



The Overy Papers

Number 35 - Attendance

Fraternal Greetings Brethren

I took the basis of this paper from a Masonic Bulletin printed by the Grand Lodge of British Columbia. There was no author just "Contributed" and to that brother I say thank you.

It deals with the loss of attendance at Lodge and the problems that were described it could have been written today. In fact it was written 61 years ago. Although I have only been with this Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon for ten of my 38 years in Freemasonry, I am little surprised we still have not solved the problem.

Much has been said in recent years about lack of attendance at Lodge Meetings and many reasons have been given for this apparent lack of interest in the craft. Have we given serious consideration to the newest of our individual members? Have we been more interested in the number of applications than we have been in our duties to the new members? Has Quantity taken precedence over Quality? We should ask ourselves are the applicants being informed of our requirements and are they favourably disposed towards these requirements?

Every applicant has his own personal reason for seeking admission and it is the duty of the sponsor to be satisfied that that the applicant will be making a worthwhile addition to his lodge. If he is then accepted, he must be prepared to devote time towards his instruction and education?

He should be given information when discussing his application with the sponsor so that he is fully aware of his duties and responsibilities.

The next responsibility rests with the Investigating Committee. The members of this committee also carry a great responsibility as it is to a great extent their report that that governs the applicant's acceptance and must be done at all times in a proper manner.

On being accepted and during the course of the ceremonies that the candidate takes part in, he should be informed of his requirements to the Lodge and

whenever possible the sponsor will to accompany him to Lodge or other lodges when it would be permissible for him as a new member to attend.

Our Grand Lodge, probably like many others, has guides explaining what requires to be done and I feel our Grand Lodge a done a great job on producing these guides for us, that work in all of the four rituals, Canadian, Ancient, Emulation and Australian, used in our Provenance. So now it is up to the Lodges to put them into action.

Next consideration should be what are the requirements of the Lodge to him?

He has been accepted, has paid the necessary fee, and passed the three degrees and now is a Master Mason.

What then? Will we leave him to his own resources or shall we devote our efforts to his Education in the fundamentals of Freemasonry?

If the candidate has met the aforementioned requirements he wants, needs and deserves some explanation on what has transpired.

He needs to receive guidance and encouragement to think and ask about the lessons he has received and to be encouraged to maintain an interest in the craft?

While we are willing to accept men who will conform to our ideals let us also devote our time and effort to all the membership so that they come to an understanding of what Freemasonry means and what they are expected of, as a Mason.

We now come to the responsibility of the officers of the Lodge.

Each officer of the Lodge has the responsibility to carry out his duties as the best he can. He should be willing to be present at all meetings, within reason, that he can. There is nothing worse than to have a mad scramble to have to fill in stand in members at the last moment.

At an emergent meeting a good ritual is a pleasure to all who are present. When a degree is being acted it is essential not only for the members who are present but more so for the candidate who will pass this way only once. For him it is his introduction into our craft and it is the duty of everyone to help him to enjoy it.

Another problem is the inability of those members present to hear the spoken word. Nothing is more discouraging to those in Lodge to sit and hear little or nothing of the speaker during the ceremonies. I know we cannot all be Shakespearian Actors and if the lodge is short of good ritualist speakers maybe the time has come to form a Ritual Team from members of the Lodge.

Regular meetings are also important as they not only allow for business to be dealt with but also give our newest members an idea of how the Lodge works. The sponsor or another member should make sure all new members are present in lodge for these meetings. He needs someone to sit with him, often in the North East to answer his questions and explain what is going on.

Education is a major part of this meeting and talks should be planned before hand with the Master and maybe a guest speaker can be introduced occasionally to vary the format or maybe introduce a concordant body to talk.

All officer positions should not be a one man job but a team effort of the officers to make our meetings enjoyable and worth visiting.

In assuming office, the Worshipful Master should have a program prepared for the regular meetings that would be of interest to the membership. Remembering the charge you received when assuming office "It will be your province to communicate light and instruction to the Brethren of your Lodge."

The festive Board is also part of the lodge meeting and it is a time when we meet visitors in a social environment. At the same time it should be structured with a top table and the toasts should be given by members who have been advised beforehand not surprised at the last minute.

And lastly do not forget the Tyler's Toast "To absent brethren" and maybe we should remember that the term absent brethren includes all those members of the Lodge that did not bother to take the time to come to the meeting that night,

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.