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What has Freemasonry done for me?

by MW Bro. Carl H. Claudy (1879 - 1957)

Let each brother who hears the question answer it for himself. But let him answer it carefully and with slow thought; not hastily and carelessly.

Most brethren will make an answer somewhat as follows:

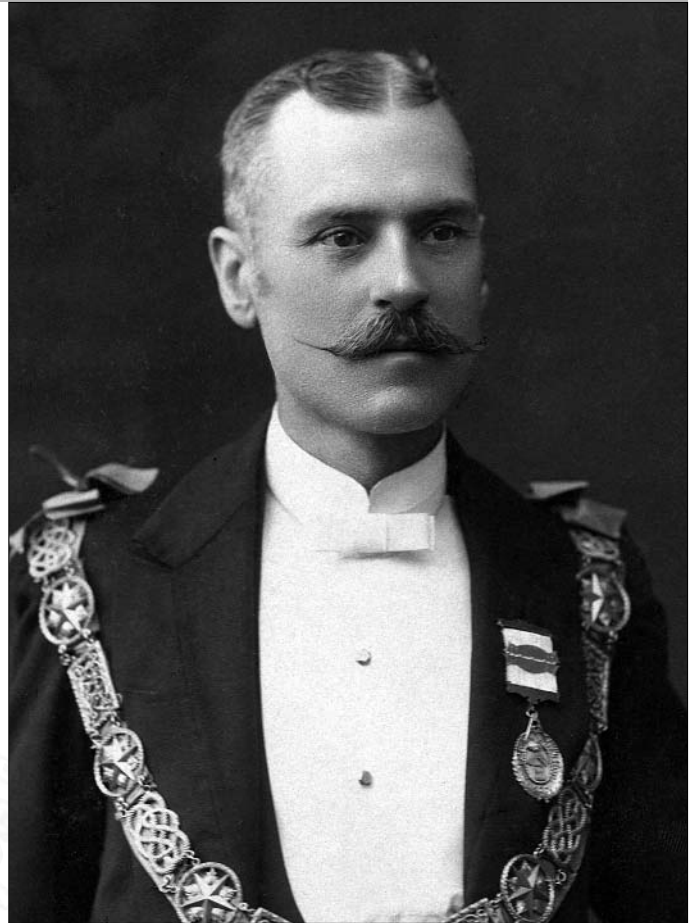
"Freemasonry has given me sweetness in my life; the sweetness of brotherhood, the feeling of oneness with my fellows. In its shelter I have made many friends; friends I would not, or could not, have made otherwise. I have taken from them that cheery smile, that helpful word, which has made the rough places in the path of life smooth; I have received from them the encouragement, the heartening, the courage, which have made the battle easier to win.

"Freemasonry has given me the mystic tie; the tie which no man may put into words, yet which binds more closely that it is intangible. Bonds of silk are

Freemasonry's chains; yet none of steel could hold as tightly or wear as softly. In the mystic tie, which I am privileged to renew about the holy altar of my lodge as often as I will, I find the perfume of life, the lovely colours of the love of man for man, and the gentle touch of a friendly hand, than which there is nothing softer in all existence.

"Freemasonry has given me education; it has taught me that there is a greater reward for unselfishness than for self-seeking, that there is a high wage to be earned for good work, true work, square work done for love of the labour and not love of the wage. It has given me the opportunity to know of high aim, of lofty aspiration, of patriotism, of struggle upward through the mire of discouragement with eyes fixed always on the star; it has given me an inspiration."

Many a brother can speak of what Freemasonry has done



Lieutenant-Colonel Lacey R. Johnson (1855-1915) was in command of the Heavy Artillery of Montreal which later served in the First Great War. An executive with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company at Vancouver, he served as Grand Master for this jurisdiction for 1895-1896.

for him in terms of the practical workaday world; of the note endorsed; the fund given; the trip arranged; the sick visited; the flowers received; the loved ones comforted in grief. But for every man who has had the material help, a thousand have had the spiritual gifts of Freemasonry, and most of us, let us thank God, have not had to ask for, or receive, even the beautiful charity of brotherhood. All of this being so... and let him who finds it untrue arise

now in his place and deny if he can that Freemasonry has so benefited him... it is but fair and honest that as true an answer be given to the question, "What have I done for Freemasonry?"

There will be some who reply to themselves, "I have served as an officer. I have conferred degrees. I have borne the heat and burden of the day." They are the lucky ones, for they have received the more

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What has Freemasonry done for me?
from page one

as they have given the more. But the great majority of us cannot so answer, since there are but few officers in proportion to the number of craftsmen.

So ask again, you who have never served in an official capacity, "What have I done for the Freemasonry which has done so much for me?"

