

## FREEMASONRY AND THE FUTURE

“Why the quest for ancient ‘secrets?’ Subconsciously, we know that those who know and understand the past; know the future. Human nature is that constant.”

Today, the Masonic membership roles are rapidly declining; what of Masonry’s future??? We see all the major social institutions that made America great under attack. Church, schools, family, marriage, Boy Scouts – God only knows what all. What happens when they go after the fraternities, such as Freemasonry? What’s left? Does anyone really think that the fraternities are safe – forever? What would happen if Freemasonry was forced underground? That’s happened before.

Too few Masons know what we had, or what we currently have; so - what of the future?

As with all successful institutions one word drives institutional success – “Hope!” Hope for a better life, more money, recognition; the list is endless. Throw in hope of fun and excitement – anybody for ‘education?’ “Hope” is anticipation. When no one anticipates a ‘good’ Lodge meeting, they stay home. When they see something go to hell, with no anticipation of reversal; they quit.

‘Hope’ for just SURVIVAL - itself - drove Nazism, Communism; even Christianity and Islam. “HOPE” is really powerful stuff.

So, what is Freemasonry?

FREEMASONRY IS LARGELY AN “ATTITUDE”

Freemasonry is about noble participation and legacy – based on ‘hope.’ It is a “fraternity;” that term implies mutual support – not just common membership.

The Craft is an investment. Who comes to Lodge, anymore? – those who have already invested their time and effort – maybe even their money. Why? Because they have a strong faith (read: “hope”) in the Craft and what it stands for.

So, how should we think? As an ‘empowering philosophy,’ don’t assume that you’ll just reap what you sow; assume that you’ll have to EAT it! BUT, is there even anything on the table, good bad or otherwise?

Is starvation imminent? Is it poison, something barely palatable or something exquisite? Look to the just the well-known lecturers; they get a lot of admiration - they earn it. AND, their name is long remembered. Add the Lodge Past Masters

and the Grand Masters whom are a thrill to be in the presence of. Those personalities sowed some great seeds.

Sure! Everybody is “CONCERNED!” “Concern” is just another form of ‘talk-is-cheap.’ So, what is there in the way of a VIABLE – repeat - VIABLE action plan? What is cheap and easy? The fact is that there is an overwhelming amount on leadership and Lodge management information. BUT – what of the members, at large? This is a membership organization; not a leadership organization. It’s a “fraternity!” No fellowship equates to no participation.

First, let’s look at what changed.

Think about this – Life used to be a function of one’s “associations;” one’s support systems. 100 years ago, nationality, community and Church membership dictated one’s very survival. Churches were radically important to people, as religion was marginally above superstition, as to one’s very survival – let alone ‘success.’

Comparably, Freemasonry was a more of a “sharing” support system, a social system and a major source of entertainment! In relative terms, Craft membership used to be expensive – an investment. Dues made Lodges rich. Out of that, a lot came back to the individual member. A job, a loan, a line of credit.

In that environment, the Craft was bound for glory; no questions! How much ‘hope’ can a man stand?

Then, things began to change.

By the end of W.W. II, modern medicine was looked to for survival. God, was getting nudged from His high-priority status. Divine intervention wasn't as reliable as Penicillin. Jobs became a matter of getting into a union or the civil-service ranks. Who needed the Craft, then? With the alternative means of 'hope,' Church and fraternal membership fell.

The Craft used to be a drinking and smoking society. With DUI laws and such, even the Shriners have taken a severe beating. No fun equals no-show! No longer does a guy dare to get drunk, enjoy a cigar or two, share dirty jokes and pat the waitress on the fanny. Who needs the Shrine? It used to be a fun outfit. Their declining membership clearly illustrates the consequences of the rationalization which drives the Orwellian state of "Politically Correct."

Think about that! Seriously!

Entertainment? The Craft used to be loaded with it. Then - they invented TV and the Internet - who needs to leave the house, now? With stores staying open later - all that late evening high speed traffic – complete with traffic cops, even. Yuk! "Don't leave home!"

A lot changed.

So – what have we for answers?

For starters, we have to make Masonic functions a source for emotional stimulation. Read: fun, exciting, interesting, educational. Even ritual needs to be done with excellence and PASSION!

We all hope to have a good meeting. “Hope” requires inspiration and motivation. “Hope” also embodies a powerful driving force - the “...reasonable expectation.” How many of us reliably expect to have a good time, at Lodge? That IS one hell of a “...reasonable expectation.”

How do we honor the reasonable expectations? The solution is about action; not talk - try these recommendations:

1. The Craft is a fraternity! Think “Family;” act “Family.” Be your Brother’s keeper.
2. Learn (and share) the purpose and history of the Craft, far beyond just the ritual.
3. Go for the emotional thrill and gratification of the Craft. Ensure that others have the same experience.
4. Practice and hold others accountable for Masonic conduct! Do it! (Be reasonable.)
5. Create fun and excitement – educate each other on Masonry.
6. Think: “Personal Legacy;” titles without legacy are an embarrassment.
7. DEFINE and PRACTICE “Fellowship.” Ensure that fellowship overwhelms “politically correct,” with a vengeance. Good taste is one thing, fear of speaking is another.
8. Think up ways to support others.
9. Think of ways to actively include more people. Too many Lodges depend on a reliable (dug-in) ‘core’ team; bring in new blood.
10. ADAPT for modern times. Discover and emulate others’ success.
11. LIVE the tenets of the Craft. Encourage others to do so. Shun those who refuse.
12. Build or restore personal social skills.

13. Build or restore and practice Lodge Officer skills
14. Connect with the Concordant Bodies – long term
15. Wear the Masonic Symbols – prominently.
16. Carry & dispense Masonic literature.
17. SHARE Masonic experiences.
18. Think outside the proverbial ‘box.’

Most of the above list won't cost a dime.

What would all that take? It takes “action” – not ‘talk.’

On a personal level, obtain a name badge, print up Masonic business cards – and hand them out. **PROMINENTLY** wear the Masonic jewelry and/or logos. Ask for Masonic cards; tease if they are not forthcoming.

Develop a Masonic E-mail style. Get in the habit of communicating with other Masons. Electronically share Masonic literature. Gather and share a collection of Masonic information, whether tid-bits, books or artwork. Be so courteous as to acknowledge E-mails from Masons.

Give each other timely reminders of upcoming events – we now depend on those – dammit - **JUST DO IT!**

Visit! Visit! Visit! - ‘Nuff said.

In Masonic company – CONNECT! Be a ‘greeter.’ Insist on ‘greeters.’ Circulate amongst Masonic populations & ‘relate,’ don’t just communicate – or hide. Compare notes. Tell jokes, or interesting stories; come prepared. If you can’t learn about the Craft, take the effort to formulate some good questions. Don’t accept ignorance, explore for the educated Masons.

Time, attention, listening and feedback are “free” gifts – give regularly, at the Lodge of your choice – and elsewhere.

Look for something tangible to give away to a deserving person – anybody; more especially a Brother Mason.

Host a living room Masonic discussion group. Be - or solicit - a good moderator. Use pertinent videotapes. Show the Masonically related movies. Host a ritual-tips evening; invite a well respected ritualist. Print up ‘ritual tips’ sheets. Ask others to share in refreshments. Put out a bowl for donations. Listen to the feedback.

If you’re a Lodge Officer – assertively get to know your peers. If you expect to be introduced in Lodge, give your counter-part a business card – before the meeting; ask for his. At least wear your name badge.

Seize on every opportunity to pass a compliment. Offer assistance where appropriate.

Practice elementary courtesies; such as saying “hello,” paying a compliment, saying something positive - and don’t forget to say “thank you.”

Be prepared to educate the public. If you don't know an answer, be prepared to steer people in the proper direction.

Be forward looking. Be a 'reformer;' not a critic, taking sleazy cheap-shots. Methodically precede any seeming criticism with a compliment. Phrase a correction in the format of "...may I suggest."

"Charity" isn't to be exclusively out-sourced for public consumption; be charitable to Masons and the Lodges. With Lodges in serious disrepair, why the unique focus on "Habitat for Humanity" and such?

Discover someone who needs or deserves something – gang up on them & deliver – whatever.

Try not to go to Lodge, alone. Request - or offer - a ride. Assertively introduce your riding partner at Lodge.

Identify new members & go out of your way to get to know them. Ask if they want/need help with anything. Ask if they have any questions. Listen to any feedback that they may have.

Involve family. Ask the wife-girlfriend to make some cookies. Ensure that she knows when 'family' is welcome.



Think of ways to excel, not just survive and/or wait out events. Get truly involved. Invest more ‘discretionary’ time in Masonry.

Focus on harmonious fellowship. Practice and demand the Golden Rule. Commend progress.

Identify Masonic problems – AND SOLUTIONS!

Most importantly, closely attend to the “feelings” of others.

Get into “Masonic habits”- Be an Example!

(AND – notice how good that feels!)