (1985 – 1987) of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Canada in the Province of Ontario



Photo from the Grand Lodge

(1920 - 1993)

Prepared by V.W. Bro. Marshall Kern.

Alvin Lou Copeland was born in Toronto on April 24, 1920. He chose to use his middle name and was known as A. Lou Copeland. After public and high school, he received a post-secondary diploma in Industrial Chemicals and specialized in advanced organic chemistry.

A. Lou Copeland was drafted into the Canadian army in 1940. He trained as a specialist in artillery. Australia entered the war in December 1941; Lou was assigned to the Australian army as an artillery specialist and shipped out at the end of January 1942. A. Lou Copeland remained fighting with the Australians and the US Army in the South Pacific until the war ended and he returned to Canada in January 1946 with the rank of staff sergeant.



In 1946 he established his own chemical specialty manufacturing business in Rexdale. The company was known as Copeland Laboratories and continued to grow and thrive. Copeland Laboratories produced soap and detergent cleaning products for consumer and industrial users. A. Lou Copeland also returned to university, completing programs at Lehigh University in Bethlehem Pennsylvania, and at the University of Rochester, in Rochester New York, and at the University of Toronto. He was a Chartered Chemist and Member of the Chemical Institute of Canada.

In business, he participated in the Soap and Detergent Association of Canada for many years and represented the organization at the 1977 World Conference on Soaps & Detergents in Switzerland. He participated in the transformation of the Association to the Canadian Manufacturers of Chemical Specialities (CMCS). To support consistent standards of quality in the chemical industry, A. Lou Copeland was active with the Canadian General Standards Board and served as President of the Review Board.

He retired from Copeland Laboratories in 1978 to join his son, Martin, with Copeland Associates Inc., Markham.

A. Lou Copeland had two major interests in life, one being Masonry, and the other being the state of Israel. He found the relationship between Masonry and Israel very much co-related. In the early 1970s, he partnered with an Anglican minister, Reverend Roland de Corneille (1927 – 2014), who also was a Mason, and together they led numerous Masonic trips, taking anywhere between 60 and 80 people on a yearly pilgrimage to the state of Israel. There, Rev. Roland de Corneille and Lou Copeland could draw the world of Masonry to the state of Israel. (R.W. Bro. Roland de Corneille was a member of Zetland Lodge No. 326 in Toronto, appointed to the office of Grand Chaplain in 1973, and a Member of Parliament from 1979 to 1988.)

Through his Masonic travels, A. Lou Copeland got to meet many people of different walks of life. One of his favourite friendships developed through Masonry with a well-known Canadian wrestler, Lord Athol Layton (1919 – 1984). Lord Layton was a TV personality who was well known across Canadian wrestling circles. A. Lou's children remember many occasions where Lord Layton was a guest at Friday night Sabbath dinners. In turn, Lord Athol Layton often invited the family to tapings of his wrestling shows at CTV in Toronto.

Through his Masonic pilgrimages to Israel, A. Lou Copeland befriended the head of security at the Israeli Embassy in Toronto, which he attended frequently to get clearance for his Masonic trips to Israel. A security officer at the embassy, Dubi Filar, became a close friend of the family and was often invited to the Copeland home for a Sabbath Friday night dinner. Dubi became a member of the Copeland clan and was a regular guest for many years. In fact, Lou and his family were some of the only guests

at Dubi and Esti's wedding in the late 1970s. Dubi went on to have a fabulous career in the hospitality world in Toronto owning the Rosedale Diner and other restaurants.

A. Lou Copeland married Margaret Isenberg (1923 – 2005) on December 7, 1941, the day of the attack on Pearl Harbour. A. Lou and Margaret had three sons: Glenn, Martin, and Vernon. Vernon died in 1975 at the age of 26. The family were founding members of Beth Tzedec Congregation in Toronto and A. Lou remained active in the synagogue until his death. His sons became members and Past Masters of Palestine (now Mosaic) Lodge No. 559, Thornhill.

A. Lou Copeland was an avid golfer when time permitted. But even as a golfer, his golf buddies all shared the love of the Craft. V.W. Bro. Archie Goldstein of Mount Sinai Lodge, R.W. Bro. Fred Harris of Mount Sinai Lodge, and Bro. Nat Sherwin of Palestine Lodge formed a regular foursome with Lou Copeland.

M.W. Bro. A. Lou Copeland died at home on July 24, 1993, in Toronto. He is interred at Beth Tzedec Memorial Park, North York. A grey stone monument marks the final resting place for M.W. Bro. A. Lou Copeland and his wife Margaret. There are no Masonic symbols or inscriptions.

A portrait of M.W. Bro. A. Lou Copeland is displayed at the Thornhill Masonic Hall, where Mosaic Lodge No. 559 meets.

