

From The East

“And I Vouch For Him”

Did you ever find yourself standing in front of a mirror saying, ‘You know, I still look pretty good’, all the while not admitting that you’re at least 20-25 pounds heavier (if not more) than when you really did look good, your hair is thinning (if not entirely gone, or at least a totally different color), except that which is now growing out of your ears and nose (what’s with that?!?), and gravity has long since won the battle where your once finely chiseled pecs are now ‘man boobs’ (not to mention your gluteus maximus)? This is typical of what we all go through and reveals the fact that our self-image is usually much different than the way others tend to perceive us or how we tend to perceive others.

We recently had a situation in our Lodge where a good Mason asked some of our brothers to sign off on a new petitioner. This brother is well liked, and a good Mason and the petitioner was a member of his church. Four other men signed off on him simply because they were asked to do so by a good Mason they all knew and respected. The Investigation Committee asked those four brethren, ‘Do you know this man well enough that you would trust him to be alone with your 16 year old daughter?’, and of course the answer was no. Thus, the Investigating Committee rejected the petitioner’s application on the grounds that none of the brothers who signed his application knew him well enough to vouch for him, and the application was never submitted to the Lodge for a vote. The petitioner was informed of the Committee’s recommendation that the application be rejected on the grounds that no one knew him well enough to vouch for him, AS OF YET. He was told that he merely needed to come back and attend more stated meeting dinners, get to know some of the brethren better, socialize with some so that there could be enough Masons to truthfully say, ‘Yes, I know this man, and I vouch for his integrity, he is qualified to become one of the fraternity.’ Now, if this man had been true Masonic material, he would have followed that counsel and done precisely that. Instead, he, and his wife, immediately began an anti-Mason campaign, spewing venomous verbal assaults to the community, threatening to call the newspapers, banks, local businesses, and even the Grand Lodge of Texas to register their complaint that the man had been unfairly ‘black-balled’ for no reason, when in fact, his petition had never even been officially received and accepted for a vote, much less, blackballed. In retrospect, this technicality proved to be divine providence, for this man obviously was not the type of man the fraternity is looking for, and his actions exhibited just that. As a matter of fact, this type of man is exactly who the fraternity should guard the south, west and east gates against, to see that he should not pass, because he is not duly qualified.

By the time an EA candidate kneels at the holy altar to take his obligation, he has had been vouched for a total of thirteen times. First, by two first line signers and three recommending brothers of the Lodge, then three Investigators, once by the Master of Ceremonies, and four times by the Senior Deacon, (once each to the two Wardens and to the Worshipful Master twice during the degree itself). This is a great failsafe system and prevents a situation like that that might have occurred at our Lodge recently, had the Investigation Committee not been savvy enough to catch the oversight.

Needless to say, all five of those signatories were humbled and felt lucky that they had narrowly escaped a potential mistake that could have cost the Lodge, and Masonry, a severe blow. Lesson learned. Make sure you know exactly who you are vouching for, and most importantly, make sure you know him well enough to indeed vouch for his integrity. Those five signatures on the petition and the recommendation of the three investigators are the most important components to entering Masonry and they MUST be on target. The five times after that, during the EA initiation, when the Master of Ceremonies, or the Senior Deacon states, ‘... and I vouch for him’, is predicated strictly on what those eight men have told them prior to that ceremony. Sometimes, we can let our guard down because we are always passively looking for new members, but all Masons should keep their guard up, because not all petitioners are qualified to become Masons. We can ill afford unqualified men to pass through our

gates, for the adversary can accomplish much within the hallowed halls of divinely inspired men.

When we look in the mirror, it's okay if we fool ourselves a little about our own self-image, that's harmless bordering on comical. But, how do others perceive us, and in turn, how do we perceive others? Make certain that you, or your Lodge, doesn't become the victim, and NEVER, EVER, vouch for a man you don't know, no matter what.

Duke Davis, Worshipful Master

The West Gate

Being a Freemason is a very big privilege to me. I think of how I can live up to the obligation of being a Mason and helping others in the community to see through actions and deeds what Masonry really is without explaining a single word. I must admit, that time is a big factor and sometimes we, as Masons, have to juggle our activities and try to prioritize them. But in the end our actions can somehow have a positive impact on others. I now share with you this story I recently read...

A young man passed a pawnbrokers shop. The money lender was standing in front of his shop, and the young man noted that he was wearing a large and beautiful Masonic emblem. After going on a whole block, apparently lost in thought, the young man turned back, stepped up to the pawnbroker, and addressed him: "I see you're wearing a Masonic emblem. I'm a Freemason too. It happens that I'm desperately in need of \$25 just now. I shall be able to repay it within ten days. You don't know me but I wonder whether the fact that you are a Freemason and that I am a Freemason is sufficient to induce you to lend me the money on my personal note."

The pawnbroker mentally appraised the young man, who was clean-cut, neat and well-dressed. After a moments thought, he agreed to make the loan on the strength of the young man being a Freemason. Within a few days the young man repaid the loan as agreed and that ended the transaction.

