



## *The Overy Papers*

### Number 13 Humility - The Forgotten Virtue

I used the letter by H. H. Astbury Published in February, 1982 as the basis of this talk.

Of all the virtues and attributes propounded by Craft Masonry, the most obscure and overlooked is also one of the most vital and essential to our order. Yet it is, for many people, the one of the most difficult to honestly apply. This virtue is HUMILITY.

I for one find this very difficult to apply as in my working life it was not a virtue but a part of my very singular life as a troubleshooter for two major aircraft companies where I often put aside my company position and took up the side and problems of the customer.

Today I find that I must change my attitude and show my humble allegiance to my Masonic Obligation and to support my Lodge with humility of my actions. One of the main three great tenets of a Mason is Brotherly Love and we are taught to regard the whole of the human species as one family, the high and low, the rich and poor, and to support and protect each other. On this principle Masonry unites men of every country, sect and opinion and conciliates true friendship among those who might otherwise have remained at a distance.

Our actions in lodge and our Masonic actions out of lodge must reflect this and we must remember the principle of masonry that unites us all. So what we say and do both in and out of lodge must be said and done with this in mind.

This does not mean we are sub versant but that we just have a difference of opinion on the way things are. Unfortunately actions must be taken occasionally to retain the harmony of the lodge but that does not happen very often and when it does "The 25 Landmarks of Freemasonry" should always be our guide.

I talk to the master about once a month on my lodge duties and we discuss what I have planned to do and how I plan to do it.

95% of what I tell him he is happy with and we discuss the other 5% with Brotherly Love in mind and I hope with the humility I strive to attain. When someone has made comments that I am not happy with I discuss them with him and what I plan to do.

The last thing I want is to disrupt the peace and harmony of the lodge inside and out and I must admit that so far nothing has happened that I am not happy to handle myself outside of the Lodge.

Also I must say no "important" issues have involved another Brother. I have accepted that they have a difference of opinion and once I have thought it out thoroughly, brotherly love must prevail. For me I hope it is a win/win situation and I hope I will continue to have the humility to accept our differences.

Some situations are outside the sphere of influence of the Lodge but could still upset the Peace and Harmony if I bring them up in Lodge. In those cases I have just said my point to the Worshipful Master and will if required, bring up the issue at the board of General Purposes, not for action, just for information and what I plan to do, which is usually to, "just shut up". As I said, in all cases so far the issues have been discussed with the Worshipful Master and my course of action as always been agreed by him. I do think they are **my** issues and I should deal with them, not him, and so far all is well.

So I think humility is a humbleness of attitude and although our rituals do not make direct reference to this virtue except in our attitudes toward the GAOTU it should always be at the back of my mind. In England we do not have regular meetings and emergent meetings just emergent meetings. The business part of the lodge is done at a Board of General Purpose that is held once a month. The reason being that if there is a strong difference of opinion on an issue it might disrupt the harmony of the lodge. I have mixed feelings about this but I am coming down in favour of our system but it must be done with Humility in mind and we must all have a strong sense of our Masonic Virtues.

You may have noticed my silence in many issues in lodge it is not because I have no interest I just need to think about them and have nothing to say at the time. That is OK by me but then, I have the chance to have my say in lodge once a month like tonight.

The preparation of a candidate for our ceremonies is in itself a humbling experience, and throughout the course of the three degrees our candidates

are told what to say, where to sit, and when to stand, walk and speak. They are dressed in an inferior manner, presented with an unadorned apron, and treated generally as a beginner in front of the skilled and learned.

When he receives his third degree he earns the right to be treated as an equal among equals. The only distinctions that exist within the lodge are those of merit and position. The labourer sits as an equal with the professional, the clerk with the judge and the scholar with the student and each has the same voice in the affairs of the lodge.

However, all too often the lessons of humility are missed or forgotten maybe because they are not specifically emphasized in our charges or stressed in our instruction.

Yet it becomes virtually impossible to practice true brotherly love without genuine humility, since only the truly humble person has shed the trappings and motivations of self-interest. His concerns and feelings are for his fellow man, rather than for himself. He has been able to widen his sphere of interest, compassion and action to encompass all with whom he comes in contact.

This is not to say that he lacks strength of character or personality or that he has no personal pride. To be humble is not to lack confidence in one's own self.

We all hope that those in our fraternity do so for the right reasons. When they stand for an office in our Lodge they should do so without being motivated by self-glorification. Their motivation should be to serve our fraternity and contribute to the well being of our craft then hopefully they will know that this virtue called "humility" has its own reward.

So let us all remember humility and when someone makes an error in our ritual or forgets to do or say the right thing, let us remember that I am doing my best and that is all we should ask for and be thankful for my efforts.

I once said to a brother years ago when he asked my rank I replied "I am just a Master Mason" and he rebuked me saying "you have reached the highest position in craft masonry and you will never be **Just** a Master Mason".

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

Bro. Bill Overy

Member of the Education Committee of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon.