

The Weathered Ashlar

By Brother Steven P. Lawton, E.A.

Temple Lodge A.F. & A.M. #666 G.R.C.

Editor's Note:

Brother Lawton is a Master Corporal in the Canadian Airforce currently serving over seas with The National Support Unit-Joint Task Force-South West Asia. He has thus far taken only the entered Apprentice Degree. His progression through the degrees was interrupted by his duty to his country. Our Brother was initiated into Freemasonry on April 1st, 2002.

Since the times of the first Freemasons, there have undoubtedly been men who were very eager to learn the secrets and mysteries of the craft. They would have been anxious to pass from one degree to the next actively seeking knowledge as they progressed. There were times, as I have learned from reading articles at www.thelodgeroom.com and www.thefreemason.com, where men like W. Brother Robert Burns in "short talk bulletin Vol-I June, 1923 No.6 (Author unknown)", received second and third degrees in one night. Such an undertaking must have been very long and I expect that W. Brother Burns, and many like him, found that much of the history and information passed to him would have been a little blurred during the following days.

In today's Freemasonry it is not unheard of for an Entered Apprentice or Fellow Craft Mason to wait one, two sometimes even three or four months during the summer season before being passed to the next degree. Though this can be trying to one's patience we should remember that patience is a virtue. Also we run the risk that an Entered Apprentice may become disheartened and loose interest. Thus the ongoing debate that we hear: "How long should one wait before advancing in degrees?"

I find myself being an extreme version of the later scenario where it has been over six months since my initiation and several months still to go before I will return to Temple Lodge A.F. & A.M. #666 G.R.C. I consider myself lucky to be in a position where I do not have the misfortune of wondering when I might advance to the second degree. I have chosen a path in life, which allows me to understand that the things we wish for can not always come to pass when we would like. I do have a great anticipation of the future that Freemasonry holds for me, but I use that anticipation as a crutch to carry me through the difficult times I find myself in.

The privilege, as I see it, of having so lengthy a period before advancing to Fellow Craft, allows me to contemplate the knowledge, which I have gained as an Entered Apprentice. Not knowing which further lessons lay ahead of me, I can dwell on those that I have been taught and concentrate on putting them to use in my everyday life. A lesson I learned from the article by W. Brother Stephen

Dafoe, titled "Toast to the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario," where he recants a story that was told at Moira Lodge's 175th anniversary in 1976 by the Grand Master. It basically states that the teachings of Freemasonry, like gifts from the heart, should be worn proudly at all times.

Having been separated from my wife Andrea, our children, and my other family and friends, has created much anguish in my heart. I am doing my part to fight the threat of global terrorism, and the heavy burden of the world's troubles, which dwell in the minds of all soldiers at one point in time, added to that anguish in my heart, is a difficult path at best. Freemasonry allows me a peace of mind to deal with this time as a life lesson. I will walk away from here with a stronger sense of family values. I will strive to maintain the appreciation that I hold for my family at all times. I will never again take for granted the privileges bestowed upon me by the Great Architect of the Universe.

As an Entered Apprentice I am a symbol of a Rough Ashlar in a long line of others, anxiously waiting my turn to be crafted into a Perfect Ashlar. Though the path can be a long one, I am pleased to realize, much to the benefit of the craftsman, that when left to the elements that rough stone can slowly become weathered smooth.