Masonic Career

Mr. A. Lou Copeland first became interested in the Masonic order in the early 1950s after his experience in the military. M.W. Bro. Copeland was initiated in Palestine Lodge No. 559, Toronto, on October 29, 1949, with his father-in-law Bro. Sam Isenberg acting as Junior Deacon. He was Passed on the 1st of March 1950, and Raised on the 1st of May 1950. He served as Worshipful Master for the 1961 – 1962 term.

He was elected as DDGM of Toronto District 7 (1969 – 1970). There were 27 lodges in Toronto District No. 7 for DDGM Lou Copeland to visit and oversee. He commented on those lodges where experienced Past Masters contributed to the leadership of the lodge. A half-day "Think In" was reported as a success because "The dialogue attempted to project a viable, dynamic posture of possible change over the next few years. This very human internal tug-of-war is healthy and sound, so long as we recognize that the Craft's advances must represent compromise, which is a fact of life in all social, business and political groups."

A highlight of the many events in the year was the presentation of the Regalia to R.W. Bro. Marshall S. Jess, a Past Master of True Blue Lodge No. 98, Bolton, who was invested with the Grand Chaplain's Regalia. As DDGM he commented "one can only say that the sincerity and deep intellectual qualities of this outstanding man of God, are surpassed only by his popularity in District 7."

M.W. Bro. Copeland was first elected to the Board of General Purposes in 1977, serving on various Committees, including: Long Range Planning, Audit and Finance, Masonic Education, Lodge Buildings and Masonic holdings.

He was elected as Deputy Grand Master (1983 - 1984 and 1984 - 1985) and Grand Master (1985 - 1986 and 1986 - 1987). At his Installation, M.W. Bro. W. K. Bailey presented R.W. Bro. A. L. Copeland, Grand Master-elect, at the Altar, following which he was obligated by M.W. Bro. R. E. Davies and invested by M.W. Bro. J. N. Allan.

M.W. Bro. Copeland was appointed the Grand Representative of the Grand Lodge of Israel near our Grand Lodge.

He was an affiliated member of Centennial Lodge No. 684, London, The Heritage Lodge No. 730, and a charter member of Anniversary Lodge No. 733, Brampton. By the time he was Grand Master he had been awarded honorary memberships in over 20 Lodges throughout Ontario, as well as in New York, Israel, and Jamaica.

At the 129th Annual Grand Convocation of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada, M.W. Bro. Copeland was honoured with an appointment to the office of V. Ex. Comp. G. Sr. Sojourner.

As Grand Master

Our 62nd Grand Master had the sad duty to announce the death of M.W. Bro. George Edward Turner. M.W. Bro. Copeland eulogized the Past Grand Master with the words: "M.W. Bro. George Turner had a depth of knowledge from which many, including myself, regularly drew solutions to our problems. He enriched Masonry and the lives of all who knew him. His presence touched so many of our lives. Bro. Turner's cheery countenance and friendly disposition will be sorely missed. He truly has left for us a legacy that personified, in every respect, a kindly and caring Mason."

Grand Master Copeland's theme for his term of office was "Igniting Masonic Pride" which required implementation of a five-point plan. The first point was answering the question 'what is Freemasonry?' with a clear Masonic story. The second point was sharing an understanding of Masonic Charity. The third point was a Mentorship Programme to share a love of the Ritual as well as educate Masons. The fourth point was to achieve effective lodge management. The fifth and final point was to develop leaders of Masons in all lodges. In expounding this five-point plan, M.W. Bro. Copeland emphasized in his Address "you will infuse vigour and vibrancy into your individual lodges and re-establish the greatness of our time-honoured Fraternity."

The 'Mentors Programme' is composed of a standardized set of prepared papers, geared to instruct the potential candidate, inform, and follow through with him during

the three degrees and reinforce his education and confidence for one year after he has completed his Master Mason's Degree. It emerged singularly as the top rated, most exciting activity of the five-point plan and caught the imagination of many Masons in our jurisdiction.

M.W. Bro. Copeland recommended the formation in each Lodge of a Retention Committee to contact and visit the inactive brethren. He offered to correspond directly with any member about to be suspended or requesting a demit, if he was asked to do so by a Lodge. As he was leaving the office of Grand Master, he shared that he sent many letters to such members, with responses that were extremely gratifying. He urged that Masters and Secretaries of lodges personally contact inactive members.

He added that the C.O.M.E.L.Y (Calling on Masons of Every Lodge Yearly) programme was gathering momentum in the jurisdiction as an extension of the retention programme. He praised the Grand Lodge of Manitoba, and particularly M.W. Bro. J. E. R. Bingeman, P.G.M., "who designed and implemented the C.O.M.E.L.Y. programme, with the assistance of the All Canada Conference."

Early in 1985 Grand Master Copeland initiated a quarterly Grand Lodge newsletter that was sent to the members of the Board of General Purposes and others. The purpose was to keep the Board Members informed of current and upcoming plans and events. Grand Master Copeland received some very favourable comments on this publication.

