

## **Programming Potpourri**

### **Unknown**

One of the most frequent requests made to The Masonic Service Association is from Worshipful Masters, "Can you give me some ideas for lodge programs?"

It's a good question. It deserves a good answer. This Short Talk Bulletin is designed to provide a variety of suggestions and ideas from which to choose. It would be impossible to use them all. In selecting a program, the Master (or the program committee) must determine how a particular program can be adapted to the tastes, character and traditions of the lodge; how much work and planning must be done in preparation; and if it will be a motivating and interesting experience for those attending.

Any program designed for use in a Masonic lodge must have in it an element of Masonic education – something that will be meaningful and that will add to one's Masonic knowledge and experience.

Certain programs are more adaptable to certain months or seasons. Others are of a nature suitable for "Ladies Nights." Care must be exercised in selecting appropriate programs at appropriate times.

No effort has been made in this Short Talk Bulletin to give full scripts for meetings. Instead, we have provided the "foundation stones." It's up to you to build them according to the "designs" on your own "trestleboard."

For additional information be sure to read the M.S.A. Pocket Digests, "Think Tank for Junior Wardens" and "Hat and Gavel."

### ***A WORD ABOUT PROGRAMS***

Meeting programs require a lot of thought, a lot of planning and a spirit of cooperation to ensure they go off "without a hitch." One man can't do it all. The wise Master will select a hand-picked committee to plan, organize and conduct each program.

Programs fall into several broad categories: Speakers, "fun" programs, instructive programs, and "ladies night" or social programs. Following, you will find examples of these discussed.

How effective such programs will be depends entirely upon how well they are planned and presented.

Planning is the most important fact. Does the program fit into the "theme" of the Grand Master? Does it help to promote the areas of emphasis of Grand Lodge programs? How long will the program be? Will it be of interest to the members? Care must be exercised that a program does not embarrass or offend any of your members. Each program must have a Masonic message.

"The Rusty Nail Degree"

A simple, entertaining and instructional program is one based upon an "in lodge" demonstration of the examination of a "visitor." It serves several purposes: as a "training aid" for those called upon to serve on the Examining Committee; to demonstrate that there's no need to worry about being "rusty" when visiting.

Emphasis, of course, must be placed upon proper decorum in the examining room; that the sole duty of the Examining Committee is to satisfy the lodge that a visitor is a Master Mason in good standing – not to see how much – or how little – the visitor knows.

If well-planned, this program can be one that generates a great deal of interest, discussion and participation. Many variations can be used to show proper – and improper procedures. It is usually good to open the floor for a question and answer session after the demonstration.

### ***MASONIC HOME NIGHT***

If your lodge is located near a Masonic Home, you might consider entertaining some of the guests at the lodge. Many of them relish the opportunity to "sit in lodge." Prior arrangements have to be made with the Home Administrator for them to attend. And arrangements have to be made to transport them to lodge and back to the Home. Strict adherence to the Home's rules must be kept as to times the guests must be returned. It gives everyone a boost if you can get one of them to speak about his Masonic experiences.

When it isn't practical for the guests to visit lodge, another great thrill for them is to have the Brethren from the lodge visit with the guests at the Home.

Don't neglect this important part of "the Masonic family."

### ***VISITING DEGREE TEAMS***

For an extra-special event, there are a variety of Degree Teams that will insure a big turnout. (CAUTION: Some Jurisdictions do not approve the use of degree teams.) There are several Indian Degree Teams; State Police Degree Teams; The Virginia Craftsmen; Royal Canadian Mounted Police; Military Degree Teams, etc. . . Be sure to check with your Grand Lecturer or Grand Secretary before inviting a Degree Team. Usually it requires a Special Dispensation from the Grand Master if they are from another Jurisdiction.

And, of course, there is frequently a great deal of expense – transportation, meals, and lodging. Be sure to check this all out in advance to be sure your lodge can cover the expense. Banquets are frequently used to raise the necessary funds.

