

From The East

Let There Be Light

When an initiate knocks at the door for admission in the Entered Apprentice degree, one of the first things he requests is to be brought from darkness to light by receiving a part of the rights, lights and benefits of the Lodge. As the man progresses in his Masonic journey, he goes on to subsequent degrees receiving further light, and more light, until he finally reaches a juncture in which he is entitled to receive all the light. Sounds great, and all Masons memorize and recite all the proper words to be declared proficient in the esoteric work, but, what does all this mean, do we really understand it, and how do we apply this daily to the continual building of our personal Masonic edifice and the personality of our own Blue Lodge?

The operative word here is, 'entitled', and a word, in my opinion, that we hear way too much of nowadays, in the maturation standards of our youth, from those who unethically accept government welfare, to the moral fiber of a liberal society itself that demands instant self-gratification at the expense of others. Entitlement, I loathe the word. It reeks of automatic benefit, unearned status or reward, and gifted advantage through unproven deeds.

At least in Masonry, the word is muted in its meaning. In the Masonic sense, we take it as being 'entitled' to 'receive the beauties of Free Masonry' through our own efforts of continual study, never ending service to our fellow man and charitable activities, all endeavors of self-earned worth, and not something that someone just automatically gives you. A great reward, as well, because those who devote themselves to being good Masons do, undoubtedly, receive endless benefits. Good Masons will tell you how great Masonry can be because they practice it and live by its precepts, thus, they know it in its purest form and have a testimony of its power. Good Masons know all about 'light.'

How does a Lodge go 'dark?' No one takes the 'light' from them. They lose the 'light' all by themselves, either through poor leadership or non-active Masons, or both. The warning signs of apathy, indifference, lack of accountability, poor attendance and failure to perform assigned tasks, ultimately culminating in back-biting, contention and inactivity all reveal one common denominator. Masonic 'light' can be given and it can be 'lost.'

I love it when our Lodge is running like a finely tuned engine firing on all cylinders. You can almost feel it levitating off the ground sometimes, vibrating with a 60 cycle per second hum that is nearly audible. Good men all focused on the proper elements to do good works, inviting the Holy Ghost with their attitude, demeanor and heart, playing off of each other with the brotherly love and affection that the Craft requires. You could turn off the electric light switch sometimes and I bet the Lodge Room would still be glowing. It's that apparent and noticeable.

Conversely, there are those extremely rare instances when darkness creeps into the Lodge Room and threatens our civility and divinely inspired efforts. Just as light can illuminate the darkness, so can darkness swallow the light. When these dark moments occur, our good Masons immediately have their Masonic antennae go up and identify a foreign energy that is not conducive to illuminating and preserving the light. Mostly it is dealt with on the spot, by verbally squelching the negativity with Masonic principle espoused by one of the good Masons. Other times, after the meeting it might be dealt with, and occasionally, it takes a day or two to neutralize the unwanted thwart of personal agendas that simply aren't conducive to our Masonic activities, nor our true Masonic heart. The bottom line is, in our Lodge, it's always dealt with. We are very lucky. We have a lot of really good Masons and I am proud to call them my brothers.

One doesn't have to look for good Masons. They're easily recognizable to all, Masons and non-Masons alike. They're the ones doing the work. They're the ones known by their kind heart, warm smiles, firm handshakes and good deeds. They are the ones who talk little of themselves and are more concerned for others. They are the 'light'

and they emit an aura that glows like a radioactive isotope.

If you, or your Lodge, needs to be brought from darkness to light, ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you. Good Masons will always light the darkened pathway for fellow travelers. You merely need to just look for their glow, and then, follow the light.

Duke Davis, Worshipful Master

The West Gate

I often use to think a few years ago, what is Freemasonry?

What I have personally experienced and what I recently read in my personal study, answers this question.

“Most would agree that Freemasonry is an organization whose members are concerned with moral and spiritual values, self-improvement, and helping their communities with charitable endeavors. Masons (synonymous with Freemasons) take oaths to be good to their Brothers in Masonry, their families, and all people. They are taught that we are part of the brotherhood of man, under the fatherhood of God.

Some of the often-used definitions are that, “Freemasonry is an organization that takes good men and makes them better,” or that it is, “A system of morality, veiled in secrecy, and illustrated by symbols.” Its principal tenets are brotherly love, relief, and truth. Its goal is the universality of mankind, with all will act towards others as we want them to act towards us, and with faith in the social, eternal, and intellectual progress of mankind.

Masonry is also sometimes called a “great quest for light and knowledge” that deals with the “intellectual, moral, and spiritual values of life.” To achieve these goals, “freedom of thought, speech, and action belongs to every man.”