About four months later the young man was in a Lodge receiving the Entered Apprentice Degree. He had not really been a Mason when he borrowed the \$25. After he had been admitted for the second section of the degree, the young man looked across the Lodge room and saw the pawnbroker from whom he had borrowed the \$25. His face turned crimson and he became nervous and jittery. He wondered whether he had been recognized by the pawnbroker. Apparently not, so he planned at the first opportunity to leave the Lodge room and avoid his benefactor. As soon as the Lodge was closed he moved quickly for the door, but the pawnbroker had recognized the young man, headed him off and, to the young mans astonishment, approached him and greeted him with a smile and outstretched hand.

"Well, I see you weren't a Freemason after all when you borrowed that \$25," the pawnbroker commented.

The blood rushed to the young mans face as he stammered, "No, I wasn't, but I wish you'd let me explain. I had always heard that Freemasons were charitable and ready to aid a Brother in distress. When I passed your shop that day I didn't need that \$25. I had plenty of money in my wallet, but when I saw the Masonic emblem you were wearing, I decided to find out whether the things I'd heard about Freemasonry were true. You let me have the money on the strength of my being a Freemason, so I concluded that what I had heard about Masons was true, that they are charitable, that they do aid Brethren in distress. That made such a deep impression on me that I presented my petition to this Lodge and here I am. I trust that with this explanation you will forgive me for having lied to you."

The pawnbroker responded, "Don't let that worry you too much. I wasn't a Freemason when I let you have the money. I had no business wearing the Masonic emblem you saw. Another man had just borrowed some money on it, and it was so pretty that I put it on my lapel for a few minutes. I took it off the moment you left. I didn't want anyone else borrowing money on the strength of my being a Freemason. When you asked for that \$25, I

remembered what I had heard about Masons, that they were honest, upright, and cared for their obligations promptly. It seemed to me that \$25 wouldn't be too much to lose to learn if what I'd heard was really true, so I lent you the money and you repaid it exactly as you said you would. That convinced me that what I'd heard about Masons was true so I presented my petition to this Lodge. I was the candidate just ahead of you."

I conclude by saying, Masonry has a certain reputation that precedes us. We are Masons, and it is a privilege, and we have the opportunity to help others see what Masonry is, and can accomplish, by our continual actions and activities for the benefit of others in our community, and ourselves.

Sal Pacheco, Senior Warden

The South Gate

November is a time for Thanksgiving as we all know. The question for each of us is; what are you thankful for? I personally cannot go a day without finding new things to count as a blessing for which to be thankful. With young children in my household, that is easy to do. As a Master Mason, I am also thankful for my brethren within the lodge. They have been invaluable in my growth and learning in the past couple of years. They have much knowledge and experience, which I am thankful they are passing along to me. The term brotherhood has taken on an entirely different meaning to me. We are on the verge of raising two new Master Masons, and I look forward to the opportunity to pass some of my light on to them in the coming years.

Please remember, as we enter this holiday season, this lodge has many opportunities to give back to the community. We have been assisting families in this community that are unable to afford Christmas. We put on a Christmas party for some very thankful 5th graders and their families last December. We will be doing the same this year at the lodge. For some of these families, it is their only time to see the "real" Santa Claus. You will find that giving someone else something to be thankful for can be a very gratifying experience. Check your calendars for early December and be ready to come to the lodge for a little Christmas cheer.

Be thankful this November that we have an active and growing lodge that is able to give back to the community. Thank you for being my brethren at Fredericksburg Lodge #794 and all that you do for me, the lodge, Fredericksburg, and Masonry.

Randall S. King, Junior Warden

Mouth To Ear

Some Masonic Symbolism

Masonry has been described as "A certain system of morality, illustrated by symbols and veiled in allegory" which is a pretty good synopsis of what goes on. We are all familiar with the lessons of the most visible symbols of the craft, being those that are described and alluded to in the three degrees, but others are also beneficial in our search for more light and are too often overlooked. One of these is the scythe and hourglass, which is symbolic of our mortality and the passage of time. "Freemasonry for Dummies" says that "the scythe is an ancient, sharp tool used for cutting tall grass or harvesting wheat. Mythologically, it is a tool of Father Time or the Grim Reaper, to cut the fragile thread of life. It is to remind Masons of the ever-present danger of death that awaits us all.

Like the scythe, the hourglass is an emblem of mortality. Scarier than a clock, the sands slip away and cannot be

put back. It teaches a Mason not to waste his limited time on Earth. In our hurried lives we all tend to ignore the passage of time until our age, ill health, or a tragedy forces us to confront the fragility of life. We feel little urgency to square up all our actions with our fellow man thinking there will always be another tomorrow or a more convenient time. It has been said that time is the most powerful force on earth. It is relentless in its passing and has no regard for any man's station in life or whether or not he is moral or a scoundrel. Time just keeps on going. How we use the short span of life granted by the Grand Architect of the Universe is our choice. Our allotted time on this earth is a finite thing, it is not endless and we have only so much to use for the benefit of ourselves and our fellowman. Masonry teaches that we use our time mindfully as it is most precious because once it passes through the hourglass, it is never to be regained.