Nay, my brother, you need not be ashamed if the catalog of your services is short and small. For there must always be those who are but the background; who take without giving; who receive without effort the largesse of their brethren; who have learned the great lesson that to give is to receive; that to put forth is to have returned, aye, an hundred-fold.

Yet there will be many who hear the question and answer it to themselves, and are ashamed; and these will want to know: "What can I do for Freemasonry? I would pay my debt; I would also be in the ranks of those who give, as well as receive."

Freemasonry is not a thing; it is not an organization, a system of men and officers; of lodges and Grand Lodges. The organization, the system, the men, the officers, the Grand Lodges are but the vehicle through which Freemasonry expresses itself. A man might be the sole inhabitant of a lonely land, where there was no brother, no lodge, no Grand Lodge, no dues, no masonic work to do and yet carry Freemasonry in his heart. And if there were two in that lonely land, Freemasonry could find a way to express itself. For Freemasonry is coin of the heart, and therefore can only be paid to the heart. What you can do for Freemasonry then is largely what you can do for your own and your brother's heart.

It is agreed between us that

he who serves the vehicle also serves the spirit of Freemasonry; that the brother who labours on her material temple, who serves his lodge, who acts upon committees, who provides entertainment, who tyles, sweeps, makes the fire and fills the lamps serves truly and serves well. But when all the physical labour is done there is still much to do; and, when all who may have done the toil, there is still a design upon the trestleboard. Therefore my brother, answer in terms of the heart, not of the muscles, the pocketbook, the voice or the time spent in attending lodge; "What have I done for Freemasonry?"

If all of Freemasonry was in the hearts of ten brethren; and ninety-one percent of it was in one heart, and each of the other nine had but one percent; would the ten be happy, successful and well-paid freemasons? They would not. But as each one of the nine rose in knowledge and in the practice of Freemasonry, he would benefit not only himself but all rest as well. And when all ten knew all and practiced all of the gentle arts of Freemasonry, surely those ten would make a happy lodge!

This homely little illustration is intended to bring home to him who hears it with the ears of his mind, the fact that Freemasonry is better, as each of us who profess it, practices it. No man may make of himself a better freemason and not benefit his brethren. So to him who asks in all humility, "I have not done much, show me how I may do more," this is the answer, "First, by making yourself a better freemason."

To be "a better freemason" means, first of all, to know something about Freemasonry. There will be those who hear this message who know a great deal of Freemasonry. Let them answer for themselves, if they think they know enough! But the great majority of us are content to know that there is a

"You got
to accentuate
the positive
and eliminate
the negative."

Father Divine (1876-1965)

wonderful story to be read *sometime*. We would truly be able to do something for Freemasonry if we will make that time *now*.

Where did Freemasonry come from? How did it come to a weary world? What has been its history? What are its accomplishments? What has it done to justify itself? What are its laws, its *Old Charges*, its Landmarks? What did Freemasons do in the making of this government of ours?

What do the symbols of Freemasonry teach? Why do we have three degrees, and how did they come to be? How was the word lost, and will "that which was lost" ever be found?

Answer, you who ask, "What shall I do for Freemasonry," and if you cannot, then inform yourself so that Freemasonry may have one more recruit who knows something of her glorious history, her purpose and her mysteries.

But it is not enough to know something of Freemasonry. Those who would really help Freemasonry must not only know it, but live it. Ask yourself once more, my brother, and answer, though only you will hear it: "What do I do everyday that is masonic; how do I use my Freemasonry in my daily life?"

For there is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of Freemasonry; the most

wonderful of philosophies, the most divine of truths, the most sublime of conceptions, the most learned of teachings which are as ineffective as a summer shower to quell a raging fire, "If they not be lived!"

All of us are human, and all of us, therefore struggle against the same enemies. All of us have within us a something to subdue as well as a something which subdues. As freemasons we are taught that we came here to subdue our passions and improve ourselves in Freemasonry; we accomplish the former only as we succeed in the latter. "Passions," my brother, does not mean merely anger or lust. The passion of selfishness, the passion of self interest, the passion of avarice, of deceit, of unneighbourliness, of cruelty, of carelessness; these, as well as all the other enemies against which man's spirit struggles are to be subdued and conquered; the more easily as we bring the fighting ranks of Freemasonry's militant teachings to engage them. This is not intended as preaching, my brother; this is but a humble attempt to answer the question you are to ask yourself, as to how may you help Freemasonry.

You may help her by helping yourself; by helping your family, by helping your neighbour and your friends; and all these you may do by making Freemasonry the rule and guide of your daily life just as you make the book upon the altar the rule and guide of your faith and life.