Freemasonry is open to men of any race or religion who believe in a Supreme Being and who are judged to be of good reputation and character. It is the inner qualities of men — their characters — that are important, not external characteristics or indications of wealth or poverty.

While it requires candidates to express a belief in a Supreme Being, Freemasonry is not a religion or a substitute for religion, and it has no theology, dogma, or path to salvation. Each Mason follows his own faith. Altars in masonic lodges are places where the charter of the lodge and the Bible are placed. In addition to the Bible, in lodges that include men who believe in a different holy book, their “Volume of the Sacred Law” is also placed on the altar. God is often referred to as the Great Architect of the Universe, to permit men of all religions to meet and pray in a spirit of toleration.

Tolerance is basic in Freemasonry. Masons are taught to respect the beliefs and opinions of all people. “Whenever you are an enemy of bigotry or intolerance, you live the teachings of Freemasonry.”

Freemasonry teaches lessons to members using the traditions and symbols of medieval stonemasons’ guilds, and follows many of their traditions in such things as the titles of officers: Grand Master, Grand Marshal, Chaplain, Grand Pursuivant, Worshipful Master, Senior and Junior Wardens, Deacons, Stewards, and others.

Being “initiated” into Freemasonry means receiving the three “degrees” of Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason. Degrees are short ritual dramas based on the building of King Solomon’s Temple. They teach Masons, using symbolism and allegories, “build” their characters just as stonemasons built King Solomon’s Temple.”

May we as Masons from the Fredericksburg Texas Masonic Lodge area continue to benefit, grow, and improve ourselves Masonically, and shine that Light, that Guiding Light, so that we and others can eternally benefit from it.

Sal Pacheco, Senior Warden

The South Gate

Well folks, February is upon us. Old man winter is beginning to exhaust his efforts. It will not be long before things are getting warmer and the grass begins to turn green. I am sure he will have a couple of last winter blasts for us, but I am looking forward to springtime.

I have been studying the charge from the Entered Apprentice Degree, and would like to focus on a portion of it in this month's column. In the opening paragraph of the charge, the newest Mason is offered congratulations on his admission into this ancient and honorable Order. My mind keeps wandering back to the honorable statement. I am beginning to see the importance of how this is so. It goes on to implore the young Mason to strictly adhere to the teachings and precepts of this fine Order. As I listened to this charge during my degree, my head was still spinning, and I was not able to fully grasp the light that was being offered. As I am now a few years into Masonry, I am now able to understand further this charge. The three great duties that are put before the newest Entered Apprentice are not all that unfamiliar to most good men. We know in our hearts to show respect to God, our neighbor, and ourselves. The importance is doing these things, not just knowing they should be done. A Mason has to put these things into practice, not just one or two, but all three. As we go about our daily lives, keep these duties in mind as part of your faith and practice. After all, this is an ancient order, and it has shed much light upon many great men. We must only look to our brothers in Masonry to find good examples and counsel when needed. If we strictly adhere to these precepts, we will continue to make this ancient fraternity even more honorable.

In closing, I would like to remind our local brethren of the upcoming Education Banquet in March. We will all be receiving tickets to sell in the near future. Please remember, that this banquet is meant to honor deserving educators from this community and to award scholarships to 3 young men or women to further their education. I would hope that we all sell and promote this banquet, knowing that our efforts will be well worth the time, as we invest in our future leaders and builders of this community, state, and country.

Randall King, Junior Warden

Mouth To Ear

My journey to the East was six years of travel through the chairs. It is a journey I have never regretted making and one I will never forget. I look around me nowadays and I see Brothers breaking their necks to find the quickest way to the East. I have watched way too many Brothers move from Lodge to Lodge until they find one where the Brethren there, hungry for membership and officers, allow a Brother to immediately be elected to the South or the West to satisfy his selfish desire to be a Past Master. Yes, I use the word selfish here, and I mean it. I realize that there are extenuating circumstances in some situations and I am not talking about those Brothers who are pressed into serving as Worshipful Master because there is no one else, although I feel bad for them because they are in that situation, ill prepared to take on the task of administering a Masonic Lodge. I am talking about those Brethren, and we all know who they are, whose only desire is to be the presiding officer in a Blue Lodge, and in as many other Masonic related organizations as possible, in as short a time as possible. The sad truth is that for the Fraternity, for their Lodge, and for that unenlightened Brother, this is a recipe for failure. Most of the time they give the very minimum, or less, of their time and effort to being the Master of their Lodge. And the very few who actually do try to make something of their year, are so unprepared and inexperienced Masonically that the result is less than acceptable.

The intent of this paper, however, is not to dwell on the negative, but instead to provide illumination and to illustrate a positive path to the Eastand beyond.

