



## From the East

### What's In It For Me?

In this fast paced world of instant gratification, what are your expectations for Freemasonry to begin making you a better man? Are you hoping for lightening to strike, or some life changing epiphany to shake your spirit to the very core of your being? Do you have a time table set in your mind, with preprogrammed anticipation of predicted events and monumental alterations of your mind all precisely scheduled to occur in a sort of graduation ceremony where you fling your hat high in the air celebrating and whooping in octaves of sound sharp and shrill on the diatonic scale?

As Master of this lodge and in my short-lived experience as a Freemason, I have seen how expectations can fool a brother into making some errors of judgment in this regard.

Two examples come instantly to mind: One concerns a brother who set lofty goals of attainment and fame within our mystic circle casting moderation aside with reckless abandon and superfluous excess. He thus embarked upon a compulsive path to learn ritual seeking the purple of our fraternity to rest upon his exalted shoulders. The result was cause for concern within his circle of family and friends. Another brother said to me recently, "I've been a Master Mason now for almost a year and I haven't learned anything. And I'm getting pretty tired of slaving in the kitchen as well." Although this Mason does not aspire to compulsive ritual retention, like the former example, he also has expectations as a Mason that is fooling him into thinking with error in judgment about Freemasonry and how lessons are learned.

In both cases, acquisition of knowledge is being conferred to these brothers by our fraternity. With the first, the lesson is moderation in all things. He went beyond the boundary Masonry teaches to circumscribe our desires and keep our passions within due bounds. In the second, humility and service. Freemasonry teaches with very, very subtle methods, methods which are not taught in typical school-learning-type experiences. You don't read knowledge in a book and the teacher is not a person but the institution. Understanding received this way is not expected to be learned by the brother being taught because of the method employed by Freemasonry. In most cases, the brother does not even know what they need to learn, but Freemasonry does. The way we think and act have been ingrained in us for years and changes to our personality and character must be subtle. There is more to learning that takes place in our venerable institution than meets the eye.

I'd like to give an analogy of how learning works in our mystic circle. (Mystic is used to describe our fraternity because the learning aspect is so mysterious, so obscure, sometimes beyond our comprehension that we have to work hard to see what is being taught.) If you have ever been on a huge cruise ship that has returned from sea to dock in port, you will know how Freemasonry teaches. The captain of the ship approaches the harbor slowly exercising extreme caution, ever mindful of everything around in the harbor. When nearing the dock, small navigating craft (tugboats) go out to meet the ship and gently nudge the huge vessel in the direction that it should go to reach the goal of docking safely without damage to other ships, the dock, or itself. The captain knows the ship is too huge to do the navigation alone. He needs help. So it is with us. Our tugboats are the brothers in the lodge and the system of teaching arranged by our fraternity uses due caution to navigate the waters of learning effectively.

I wonder if the brother who needed to learn humility and service knows that this is one of the important lessons the Steward positions teach. I wonder if those who wish to serve the lodge as WM know that this is also the lesson taught in the top position. Funny isn't it, that the lesson taught in the first chairs of Masonic officers is also taught by the last. Why? Because humility is a hard lesson to learn. Our egos and pride get in the way of learning and those who formed Masonry way back when knew the lesson needed to be reemphasized. Lessons when learned properly make you humble and joyful because you finally find out that you were in the dark. You were blind and now you see.

This is not to say that Masonry only teaches character changes. To be sure, there are lessons to be learned in teamwork, management, memory retention, organization, preparation, public speaking, problem solving, reverence, duty, to act upon the square, be truthful, temperate, just, kind, loving, and on and on by which your life will be immeasurably improved, not only in Masonry but in other areas of your personal and professional lives as well. These lessons are learned by design in about seven years if you become an officer. Which may seem like a long time to you my modern brother of the instant gratification generation, but think of what would happen if the cruise ship's captain decided to steam into the harbor without using due caution and help from the tugboats. The wreckage would be considered a disaster. Lessons designed to change character and personality take time to learn and incorporate into our lives. Don't rush the process and never stop learning as a Mason.

One last point: In order to learn, you must attend. How would your education in grammar school have prepared you for high school, or college, or life if you only attended school once a month, or once a year, or never? Why you wouldn't even be able to read or function in society. You would still be in the dark, and as such would be found wanting. Masons need to attend the meetings provided to them by their lodge so that you will become a better man. That's what's in it for you my brother, or potential brother reading this for the very first time. That is how Masonry makes you a better man. Keep your eyes open at all times and learn what Freemasonry has prepared for you.

Wayne De Vliegheer - WM Peoria #31



From the West

## DISTINCTIONS

One of my favorite aspects of Freemasonry is our confident declaration of right and wrong. Even in today's wacky world we hold steadfast to tradition and simple values. Granted, there are those that resist this conservative choice and press us to get with the times. Most new Masons seek us out because they yearn for a structured environment. Some find this transition difficult given the lax / liberal / laissez-faire attitudes of the general public from which they come.

Are we politically incorrect, or are they blinded by the darkness of their own ignorance?

It makes life so much simpler in our men only, patriarchal Order to always be correct with he, him & his without any silly gender neutral obsessions. Spanish speaking Lodges however, are by their language obliged to speak in the masculine/feminine construct, [*which my being no linguist in foreign tongues*] I assume has no real bearing on gender. So give me a good old fashioned American, steak and potato diet of he, him and his.

In direct conflict with the thinkology of the profane and newly made, are many other reasons to prefer the company of men. Children “make excuses,” men give reasons. Women want you to feel, men care. Men understand that “country” is not where you live, it is how you live. Men don’t giggle when you say whence, whither, hither or thither.