### ***TABLE LODGE***

In those Jurisdictions where it is permitted, the Table Lodge can be a useful and enjoyable way of promoting Masonic knowledge and good fellowship. Some Grand Lodges have prescribed rituals for use at Table Lodges, and strict guidelines for the conduct of Table Lodges.

A Masonic digest, entitled "Masonic Feasts, Banquets and Table Lodges" is available from the Masonic Service Association which describes these festivities and their histories.

### ***CANDIDATE RECEPTION***

A successful program which originates in South Carolina is one which is a "Reception" in honor of the Accepted Candidate given between the time he is accepted and when he is initiated .

His family, friends and fellow workers are invited to the reception at the Masonic Temple. A carefully prepared program, consisting of short talks about the history and purposes of the Craft are given emphasizing that he is becoming a part of a "Universal Brotherhood" – not just another Men's Club – and asking for understanding as he mumbles to himself over the coming weeks. Everyone is treated to a tour of the Temple; and, then, over coffee and doughnuts, there is a question and answer session.

We're told that frequently one of the questions asked is, "Where can I get a petition?"

This is fully discussed in the M.S.A. Digest, "Tried and Proven."

### ***SPEAKERS***

Masonic speakers can be big "drawing cards" for Masonic meetings and banquets. For some tips on "the care and handling" of speakers, you'll find the Short Talk Bulletin, July, 1978, "The Masonic Speaker," most helpful.

One caution! It's not wise to have speakers too often. The Brethren get bored with speeches. Some speakers tend to be long-winded. It's best to tell them well in advance what their time-limit is. And it is a good idea to give them an outline of your program so they will know just when and where they fit into your plan.

### ***PAST MASTERS' NIGHT***

This is the night when you recognize the Past Masters of your lodge and the contributions they have made to the Craft.

There can be many variations of the program. A great deal will depend on how many of your Past Masters can attend. Some lodges have made it traditional that the Past Masters assume the stations and places of the lodge officers for the conferral of a degree.

Note, however, if there is no candidate, the Past Masters really don't need the experience of doing an exemplification. Then you can use one of the variations.

In one, the Past Masters are lined up west of the Altar, called by full name and years of service. Then they are each greeted individually by the Master (and sometimes presented with a token gift to mark the occasion.) Frequently, one Past Master is called upon to respond for all of the Past masters.

Sometimes the oldest past master is singled out for special recognition, with a short biographical sketch given on his Masonic career. Other times the Past Master is specially recognized who presided when the current Master was raised. One successful twist on this was a "This is your Life" type program honoring the Past Master. (It was a beautifully planned audio-visual presentation.)

It's always a nice gesture to recognize all Past Masters who are present at a Past Masters' Night. And don't neglect the Past Masters of your lodge who couldn't be present. You might consider having everyone present sign cards to be sent to them.

There are so many ways a lodge can honor its Past Masters. Think about it! One of these days you'll be a "Past Master." So why not plan a program that would be meaningful to you if you were on the receiving end?

(For additional ideas, see the Short Talk bulletins of January 1931, April 1945, February 1941 and October 1943 .)

## ***PATRIOTIC OBSERVATIONS***

Washington's Birthday—February

Law Day—May

Memorial Day—May

Flag Day—June

Fourth of July (Independence Day)

Veteran's Day—November

Patriotic programs are always popular. You can get a lot of people involved, especially the Youth Groups. You can usually get some good publicity on well-planned patriotic activities. "Love of Country" is still a basic emotion that needs "recharging" frequently.

Programs can be planned around the specific event with appropriate speeches, plays, skits, flag displays, oratorical contests, etc. Use your imagination.

### ***YOUTH NIGHTS***

In most Masonic communities there are (or should be) youth groups which are sponsored by Masonic Bodies. The most popular of these are the Order of DeMolay, the Job's Daughters, and the Order of Rainbow for Girls. In some jurisdictions, you will find the Order of Builders, The Order of the Constellation of Junior Stars, The Order of Girls of the Golden Court, and perhaps others. And, of course, there are the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts .

All of these organizations promote and teach the social virtues and are worthy and deserving of our support, concern and encouragement. Lodge programs which recognize the accomplishments of these groups will do much to show that interest and concern.

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