Other than the title of Master Mason, being selected by your Brethren to serve as the Master of your Lodge is, in my opinion, the highest honor there is in Masonry. For most it is like getting married, a once in a lifetime event. Just like the journey through our degrees should not be done so fast that an understanding of what a Brother has gone through is missed, so should arriving in the East be a real journey instead of a quick leap. There is no doubt that in the case of traveling through the "chairs" that the longer the journey, the greater the satisfaction and success of the year as Worshipful Master.

In my Lodge, every station from Worshipful Master all the way to Tiler is elected. We have been fortunate to have never had to recycle a Past Master back through the East. I have heard many times from Brothers who have had to do it, that serving as Worshipful Master a second time in a Lodge is not as great as the first. I cannot speak to that from experience but given the amount of effort and planning involved in having a successful and productive year I have no doubt that doing it a second time would be for most, not as fulfilling. As for me, I would serve if asked but would prefer to not. Admitting that may sound like being the Master is not all it's cracked up to be or that maybe my year wasn't all that great, but on the contrary, my year was nothing short of one of the greatest experiences of my life and it should be that for all who ascend to the Masters Chair.

Let me chronicle my journey and tell you why I believe the journey should be as slow and as deliberate as possible. My journey started in the Junior Stewards chair and during that year and the next as Senior Steward, preparing meals and cleaning up after, I got to know my Brethren much better than I ever had before. I will admit to some thoughts of "boy, this kitchen is a heck of a long way from the East" and wishing it wasn't going to take seven years to get there. Several years later when a new Master Mason was nominated to be Junior Steward and declined to serve because he did not want to work in the kitchen.....but he wanted to be Worshipful Master really bad.....and really quick, as he was angrily leaving Lodge on that election night, I heard a Past Master tell him in the nicest way possible for the moment, "My Brother, you must learn how to "serve" your Brethren.....before you can "serve" your Brethren. I never forgot that piece of advice and never regretted my two years in the kitchen and even after becoming the Worshipful Master and having the opportunity to truly "serve" my Brethren I have, many times passed that pearl of wisdom on to others.

The next four years as I moved from Senior Deacon to Junior Warden to Senior Warden and then Master, (notice I skipped Junior Deacon) I was amazed at how different the view of the Lodge and how different it seems to work when you experience it for a year in a different position in the Lodge room. There is no doubt in my mind that sitting in all of those positions and performing the tasks and responsibilities of those offices was invaluable in preparing me to serve in the East with confidence and to have the confidence to lead my Lodge and accomplish positive growth in all areas. I have heard it said that if you wanted to stand on top of Mount Everest you can do it one of two ways. You can have a helicopter carry you to the top or.....you can climb to the top. In each case the destination is the same.....it is the journey that makes the difference.....that makes it worth it.

My journey to the East in my Lodge was not part of a well orchestrated plan. It was just the way it happened. At the time I was glad that circumstances allowed me to skip the Junior Deacons place because I was not yet totally aware of the benefit I was getting by taking the long way. But to tell my story is to illustrate the importance of the journey. If I were going to write a plan for a satisfying and enlightening journey to the Masters Chair, it would be this:

Start with an attitude that it should take a minimum of five years to get to the East...preferably six or seven.

Don't waste any step. Make it a point to learn perfectly not only the opening and closing work of each position as you progress through the chairs but also everything that officer does ritualistically in every degree and perform that work in all three degrees.

By the time you are the Junior Deacon have tested and received at least a "C" esoteric certificate

Begin the L.I.F.E. program as a Senior Deacon and finish the program before your year in the West.

Attend the Junior Wardens retreat during your year as Senior Deacon.

By the time you are the Junior Warden have tested and received at least a "B" esoteric certificate.

Attend the Senior Wardens Retreat during your year as Junior Warden.

By the time you are Senior Warden have tested and received your "A" esoteric certificate

This brings me to the question I get more than any other. "When do I start planning my year?" The answer to that question is "about 10 minutes after you are elected" Which always causes the next question, "Elected to what position?" And that question should not be asked in the first place. In my opinion planning for a year as Worshipful Master begins immediately after the election.....to whatever position it is. Serving at each station in the Lodge is an opportunity to watch all the officers in their stations and especially the Worshipful Masters before you, and see all the good as well as the not so good things that happen and to form your own plan on how and what you are going to do to make your Lodge the best it can be. Identifying what needs to be accomplished for the long term success of the Lodge and gaining consensus among your officers and with their help, putting together a strategic plan for the future of the Lodge should be the ultimate plan. It is true that no Master can get anything done in one year. To make significant change, it will take a minimum of four to five years, thus the importance of gaining the buy in of the other officers. Once an agreement and a plan are made change for the good will happen.