Our Masonic heritage is a rich tapestry, woven with millions of threads. Our Lodges are a sacred retreat from the harried world and nourish the soul, they reinvigorate our resolve to make the world we live in a better place. If we each take the opportunity every day to show those we meet the desired character of a Mason, then we will prove by precept and example the distinction of being Masons.

May God bless us and forgive us.

Fraternally,

Ed Barron, SW



From the South  
An Unexpected Honor

Greetings Brethren:

As the newly elected Junior Warden, I am amazed at the chain of events that occurred after I was appointed Junior Steward, by Worshipful Brother Bill Young, last year. As a result of them, this honor now has been bestowed upon me and this is an honor. Eight years ago, when I was raised, I would have never anticipated how enormous and breath taking this is.

This last year and a half has been truly incredible. I am now in my fifth chair, since being appointed Junior Steward; along with presiding in the East, at different times, for all three degrees. And now your voices have spoken. But my skills as a manager and planner are limited. This is where I will need the help of all the Brothers of the Lodge to be successful with that which you have entrusted to me.

From the youngest Entered Apprentice, who stands in the northeast corner of the Lodge, to the Worshipful Master, who presides in the East, your help will be appreciated. Our stated meetings, as an example, with their dinners; if any Brother has the skill and know how to prepare such a dinner and would like the opportunity to display them, please let me know and we will talk about it. Helping to pick up and put away around the Lodge before and after we open and close, along with the props used for our different degrees, would be useful.

I will try not to disappoint GOD, my neighbor (the Lodge) or myself. And please feel free to approach me or call at any time. I will do my best to answer your question or try to direct you to who or what could do you the most good. I will be trying to share different aspects of Masonry with you during the months to come.

Congratulations to Brother's Fred Cheek, Joe Terrell and Tim Walsh for their change in assignments along with Brother Shawn Barker for his appointment as Marshall, welcome to the team. They will all do excellent jobs. So, until next month, here is a question for you to ponder on challenging your thinking and reasoning abilities and if you know the answer, good for you. If not I will post it in next month's article.

Name the one sport in which neither the spectators nor the participants know the score or the leader until the contest ends?

Take care and GOD BLESS.

Dale Justus, J.W.

## Masonic Education

### *What are the duties of the Tyler?*

The Tyler is actually charged with several duties, many of which are often overlooked by the Brethren. What they usually notice him doing is greeting the Brothers in the anteroom and exchanging knocks on the door. The actual assignments vary from Lodge to Lodge and even year to year, but here at Peoria the Tyler traditionally:

- Should set up the Lodge room before the meetings.
- Greet the Brethren.
- Examine visitors.
- Assure that all have signed the Register.
- See that all who enter are properly clothed.

Then there is one more duty assigned to the Tyler, which to some is a tender subject; Examining Dues Cards. The Tyler should allow no Brother to enter the Lodge room without first showing his current dues card, particularly on Stated Meetings. If you do not have your dues card with you (which you should), the Secretary can verify your standing in the Lodge. This is necessary since our dues cards expire on December 31 of each year. A RHETORICAL QUESTION: If we never show our dues card, what's the point of having one?

This is where the AMC gets murky, there are two terms used. (1) "Master Mason in good standing." (2) "whose dues are paid."

Some interpret the first (Master Mason in good standing), to apply to all MM's up to the moment preceding their being Suspended for Non-Payment of Dues or

Suspended or Expelled as the result of a Masonic Trial. This might seem charitable to extend the full rights, benefits and privileges of Freemasonry to every member, which permits them to; attend any meetings, make motions, to vote on any motion, Ballot on any candidate, Ballot to give relief under Regulation #19, etcetera. But, wouldn't it be terribly hypocritical to do this, since you are asserting whether someone else is worthy to be a Member when you have so clearly swerved from your own duty, or if you are proposing and voting to spend other peoples dues money from the Lodge treasury when you haven't paid yours!

The second term (whose dues are paid) is only treated by the AMC with regard to Lodge business, in Section 103. "All Master Masons who are members in good standing, whose dues are paid, and who have complied with the requirements of Regulation No. 13, shall be entitled to vote at an election; and none except voters shall be eligible to hold any elected or appointive position in the Lodge, except as a member of a committee."



The conflicting aspect to this is your dues card clearly states its own expiration date "through December" which would obviously end on the 31<sup>st</sup>. If an expired dues card doesn't reflect on your "good standing" why would any savvy person pay their dues more than once every two years. "A Master Mason in good standing" should be predicated on possessing a current dues card. We as adults in general and as Masons in particular should be mature enough to meet our moral and financial responsibilities, and always strive to fulfill our Masonic Obligations. There are several courses of action the Lodge can use to aide a distressed worthy Brother.

However, the By-Laws of our Lodge clearly state in Section 10, "None but Master Mason members in good standing whose dues are paid shall be entitled to vote on any business

of the Lodge." (Underline added for emphasis.) Failure to renew your membership in a timely manner is a violation of our laws, the Obligations you swore, as well as abandoning your fiscal responsibility to the Lodge. Therefore, under our By-Laws as of January 1<sup>st</sup> each year, any Master Mason member not current in their dues must be "treated as a visitor" with no right to participate beyond attending meetings, the same as any visitor from any other Lodge.

Some will say this treats the delinquent unfairly and may cause some to walk away. On the flip side, forcing the full financial burden to support the expenses of the Lodge on those that are current is truly an injustice.

Besides all that, displaying your current dues card helps the Tyler shoo away those pesky cowans and eavesdroppers.

If you have a question why we do what we do, please ask and I will try to provide an answer.

Ed Barron, SW, Master Ritualist, Code Wonk