It is not enough merely to be honest. A freemason's honesty is never questioned. Like the sunshine it is to be taken for granted. It is not enough to be just. Justice is a conception of man. Mercy is God, and Freemasonry teaches it. It is not enough to have friends. A good freemason must be a better friend than he ever expects any man to be to him. For it is written, "Give, and it shall be given unto you."

editor@freemasonry.bcy.ca

There is room for Freemasonry in every business deal, in every act of every day. There is a place for Freemasonry's smile in every greeting and in every kiss. There is a chance for Freemasonry's gentle heart in every touch of hand to a child, or word spoken to the weak and helpless. There is a blessing of Freemasonry to be given to the ill and unfortunate, and a benediction of Freemasonry to be offered the sinful and the erring.

Freemasonry is the most glorious heritage; the most sublime of conceptions of the heart... and they ask, these brethren, what they can do for her! They can take her to their souls; they can live her in their lives, they can express her in their every act, and make of her not a cry of man's voice to Deity, but a song of his heart... to God!

Reprinted from Short Talk Bulletin, vol. iii May, 1925 No.5

Standards

At the close of the first Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes meeting, in September 2009, MW Bro. Brian Tuckey said, "Nothing in our Craft should be adversarial. Criticism is unacceptable unless accompanied by solutions. We should expect nothing less than peace and harmony. Brethren who cannot meet our standards should leave the Craft."

Lodge notes

Union-Solomon Lodge No. 9 and the Westminster Shrine Club No. 8 held an afternoon cruise on the Fraser River aboard the *MV Edgewater Fortune* on Saturday, 5 September, with a follow-up reception and open house at the lodge hall, to celebrate the sesquicentennial of the founding of New Westminster,

the Royal City. Attended by our Grand Master and a number of government representatives, from all reports this event was a public relations success.

Nicola Lodge No. 53 member, RW Bro. Edward W. Michayluk, cancer survivor, and a heart transplant recipient, has been chosen as one of the torch runners for the 2010 Olympic Games. A retired member of the RCMP, and an active freemason and Shriner, over the years he has organized many masonic and concordant bodies membership programs at the Merritt Music Festival. ■

Let's take charge

by RW Bro Geoffrey S. Mook

How long does it take to make a phone call? How long does it take to make five phone calls? When was the last time you phoned a brother to ask how he was, or if there was anything you or the lodge could do to help? Do we do this often enough? Just take a moment of time to reflect on all those brethren we have lost contact with, not because they haven't contacted us but, because we haven't contacted them.

I think it's about time we started to look after our own interests. The plan is simple and it works, but don't expect miracles. Some brothers will give you a bad time, some brethren should not be freemasons but, brethren, please persevere. Here is the plan.

Take the members of the lodge who regularly attend and divide the roster amongst those brethren. Challenge them to phone their respective charges once a month. Give them all the information on how the lodge is doing and how much we would like them to come back to lodge, the time and date of the next meeting and anything that the lodge might be doing in the way of entertainment, and have them

report back to a principal officer or whoever is designated.

Make sure the lodge is informed of a brother's welfare where help is required; make sure there is a follow up contact, perhaps by one of the senior lodge members.

If this plan is followed and carried out as outlined I feel sure your attendance will increase. Perhaps not at the next meeting but over the course of a year. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Brethren, give it a try.

As freemasons we are our brother's keepers. We should be looking after our own. ■

Award

The Canadian Cancer Society has recently presented our Grand Lodge with their Community Champion Award, recognizing the outstanding contributions made by freemasons in this jurisdiction towards promoting the Cancer Society's strategic goals. ■

Restoring the centre

by MW Bro. Wayne T. Adams

It is one of the axioms of life that the person who succeeds is the person who seeks and finds that which he or she does best and then does it. The same is also true for an organization.

In Freemasonry, we seem to have a great uncertainty about what we do best. There are those who believe that fellowship is the most important aspect of Freemasonry, and their primary focus is in spending time with other people in congenial and pleasing pursuits.

There are those who think that the most important aspect of Freemasonry is its outward expression in terms of community service and involvement in charitable activities. They readily point to successful

Secrets of Freemasonry revealed!

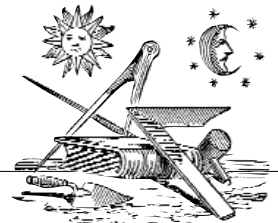
Plan now to attend the Grand Masonic Day in Langley on Saturday, 6 March 2010.

Contact :

VW Bro. John Keirstead

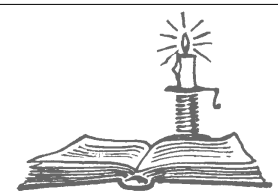
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lodges that are doing just that and having a good measure of success.

In spite of some notable successes in each of those areas, I believe our fraternity as an organization is adrift because it has lost sight of its primary purpose.

