

My Lodge Needs Me!

By Robert C. Hyland, P.M.

Bro. Hyland is a Past Master of Phoenix Lodge in Hancock, Massachusetts. This STB is to help the new Mason, or one who has not attended Lodge often, to have a clearer understanding of the function of the Lodge and the individual Masons responsibilities to his Lodge and his Brethren. Editor

New Candidates

A man must ask to be made a Mason. Sometimes a little prompting may be considered appropriate, but he must ask! When he does, you should contact the master immediately. The master will arrange for a "pre-application committee" to meet with you and the prospective candidate. Either you or the master should prepare the candidate for the meeting by informing him of the requirements for an initiation fee, as well as for references with addresses and telephone numbers. The applicant will be asked several questions. One of them must be answered in the affirmative; namely, Do you believe in a Supreme Being? Other questions may be-Will your wife or other members of your family object to your becoming a Mason? Do you have sufficient financial stability to support your family and pay dues to the lodge? Will your church object? If there is doubt on this matter, the applicant should be advised that we suggest he consult with a leader of his church.

Sponsors

If you have signed an application recommending that a candidate receive the degrees, you are a sponsor of that candidate. There are no official duties of a sponsor, and you are not obliged to do anything as such. However, if you are able to do so, you are expected to personally guide the candidate through all three blue lodge degrees. This means going with him on his visits to the Lodge of Instruction. You should also attend the meetings at which he receives his degrees. Also if he has questions during this period, you should make clear to him that you can help him obtain the answers. Make sure that any answers you give him are appropriate for the degree he has attained.

Investigating Committees

You may at some time be asked to serve on a committee to investigate a candidate to see if he is eligible to take the degrees in your lodge. This is done before he is voted on in the lodge. A past master is usually the chairman of a three-member investigating committee. He will instruct you as to how the investigation will proceed. It is important that this job be done seriously and in sufficient detail to insure that the candidate has the qualifications to become a credit to the craft.

Public Relations

In the past, many Masons have taken the position that the less said by Masons about Masonry in public forums or to friends and acquaintances, the better we would be served. This opinion has fallen into disfavor in modern times. Many of our problems such as our inability to attract enough good men to our organization, stem from the fact that our most valuable tenets are not well enough known in our communities. This fact has been proven recently by the success of presentations given at dinners and breakfasts for prospective candidates. The talks have centered on what we do, and what we believe in, as well as our historic background. The talks have been given to people who we think ought to be Masons, but are not. About thirty percent of the people addressed have become Masons! It seems obvious that our objective should be to get the same messages across to the whole world.

Wallflowers

No Mason should ever be allowed to remain by himself during a social period or break for more than a short minute, nor should he be ignored during a meal. More good men have been discouraged from attending lodge functions by being left to themselves, than by any other factor. We are supposed to be brothers! We must always be on the alert for the "Wallflowers". If you see a member, especially a new one, who is by himself, draw him into the group you are in, or go to him by yourself and talk to him. If you don't know or have forgotten his name, introduce yourself. He will reciprocate. If you have no propensity for small talk, the weather is always a suitable subject. Everyone has some interests. Find out what his are. He will be glad to talk with you about them. He is one of the valuable members of our fraternity and he must be encouraged to become an active member.

The Tyler

Some of the Tyler's duties are clear to everyone. He must always be ready to tile the door, and he must perform a bit of ritual in the third degree. But, he is required to possess a strange combination of character traits. He must always be dignified, cheerful, and friendly. This is necessary so that he can properly greet visitors, and verify their credentials as brothers. He must arrange for the examination of those who require it. He must also be ready to address visiting

dignitaries with the proper form. He should greet those that he knows, and introduce himself to those that he doesn't. He should maintain a file of members who have been examined for entry, a visitor's log, and the booklet which lists the recognized lodges. He should be a calming influence on the candidates while they are outside the Lodge room, and he must prepare late arriving brethren by apprising them of the degree in progress. As the first of ficer seen by visiting brothers, his demeanor will set the tone of their entire stay . It should be dignified, cheerful and friendly.

Politics and Religion

All Masons are in some way religious. Historically, Masons are patriots. One of our legends (possibly true) is of a lodge meeting being closed so that the members could all attend the Boston Tea Party. Paul Revere was a Mason. We know that many of the signers of h Declaration of Independence Were sons as was George Washington and several other Presidents. Most of us have some interest in politics. Nevertheless, it is a tradition of ours that we do not discuss politics or religion during our lodge meetings or other functions. The reason for this is the fact that these two subjects are viewed with very strong feelings by many if not most of us. Although we all believe in a Supreme Being, and we tend to be patriotic we do not always agree on the details of our beliefs. Therefore the harmony of our relationships may be easily disrupted by discussions of these two subjects, and we do not talk about them when we gather together as Masons.

Illness

When a brother Mason becomes ill we go out of our way to visit him and send cards to let him know we are thinking of him. This can only happen if we know about the illness. It is therefore our duty to inform our brothers when we become ill. Our brothers want to help us when we have problems, so we must keep them informed about our own welfare. Because of a natural tendency to ignore this fact at the time when it is most important, each of should tell our family that our brothers wa to know when we are sick. Our family members should feel obliged to inform the Master or the Service Committee Chairman. Tell your family about the times you have felt upset because you did not know about a brother's distress, and were therefore unable to comfort him.

Other Subjects

If you should have questions on other subjects, there are several ways that you can easily find the answers. There are always plenty of Past Masters who stand ready to respond or to find the answers to questions

Indeed, many Past Masters will be flattered to have you ask them. Also, the current officers will be pleased to share their knowledge with you. There are also many knowledgeable Masons who were never officers. In any case do not idly wonder about any facet of Masonry. The answers are there if you simply ask

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