I close this paper with an admonition and an observation. Much like our ancient Brethren, creating something that will stand the test of time should be your objective. Nothing happens overnight. Commit for the long haul.

And one thing I learned after being Master and almost every Past Master I have talked to since have agreed, that as great a year as I had, I didn't really figure out how to be a great Worshipful Master until my year was over. Thus the importance of every Past Master to continue to be active and to help work the plan. Past Masters who disappear after their year is over do not rank very high on the respect scale. Good luck to all of you who aspire to take those three steps up to the Masters Chair.

Chris Williams, PM Davy Crockett Lodge No. 1225

Labors of the Craft

Danny Poole received our Golden Trowel Award on Thursday, January 22nd. A nice meal of Cherry Pork started things off and the number of attendees was a great testimony of how many people love and appreciate Brother Poole, for his work in Masonry and in numerous community activities. A magical night it was!

Don't forget the Lunch Bunch at Gatti's Pizza on Monday, February 23rd at 11:30 AM. Lunch, laughs and great fellowship!

Join us for our Master, Wardens, Secretary Association meeting at Kendall Lodge in Boerne on Wednesday, February 25th. Meal is at 6:30 followed by the meeting at 7:00. All Masons and wives are welcome!

Thursday, February 26th we will have our Community Builder Award presented to Tami King. This is an outstanding woman in Fredericksburg who serves the community working for veteran's benefits, among other things. Join us for the meal at 6:00 immediately followed by the Award presentation.

We currently have one EA preparing for his proficiency in the first section.

Words of Wisdom

“He who has a thousand friends, has not one friend to spare.”

- Anonymous -

“Everything you can imagine is real.”

- Pablo Picasso -

“Success is when you look back at your life and the memories make you smile.”

- Anonymous -

“I’ve found that prayers work best when you have big players.”

- Knute Rockne -

“Success is never final, and failure is never fatal.”

- Barry Switzer -

Tongue in Cheek

Sonny and His Stock Dog

By Duke Davis

I guess there’s been a lot written ‘bout stock dogs, their worth, and how they work so well,

But I’m gonna relate a little story to you that beats ‘em all, that took place in San Angelo at the Cactus Hotel.

It seems that all the boys were sittin’ ‘round the lobby, drinkin’ beer, swappin’ tales and boastin’

‘Bout who had the best dog to work sheep and cattle, and to each braggart’s lie they were toastin’.

Now, braggin’ in that part of Texas has been refined to a gentleman’s game of art,

But, it seems no one could ever top Ol’ Sonny Nolke once he got his chance to start.

‘Cause Sonny had mastered ‘one upsmanship’ so he’d just wait until everyone was through

Then he’d cut loose a real zinger that’d top anything you could ever do!

Anyway, Ol’ Jim’s a’braggin’ on his Blue Heeler and how he could work a section with 500 head

Said him and that ol’ pup would have penned and loaded long before lunch had been fed!

J.P. said that weren’t nothin’ to brag on, him and his ol’ Kelpie could match that feat,

Plus, his dog could cull out all the first year heifers and tag the ears before it was time to eat!

Well, it was gettin’ purtty thick, and deep, when the phone rang off the wall,

And the bar keep yells over all the braggin', "Hey, Sonny, you got a phone call!"

Now, the boys just kept stackin' it higher and higher, it'd gone just about as far as it could go,

When Sonny calmly hung up the phone and returned to deliver his final blow.

We all turned to him and inquired, "Hey Sonny, who was that on the line?"

Sonny just smiled and quietly replied, "Oh, it was just that durn stock dog of mine."

"He said he hated to call me here, and you fellas know he seldom does,

But he'd just penned some sickly yearlings, and wanted to know where the Teramiacin was!"

Now, we figgered Sonny shore won that round, after that, what more could a dog be expected to do?

We conceded, he had the top dog, but how much he was sayin' we didn't know was true.

So it goes with braggarts and canines, but Sonny's final words were shocking indeed,

He said, " You know, that Teramiacin was right next to the bag balm, I reckon I'm gonna have to teach that dumb mutt how to read!"

Recipe of the Month

Cobbler

by Sandy Poole

- 1 stick of butter
- 2 cups flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 1/3 cups milk
- 3 cups fruit of choice

Preheat oven to 350

melt 1 stick of butter in 9x13 pan

Mix All Ingredients Except Fruit Together.

Pour Batter Into Pan

Put Berries or Fruit On Top.

YUMMMMM!!!!!!

From the Fredericksburg Lodge #794 "Recipes, Remedies and Ramblings" – 2012