M.W. Bro. Copeland turned his attention to two international items of interest to all Masons. First, he shared the news that the 1986 Methodist Conference adopted an amendment to their 1985 Report on Freemasonry making it clear that the Report does not imply that membership of Freemasonry is incompatible with membership of the Methodist Church. Secondly, he shared that the Grand Lodge of Quebec has had continuing interface with the Roman Catholic Church so that Father Irénée Beaubien represented the Grand Lodge of Quebec and the Archdiocese of Montreal at an international gathering of learned Masons and learned Clerics of the Church of Rome, held in Paris, France in May 1987.

Grand Master Copeland was elected Chairman of the 1987 Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in North America.

On September 11, 1985, M.W. Bro. Copeland visited his Mother Lodge, Palestine No. 559, for the ceremony of installation and investiture of officers. He had the privilege of installing his son, Bro. Dr. Glenn H. Copeland as Worshipful Master, investing his younger son, Bro. Martin J. Copeland, as Inner Guard. He commented in his Address that there is "No greater joy for a father than participating in such a memorable evening."

As his term as Grand Master drew to a close, M.W. Bro. Copeland gave a special acknowledgment to his wife Margaret. She was the daughter of a Mason and encouraged M.W. Bro. Copeland in all his Masonic endeavours. He declared “Truly a woman of valour, more precious than any jewel.” M.W. Bro. Copeland then acknowledged the many donations to the E. Vernon Copeland Bursary Fund of the Masonic Foundation of Ontario. The fund was created in memory of E. Vernon Copeland, the late son of our Grand Master.

As a final declaration, M.W. Bro. Copeland stated “I believe in people, and I especially believe in Masons. I have found in Freemasonry a cause to be championed / a life to be lived / a truth to be shared / and a future bright with promise. I believe in Masonry because I believe in its influence for good / and to that influence I would give myself / and challenge each of you to join with me in making our Freemasonry come alive during our allotted time!”

Grand Master A. Lou Copeland developed many friendships with Masons far and wide. He developed a personal closeness with M.W. Bro. Robert C. Singer, the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New York 1986 - 1988, when Lou was Deputy Grand Master, and that friendship spanned the rest of their lives.

During his many pilgrimages to Israel, M.W. Bro. Copeland met and became quite close with M.W. Bro. Jamil Shalhoub, an Arab lawyer from Haifa, who was elected as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Israel in 1981. When M.W. Bro. Shalhoub visited Canada in his official capacity as Grand Master to meet with then-Grand Master Howard O. Polk, he attended a reception at the home of then-R.W. Bro. A. Lou Copeland.

Grand Master Copeland was asked by a fellow Mason from Quebec to attend in hospital the son of the fellow Mason. The son was terminally ill, dying of brain cancer. The father wanted his son to be made a Mason before dying. M.W. Bro. Lou Copeland attended at Mount Sinai Hospital in Toronto with a degree team to perform the initiation of the son into Masonry so he could be buried as a Mason. This event had deep personal meaning for M.W. Bro. Copeland because his own son Vernon died of brain cancer.

As Past Grand Master

After completing his term as Grand Master, he was called on to assume the role of Grand Treasurer due to the ill-health of M.W. Bro. James N. Allan who held that position. M.W. Bro. Copeland served as Grand Treasurer from 1988 until 1993.

“In recognition of eminence, ability and service rendered” the rank of Honorary Past Grand Master was conferred on M.W. Bro. A. Lou Copeland by the Grand Lodge of Saskatchewan.

The death of M.W. Bro. A. Lou Copeland was announced in the 1994 Proceedings by M.W. Bro. C. Edwin Drew. He said “As we pick up the torch, our commitment is to endeavour to improve

our communications at all levels and by all available means.” And “His admonition to ‘Ignite Masonic Pride’ rang loud and clear across the jurisdiction; he was the driving force to computerize our records, and initiated our mentor programme. During his term he led the drive to improve our communications both within and outside the fraternity, emphasizing the universality of Masonry.”

M.W. Bro. A. Lou Copeland’s life is a testament to the values he held dear: loyalty, integrity, and an unwavering dedication to community. His story is not just one of personal achievement but of meaningful connections that bridged nations, faiths, and generations.

Sources:

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- (5) Reynolds, John W., (2012) *An overview of some significant or interesting contributions during the terms of the Grand Masters of the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario, revisited* ‘The Architect’ December 2012
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- (7) *The Freemason* magazine, Vol. 103 No. 2 September 1983.
- (8) *The Canadian Jewish News*, August 15, 1985, page 14
- (9) Friend: Lord Athol Layton: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_Athol_Layton
- (10) Friend: Rev. Roland de Corneille: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roland_de_Corneille
- (11) Details confirmed through personal communication with W. Bro. Glenn Copeland, W. Bro. Martin Copeland, and R.W. Bro. Stephen Maizels. December 2024