



The Overy Papers

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Fraternal Greetings Brethren

This month I will change my tack and concentrate on "Our Lodge". Some suggestions have already been put in place but as we prepare for the change in the officers as they go toward the Masters Chair it is also to remind us, that even they will need our full support.

This does not advocate a policy but just to give everyone food for thought.

"And so this is to New Members and New Officers"

I don't know how you felt on the day you entered the lodge for the first time. Looking at us older Brothers maybe we cannot remember that far back. But I feel that that it is very important how we treat the new member, as he progresses through the experience of becoming a Master Mason and we must remember, it can be a daunting ordeal.

In fact it could be the make or break for him and may make him undecided whether to continue in the Craft or not. We must make every effort to make him feel welcome. I know it is often difficult as our Officers are busy trying to remember their part of the ritual for the night. So, it is up to the rest of us who are not taking part to step up and take on the duty of making him welcome and thereby supporting our officers.

We must make sure we do not act as if we are superior and leave him alone, after all we are just ordinary people whatever our position or rank within the Masonic Family. We must ensure he is made to feel comfortable in Lodge and we must remember, we once stood where he stands tonight.

There is the tale of one new member, not of our lodge, whose name was Albert. Albert was a shy inoffensive sort of person and was afflicted with a very bad stutter, which made him very sensitive in the company of others. His father and brother were both masons. The father was a very

domineering individual while the brother was the total opposite to Albert he being a very popular and an extrovert sort of person.

Can you imagine how Albert felt as a new member? How he went through our rituals, especially reciting his obligations trying so hard to get the words out.

It must have been worse after his initiation knowing he still had two more levels to go through, before he became a Master Mason. But he did persevere, and became a Master Mason partly because of the person he was. He must have been very proud to have survived the ordeal and I think this meant he must have had the total support of all the lodge brothers to help and to make sure he remained a member.

Unfortunately he eventually had to join the family firm and that restricted his ability to be an active member as he had wished but when the United Grand Lodge heard about his problem they understood and gave a special dispensation to him that allowed him to stay a mason but not a member of any lodge.

He did meet another Brother later who helped him with his speech problems and eventually he was almost cured.

His name, if you have not guessed it, was King George the 6th.

After the war he designed the peace postage stamp for Great Britain and it depicted his strong feeling for the craft with many symbols.

I know he was a member of the Royal Family and probably had more help than most but when he repeated his obligation he was on his own. Or was he? He had a problem that could only be overcome by the close understanding of his fellow brothers.

Most newly made officers must have similar problems and will need to have the same understanding as a new member.

Maybe Albert had a "Masonic Buddy or Mentor", someone who knew his fears and kept close at all times. I know I had two Masonic Buddies who were personal friends and were my sponsors. They were still close friends until they went to the Grand Lodge above, one only last year.

So we must make sure that our new members do not feel intimidated by the display of highly decorated aprons by making sure that his "Masonic Mentor" is available for him to tell him what is going on and introduce him to everyone.

We must all make sure that each one of us gets to know the new member maybe a temporary nametag will help those of us who know a face but cannot remember a name. I am still known as BillyBob to one member of our Lodge,

who could not remember if I was Bill or Bob but that small thing made me feel real welcome as a member in our Lodge as recent as 2004 and after 30 years in the craft.

Maybe the new member could help at the festive board or in setting up the Lodge before the meeting as this will bring him into a social contact with others and give him a better feeling of belonging and I feel that is essential. I feel he must stay for the closing of the Lodge sometimes as he must learn everything, including why he is not allowed into all functions of the lodge until he becomes a Master Mason. He must not feel he is being left out and we must remember we all meet on the level.

So we must draw him into a conversation before the lodge meeting and also at the festive board and make sure he knows and understands what is going on in the lodge.

I well remember the waiting for the lodge to open one night not realizing everyone had all cleared off on an annual visit to Sedro Woolley. I know it was my fault for not reading the summons fully and after 30 years I still made that mistake. I can only imagine the embarrassment for a new member.

This of course should be the job of his "Masonic Buddy or Mentor" who should explain what is happening in lodge not just in the meetings but outside as well. Having said that we should all be keeping an eye on him and be available and ready to assist as needed.

Remember we should be looking at him not just as an Initiate but also someone who someday, we hope, will become our Worshipful Master. So it is very important that we nurture the enthusiasm he has and to make him find the pleasure of being in Lodge as we all do.

I discussed this with a friend in the UK and found they had a similar issue and solved it by creating a new Lodge Officer called a Lodge Mentor. The United Grand Lodge approved this and issued a collar badge of the crossed Chisels.

The mentor sits with the new member while he is in lodge and if he must leave because he is not qualified for the next level, the Mentor leaves with him and keeps him company, until the lodge is closed.

This means "the mentor" should not have another position in Lodge but if necessary he can always request someone to help if required.

And as I said, we will soon be preparing for the next set of officers who will be starting out or moving up and we must give them all the support we can.

They will all need it, especially if they are like me, and have problems remembering even names.

Thank you for listening and whatever I say may we continue in peace and harmony.

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