



The Overy Papers

Number 6 - Making Freemasonry Succeed in the 21st Century

Fraternal Greetings Brethren

In this talk I do not intend to answer all the problems but this is how I see it and when a lodge works together I am sure we can succeed.

To start I would like to say Freemasonry is not a club, it is a fraternity. The dictionary describes a Fraternity as a group of men, joined together for fellowship, with the same interests, a brotherhood and that is what I feel we are.

Freemasonry has stood the test of time and has basically been in its present form for nearly 3 hundred years. As an Entered Apprentice you are told the 24 inch rule should be your guide on how you spend your day. Part in Prayer to Almighty God, part in Labour and refreshment and part in serving a friend or brother in need.

I realize that that this is a ritualistic ideal and it has serves us well but we must understand it is only a guide.

Today 300 years later we all have a common problem. How do we make our Fraternity not only survive but how do we make it work well for our members in the 21st Century.

Many of our members may have two jobs, or wives who work and children who are busy doing homework or taking part in sport. These family activities often come high on their priority list and rightly so. Every one here has a duty to do likewise, so the time we spend with the three parts of our 24-hour day is up to each one of us.

Grand Lodge has helped us to meet this modern world by approving use of the short form we have introduced for raising up and I feel that is a step in the right direction.

A few years ago I belonged to a large number of Professional Societies and clubs. They looked good on my business card but I was always too busy to get involved, except pay my dues. Then one day I cancelled them all, except one, and that one was not even on my business card, I stayed a Freemason.

I decided to become more involved and started to look at how I can help. I am very happy in the position I have worked my way into and as the Lodge Historian and Director of Education I feel I have a place in the Lodge that I fully enjoy.

I have looked at the history of our lodge and how those early members acted in their Masonic Life. They also had problems, such as, a very busy working life, their interesting mode of travel and a lodge that was not heated. Still they made it work with good festive boards, formal ladies nights, and free cigars. That was part of their solution in 1913.

I have decided to divide my Masonic life into three different but interwoven areas that I hope, will explain how I personally see our lodge in this the 21st century. This is my personal concept, and is meant to give you something to think about.

First we have the working of the Lodge, like we are doing tonight.

I feel we must strongly protect our lodge with its obligations and rituals and to be very careful about any changes we think of making. We must also remember what our rituals and obligations mean and what they stand for because they are our corner stones not just for the lodge but for each of us.

I know we cannot all be Shakespearian Actors but we must try and make our Lodge work be as interesting and entertaining as we can. The guidance we get from our Master and his officers, over this, is essential, but don't forget, it is just as important that we fully support them.

That is why it is paramount that all members, who can, should try to get to lodge meetings and support their lodge and its officers. You get a much better meeting when you have a packed house, so even a small increase in those present would be a bonus.

We must also nurture our newest members and help them by making them have an active part in the lodge and to understand what our rituals are all about. This will make their membership more enjoyable and will make their visits to Lodge a pleasure.

I know it is not for everyone to go through the chair of King Solomon and even I am one of those. But everyone must be encouraged to do their best to take a part and get involved.

I personally know we have improved over the last few years. At the beginning I did have doubts but today I can say with all honesty I really enjoy our lodge meetings.

I feel we are on the right track but we must do better. Sending out my talks to all our members is my way to make contact with everyone and make them feel they are not forgotten and they are still our brothers. So to all of you out there, who are not here tonight without an excuse, don't forget us, because we have NOT forgotten you.

Second is the business of the Lodge that includes such things as the Board of General Purposes and the Temple Society.

Recently we held our Board of General Purposes meeting that deals with the running of the Lodge and followed this by a Temple Society Meeting that works to keep our Lodge building in good repair. We had a good turnout, in fact, it was mentioned that with this number of members, it could be a long meeting.

A number of very contentious issues were addressed and we did overrun our time but it went well and everybody had a chance to put his views forward. I must admit I am not a meeting person but I did put forward my views, especially those that affected me directly as historian. I tried to do this, not as a fait accompli, but to clearly give my opinions and follow with a list of possible options. At times I had to remember I had "to work in harmony within our lodge walls."

There was often a difference of opinion and sometimes the voting was not always unanimous but at the end of the day I felt that all the main issues were addressed and in what was almost, perfect harmony. For example all I wanted was a safe for our historic artifacts. What did I get? the membership of a new team that is updating the lodge inventory and being tasked with another cupboard to clear out.

Mind you this resulted in me finding a pile of old American Freemasonry magazines that date back to the earliest days of our lodge and run from 1913 to 1918. Once I have catalogued them they will be available to view. How we do it, is another issue at our next meeting.

And thirdly our commitment to our community that is both Masonic and non Masonic

Our founder members were great community builders. This is clearly shown by the names of many roads, parks and even schools in the city.

As Masons we already do quite a lot such as visiting our sick members and making sure that age does not get them left out, a visit often means so much to them.

Meeting with those who have asked to be Masons is also very important, as membership is a big commitment and remember, it is not a one-way street. We are not only trying to find if the possible candidate would be satisfactory but he is also trying to find out if Freemasonry is what he wants.

I must mention the widow's cookies for Christmas, it is a winner. The one I delivered to one of our widows, a war bride, had her daughter visiting at the time and proudly told her that in 35 years the lodge has not forgotten her. There is no answer to that.

And of course we all know about the Shriners, the Cancer Car, the Bursary and the soon to be started our own Teddy Bear Club.

For the Non Masonic actions I am always surprised by what is being done by our lodge members as well as members from other lodges in our fraternity. Not on a lodge basis but as individuals. I do not intend to say any more as it is a personal issue just one thing though if you ever went to the Dickens English Cafe in Chillawack at Christmas, you used to have to watch out for Santa especially if your wife is offered to sit on his lap.

Personally I feel we should all make attempts to let everyone know we are not just a "private men's club", but important members of our community. I try to let people know I am not just a Freemason but also a proud Freemason. I often put small mentions of freemasonry into my conversation and I must be honest I use the Shriners as an example.

The Shriner's is such a well-known group in North America and I find that most people know about them but they do not know they are a part of the Freemason family.

I do feel we must get out there and let people know we are not just a religious group that is taking over the world, including the Abbotsford Police department. One woman at the display in Abbotsford we did for our 100 year celebration said " I know all about you, you cut bits off. I saw it on TV.

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

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