If a man is primarily interested in performing, there are community theatres where he or she can find great satisfaction. If a man is primarily interested in fellowship, there are many other organizations that can provide congenial social outlets. If a man is primarily interested in public service and community outreach, there are other organizations that are focused on that goal, have done it longer, and seem to do it better.

We need all those men and have to respect their particular interest, but an organization needs one fundamental focus. The particular interests of individual freemasons cannot be allowed to warp the main focus of Freemasonry.

What is the unique quality of Freemasonry? What is its mission and unique vocation?

I believe that the purpose of Freemasonry is to show the path to self-knowledge, to instill a philosophy, and to offer a method or system for staying connected with and living by that philosophy.

If the purpose of Freemasonry is to instruct men in a philosophy and a system to enable them to make right decisions and to maintain good relationships and to give them some guidance in that direction, it is probably not going to be very successful if it shifts its focus to community service or to perfect ritual or to fellowship activities.

If any organization abandons its primary vocation, it is not going to succeed in attaining that vocation or any other vocation very well. From my perspective, all Freemasonry is found at the local lodge level.

If we are realistic, we have to admit that we have a seventeenth century philosophy (which we don't think about very much), embedded in eighteenth century ritual (which we perform almost by rote), entrusted to a nineteenth century organizational structure (with customs and priorities which got seriously out of step with contemporary society in the twentieth century), as we enter the twenty-first century (with leadership that spends 95 percent of its time making ceremonial appearances).

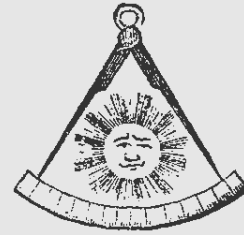
This is hardly a remedy for success, and no one attempting to design a successful organization today would ever create such a structure.

As one Grand Master has said, "We don't have a membership problem; we have a mission and vision problem." He is correct. Membership gain is not a goal; membership gain is the result of a goal achieved.

So what can we do that will make a difference? We clearly need to either recover the original focus of the fraternity or adopt some new focus. And we need to either tailor our organization to meet the needs of our traditional focus or re-tailor it to meet some new focus and purpose.

Of course I have my preference. I would like to see this fraternity become once again a thinking man's organization. I'm not saying that everyone needs to be a scholar. I am saying that we need to establish an intellectual centre, a common masonic culture that can restore direction to the fraternity, give it the guidance it needs to function in the twenty-first century, and create a common culture where those who seek more light can find it.

By intellectual centre I don't mean a place or organization. I mean a core of men who are knowledgeable about Freemasonry and acute observers of the world around them. We have the capability to create such a centre and to



GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY NOVEMBER 2009

4	W	Installation	Union-Solomon No. 9	New Westminster
5	Th	International Night	Layette Lodge No. 241	Seattle
7	S	District 22	Discovery Lodge No. 149	Campbell River
11	W	Remembrance Day		Kamloops
12	Th	District 2	Westminster Lodge No. 174	Langley
12	Th	Board of General Purposes, Grand Lodge		Vancouver
12	Th	Principal Officers meeting, Grand Lodge		Vancouver
14	S	District 24	Capilano Lodge No. 164	North Vancouver
15	Su	Church Parade	Oakridge United	Vancouver
20	F	Installation	Ymir Lodge No. 31	Salmo
21	S	District 8	Columbia Lodge No. 38	Invermere
24	T	Blighty Night	Comox Lodge No. 188	Cumberland
26	Th	District 23	Joppa Lodge No. 112	White Rock

create a vibrant masonic culture. Bearing in mind that institutions tend to fossilize, I think we need several points of activity. Let me suggest a few points that could make up a lively and creative center.

A masonic college is now in the advanced planning stages in Maine. The college is developing seminars and courses on the history of our ritual, the rôle of myth and symbolism in masonic thought and teachings, explorations into the tenets and moral values of the craft, analysis of popular books that feature masonic allusions, masonic music, and the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and Freemasonry.

A second important element in creating a common masonic culture and a common frame of reference would be a well designed and structured reading program. The Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania has an Academy of Masonic Knowledge offering a three-level reading program with works of increasing complexity. A third important element to an active masonic culture could

be a lodge of research.

Research lodges could make a greater contribution to re-energizing the Craft. I would like to see our lodges of research shift their focus from the past to the present, because I believe they can make a valuable stimulating contribution to the present. A fourth element would be the establishment of new lodges having a special focus. These four elements can be important parts of a creative, vibrant, intellectual centre for Freemasonry. There is nothing wrong with ceremony. There is nothing wrong with good public relations. There is nothing wrong with good community service.

My point is that all these things have to be emanations of a common philosophy and belief system that is now, always has been, and always will be the product of study, reading, reflection, and discussion.

MW Bro. Wayne T. Adams is a Past Grand Master in Maine. excerpted from The Northern Light magazine, August 2006.