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Thoughts of a lodge secretary

by RW Bro. G. Murray Webster, Senior Grand Warden

For most of the past twenty years I have served as the secretary of a lodge in a small rural community in our jurisdiction. As I move on to 'higher honours' I wish to share some thoughts and perspectives gained from this experience.

Accepting and fulfilling an officer position in a lodge is an honour and privilege. Each position has its required duties and if done with enthusiasm can be a very rewarding experience. The lodge secretary position is no exception

It is desirable that a lodge secretary possesses basic administrative and organizational skills. While having served as a Worshipful Master is advantageous from an experience perspective, it is not an absolute requirement for the lodge secretary position. Many brethren who are not Past Masters and who are well organized do a marvellous job as a lodge secretary.

The duties of a lodge secretary are generally defined in the *Book of Constitutions*, the installation ritual, and in the by-laws of a lodge. In essence they are:

Liaise with membership

The lodge secretary is often the only contact that members who do not regularly attend meetings have with their lodge. Many of these brethren have been members for many years, live in other communities, do not attend any lodge activities and, yet, faithfully maintain their membership and are very proud of 'being a freemason'. Most often the only connection this brother has with his lodge is the monthly documents sent to him from the secretary. Hence the monthly notice and accompanying documents must provide the required information to sustain the member's interest.

A pleasant and strong rapport often develops



Grand Secretary, RW Bro. George Moore and Grand Treasurer, RW Bro. Del Paterson, seen in dignified procession at Barkerville.

between such members and the lodge secretary. This is one of the most pleasant and rewarding parts of a lodge secretary's duties. This rapport, in its own way, provides a unique form of fellowship not experienced by other officers.

Many lodge secretaries issue a monthly newsletter in addition to preparing and distributing the monthly notice. The newsletter is usually very well received and often reported as the highlight of the monthly collection of

documents.

The lodge secretary needs to be up-to-date with the presentation of long service awards. While the presentation of these awards may be seen by some to be an insignificant gesture, they are enthusiastically received by the recipients.

The lodge secretary is often the brother who needs to remind brethren of outstanding dues. This can become an unpleasant duty especially if constant reminders are

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The lodge secretary from page one

required. An elderly and experienced lodge secretary once told me that you don't need to remind a gentleman of a debt, but 'after 30 days he is no longer a gentleman.' All lodges should have a programme, which involves more than the secretary, to receive annual dues from its members in a timely manner.

Record the Proceedings

The lodge secretary's specific duty is to 'record the proceedings.' He is one of the many officers who assist the Worshipful Master in the organization and execution of the activities of a lodge. This is a team effort with the Secretary doing his share in assisting the Worshipful Master.

Exchange of information with the Grand Lodge office

The lodge secretary is responsible for the lodge's part in the two-way communication with the Grand Lodge office. The Grand Lodge office relies upon statistical information to be provided by the secretary in an accurate and timely manner. The Grand Lodge office also expects the information which it disseminates to the lodges of the jurisdiction to be communicated unfiltered through the lodge secretary.

Myths

There are several myths about the lodge secretary position which need to be dispelled.

Just because the lodge secretary receives a stipend, it doesn't mean he's expected to do everything. There are many things which a lodge secretary does which can and should be done by others. Lodges should examine the duties being undertaken by their secretary and assign some of those duties to others. For example, the preparation and distribution of the monthly notice can be separated into smaller tasks and assigned to others. Preparing a

monthly newsletter and being the almoner are examples of other duties which can also be done by others.

Being a lodge secretary is not a life sentence.

A slip of the tongue was once made during the installation of a lodge secretary when the brother doing the investiture said 'for the ensuing twelve years or until a successor is found.' Brethren should not be expected to be the lodge secretary forever. It is healthy for a lodge to change the person doing the lodge secretary's duties. Some lodges establish defined periods of time for a brother to hold the office of lodge secretary for this very reason.

No lodge secretary is indispensable to his lodge.

As the saying goes, the graveyards of the world are filled with indispensable people. The secretary is only one office and the lodge should not allow, nor expect, too much influence from that office.

Fundamentals

Experience is a great teacher and my experience as a secretary has taught me some particular fundamentals which are very important and need to be followed.

Planning is a must.

All successful activities follow the task cycle; plan, organize, communicate, execute and review. All five tasks must be done well for an activity to be successful. The activity will fail to meet expectations if any one of these tasks is done inadequately. Planning is the most important of these tasks and from my experience planning is not done, or is poorly done, by many lodges.

A strategic plan defines a lodge's purpose and its vision for the future and describes plans and actions to achieve that vision.

A succession plan forecasts the organizational structure of a lodge and provides a timeline for brethren to prepare

themselves for their changes in duties.

A term plan identifies specific activities which will occur during a period of time, usually during a term of office. If an activity is planned to be undertaken it has a high likelihood of taking place. In reverse, if an activity is not planned, it will not likely occur.

All plans need to be committed to paper and frequently referred to.

Each lodge should understand the importance of strategic planning, succession planning and term planning and undertake appropriate planning exercises.

The fundamentals of Freemasonry are very sound and do not need to change. The manner in which they are presented needs to be adapted to meet the changing needs of the membership.

Men are freemasons because the activities are interesting, involvement is considered time well spent, participation makes one feel good and they have fun. This hasn't changed with time. However, activities and practices that served a lodge very well years ago may not necessarily be applicable today. These activities and practices need to be adapted to meet the needs of today's members, with the expectations of all generations being considered.

The mentorship of a brother going through the degrees or being newly raised is very important.