Joe King, PM, Brady Lodge #628

Labors of the Craft

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We have a Master Mason degree coming up on Thursday, November 19th. We'll have a meal at 6:00 PM followed by the degree at 7:00 PM. All Master Masons are welcome to attend, especially those in District 51. We also have one Fellowcraft currently studying for his proficiency, and one Entered Apprentice who is preparing to examine himself in proficiency of all three sections.

Our 2nd Annual Masonic Picnic held at Lady Bird Johnson Park last Saturday was a smashing success with 40 people attending. Brisket, Brats and Fried Chicken filled the crowd's plates while John Kirby supplied some wonderful music. Masons and non- Masons both enjoyed the perfect weather and fellowship, so it appears we have started a tradition with this autumn event. Don't miss next October's picnic!

Don't forget the 2nd Annual Frontier Days at Fort Martin Scott. This is an excellent opportunity to not only educate history buffs but to witness firsthand how life was back in the 1800's here in Texas. As some of you might know, the original Freedom Lodge #100 was chartered at the Fort in the 1850's and plans are currently underway to relocate Fredericksburg Lodge #794 to the Fort. For further information, visit the web site at www.ftmartinsscott.org

Recently, the Worshipful Masters from all six Lodges in our district came up with a wonderful concept called "Traveling Masters Night", where the Worshipful Masters from five of the Lodges get together and visit the sixth Lodge on stated meeting nights. We began Monday, October 20th and visited Kendall Lodge. The next scheduled Lodge is Fredericksburg this November 10th, followed by Kerrville Lodge on Monday, December 2nd. We will rotate Lodges until all Lodges are visited at least once during the Masonic year. This is a great opportunity for all brethren to not only attend other Lodges in our district but also observe how other Lodges are conducting their meetings and addressing their Masonic duties. In addition, it exhibits brotherly love and support for all the Lodges in our district and gives the line officers a good chance to get to know each other. All Worshipful Masters will attend these designated nights, all Wardens are encouraged to attend, and all brethren from any of the Lodges are invited, as well.

Our Annual Christmas Party is scheduled for Friday, December 12th at 6:00 PM. As you know, the 'real' Santa Claus will be there again, along with Mrs. Claus and some elves. This is for Kiddos (young and old)! Light refreshments will be served.

Words of Wisdom

“Luck is not something you can mention in the presence of a self-made man.”

- E.B. White -

“It’s time to start living the life you’ve imagined.”

- Henry James -

“The era of procrastination, of half-measures, of soothing and baffling expedients, of delays is coming to a close. In its place we are entering a period of consequence.”

- Brother Winston Churchill -

“If at first you don’t succeed, find out if the loser gets anything.”

- Bill Lyon -

Tongue in Cheek

Three contractors are bidding to fix a broken fence at the White House.

One is from Chicago, another from Kentucky, and the third is from New Orleans.

All three go with a White House Official to examine the fence.

The New Orleans contractor takes out a tape measure and does some measuring, then works some figures with a pencil.

“Well,” he says, “I figure the job will run about \$9,000. That’s \$4,000 for materials, \$4,000 for my crew and \$1,000 profit for me.”

The Kentucky contractor also does some measuring and figuring then says, “I can do this job for \$7,000. That’s \$3,000 for materials, \$3,000 for my crew and \$1,000 profit for me.”

The Chicago contractor doesn’t measure or figure, but leans over to the White House Official and whispers, “\$27,000.”

The White House Official, incredulous, says, “You didn’t even measure like the other guys. How did you come up with such a high figure?”

The Chicago contractor whispers back, “\$10,000 for me, \$10,000 for you, and we hire the guy from Kentucky to fix the fence.”

The White House Official replies, “Done!”

And that, my friends, is how the Government Stimulus plan worked.

Recipe of the Month

“Grandma Liberatore’s Minestrone”

By Shannon Ramsey’s Grandmother

3 Tablespoons Olive Oil
2 Large Onions, Coarsely Chopped
4 Carrots, Coarsely Chopped
4 Celery Sticks, Coarsely Chopped
3 Zucchini, Thinly Sliced
6 Red Potatoes, Peeled and Cubed
6 Cups Shredded Green Cabbage
3 Quarts Beef Broth
2 Inch Piece of Parmesan Rind (optional)
One 28 Ounce Can Plum Tomatoes, Chopped with Liquid
Two 16 Ounce Cans White Beans, Rinsed and Drained
2 Cups Green Beans, Cut Into 1 Inch Pieces
1 Teaspoon Salt
1/3 Cup Freshly Grated or Shaved Parmesan

Heat olive oil in a large stockpot. Add the onions and cook over low heat until soft but not browned. Add the carrots, celery, zucchini, potatoes, cabbage, beef broth and Parmesan rind. Over high heat, bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer 2 hours, stirring occasionally. Add the tomatoes, white beans, green beans and salt. Simmer 30 minutes more. Serve with grated or shaved Parmesan.

Keep it: You can make a double batch so that you can freeze half, remove the Parmesan rind before ladling cooled soup into containers or heavy duty zipper bags. They will freeze well for up to six months.
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