

A Commitment to Your Lodge

By RW Bro Ken Meyer

In March of this year, our Lodge, like many others, will be holding installations for its officers, a time to consider those that have shown an interest in moving through the chairs. It is the filling of these positions that I would like to address.

To begin, the ritual book gives reference to memory work and responsibilities for various positions within the Lodge. For example, the position of Inner guard has approximately 20 references to memory work that consist of from a single sentence to half a page: in the scheme of things, not too involved. However, as you progress through the chairs, the amount of memory work increases, as does your responsibilities. If you were to follow the natural progression of the chairs, you would eventually find yourself as Master of the Lodge with 270 items of memory work, varying from a single sentence to a seven-page lecture depending on the type of work your Lodge carries out and whether you share the work among your brothers.

I have mentioned this statistic to make a point; that moving through the chairs should not be taken lightly. Success of a lodge can be attuned to the structure of a chain, with each link pulling equally toward a common goal. Failure to except responsibility by any one of the links will interfere with the purpose and strength of the chain, which in any organization will cause dissention and eventual disharmony.

The word responsibility encompasses various aspects of individual characteristics. If you are considering representing your Lodge as an officer, it might be wise to conduct a self-assessment to ensure that you presently carry the necessary qualities or are willing to learn and take them on while serving in your role. While conducting this assessment, it would serve justice to the Lodge to make your decision from the heart and not from the head. This is not to say that any one brother cannot do this if he is determined enough to carry out his goals, as the human spirit along with encouragement goes along way.

One of the worst scenarios for any Lodge is when an individual takes a position based solely on importance and prestige. The negative approach of, "what can the position do for me," as opposed to the positive approach of "what can I do for the position," and what can I do for my Lodge". The negative approach causes frustration, anxiety, anger, and the eventual depletion of interest. The positive approach not only benefits the Lodge but, in turn, benefits the individual, as his efforts and sense of responsibility will be returned to him in Masonic knowledge and respect from his fellow brethren. Please remember that you only get out of Freemasonry what you put into it!

Many papers on Freemasonry state that advancement within the lodge should be based on the merit of an individual and not his seniority. And some Lodges won't let anyone progress amongst the chairs unless they have proven to the Lodge that they can carry out the work, i.e., "the Junior Wardens Lecture" as an example. This discourages many from even considering in going any further than Senior Deacon because they cannot memorize huge portions of work. This is not to say that a Lodge should not encourage

someone to go through as if he has the qualities of a leader, the work can be shared among the brethren, and everyone wins and stops the old adage of “that’s the way we have always done it”.

If you are a Mason who wishes to make the journey through the chairs, commitment should be a priority in your mind. Commitment, in this case, relates to accepting responsibility for the chair or position you chose to be placed in. As well, it should mean that while functioning in your existing position you are committed to preparing for your next position. This is important, as there are many masons who attempt to prepare at the last moment and find themselves arriving at the destination but having missed the trip and consequently cause disharmony within the Lodge. Please remember an important undertaking when you are a Lodge Officer, and that is responsibility to the Worshipful Master if you are unable to make it, please offer the courtesy of making a phone call so other arrangements can be made in your stead, as your commitments are at the minimum of attending all Lodge meetings, unless in extreme cases of emergency, work, or family matters.

I have not brought this subject up to discourage or to place fear or apprehension in an individual who has a desire to move into the chairs. You may be the Mason who enjoys the fellowship alone and wishes not to partake in the work. This is as acceptable as it is for those who wish to advance. Ritual and memory work, alone, does not make a Mason. The message is, if you are intending on taking a position within the lodge, that you do it for the right reasons.

"You owe it to yourself, and you owe it to your lodge."