This is the formative period in the development of a freemason and the foundation built during this time will augur well for his future.

The adage, the best way to learn is to teach, is very true and applies to being a mentor. Being a mentor is a very rewarding experience. Mentorship programmes are available and their use needs to be promoted.

Every lodge needs to develop an interesting and

diversified education programme. Such a programme needs to be written down, meet the needs of the brethren, include the participation of as many of the brethren as possible, and permit dialogue.

Brethren belong to the Craft for these reasons:

- Fellowship (the essence of Freemasonry);
- Development of basic social and business skills;
- Betterment as a person;
- Development of the human spirit and an understanding of the meaning of life.

The first three reasons are frequently referred to and the topics of education presentations. The latter is seldom referred to and needs to be included in our education programmes.

As presented at the Western Canada Conference in 2010.

Mosaic

The masonic tradition is that the floor of the Temple of Solomon was decorated with a mosaic pavement of black and white stones. There is no historical evidence to substantiate this statement. Samuel Lee, however, in his diagram of the Temple, represents not only the floors of the building, but of all the outer courts, as covered with such a pavement.

The masonic idea was perhaps first suggested by this passage in the Gospel of Saint John 19:13, "When Pilate, therefore, heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment-seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, *gabbatha*." The word here translated *pavement* is, in the original *lithostroton*, the very word used by Pliny to denote a mosaic pavement.

The Greek word, as well as its Latin equivalent is used to denote a pavement formed of ornamental stones of various colours, precisely what is meant by a mosaic pavement. There was, therefore, a part of the

Temple which was decorated with a mosaic pavement. The Talmud informs us that there was such a pavement in the conclave where the Grand Sanhedrin held its sessions.

By a little torsion of historical accuracy, the freemasons have asserted that the ground floor of the Temple was a mosaic pavement, and hence as the lodge is a representation of the Temple, that the floor of the lodge should also be of the same pattern. The mosaic pavement is an old symbol of the Order.

It is met with in the earliest rituals of the eighteenth century and is classed among the ornaments of the lodge. Its parti-colored stones of black and white have been readily and appropriately interpreted as symbols of the evil and good of human life. ■

Little difficulties

MW Bro. John L. Lewis, Jr.

The little difficulties which spring up in lodge are too frequently magnified by the actors into matters of mighty moment. Here is a great brotherhood associated together that they may learn to subdue their passions, and promote the mutual improvement of each other, and join in the offices of benevolence to mankind. A difference of opinion as to some question of detail arises in a lodge, where one individual is right and another wrong, or, if the contest waxes very warm and fierce, it proves that probably both are wrong. Partisanship arise or are created; one ill-natured act is the cause of another, and the dissension can only be healed by the aid of a friendly umpire, or the exercise of authority by some superior officer or body. And yet, in view of the world-wide enterprise before us, and of the mighty host marching to its accomplishment, how utterly

insignificant does all this appear, and how fertile must be the imagination which would convert such a surface ripple into a rolling mountain wave! ■

John L. Lewis, Jr., Grand Master. *The American Quarterly Review of Freemasonry*. New York : Robt. Macoy, Publishers, 1858.

Masonic Day history

The first Grand Masonic Day was organized by the Grand Lodge Committee on Education and Research, under the chairmanship of RW Bro. J. Morton Heaps. The committee's annual report in the June 1983 Grand Lodge *Proceedings* noted an attendance of 300.

The Grand Lodge Committee on Education and Research continued to sponsor the annual event until 1996.

There is no record available as to when the Junior Grand Warden was first invited to give an after-lunch address but it may have been as early as 1987. Regardless, this address has subsequently been an annual opportunity for the brethren to gain an insight into their newly-elected Junior Grand Warden. His remarks were often extemporaneous and rarely recorded. It is also unfortunate that the remarks—or in some cases presence—of such guest speakers as Michel L. Brodsky, and others, have not been recorded.

Although the annual report from the Grand Lodge Committee on Education and Research for 1995 notes an attendance of 194 to hear Michel L. Brodsky, and the 1996 report notes "a very successful Grand Masonic Day, as the Prince Hall Masons were present...", there is no mention of the committee's withdrawal of sponsorship in 1997 when there was no mention of Grand Masonic Day in the Grand Lodge *Proceedings*, and

subsequent events—now styled the Lower Mainland Grand Masonic Day—have been sponsored by the Vancouver Lodge of Education and Research.

Other communities, notably Victoria, Nanaimo and Kamloops, have organized similar education days. All are deserving of the support of the brethren. ■

The gavel

Freemasons have two gavels.

One is the Master's gavel, symbol of authority that must be wisely used to preserve harmony within the lodge. The other is the working tool of the Entered Apprentice.

In either sense the gavel is of ancient origin and honourable history. As a symbol of authority, the gavel always has ruled deliberative assemblies. From the gathering of a neighborhood sewing club to legislatures, congresses, supreme courts, presidents and monarchs, the gavel brings order and obedience.

Handing the gavel to another transfers for the time the authority of the one who originally wielded it. A Master of a lodge is an autocrat while in possession of his gavel. The Grand Master does not actually take over a lodge until the Master yields his gavel.

Our other gavel, that of the Entered Apprentice, is for the workmen to employ in their labours. It approaches in importance the gavel of authority. In one sense it is as important as the other gavel, for no Master may open a lodge unless workmen are present. He cannot preside and supervise the work unless the workmen are at their labours. He cannot be successful in his conduct of the lodge and his supervision of the work unless the workmen are willing ones. He cannot drive them to their labours, autocratic as his powers may be, even when



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Be a builder

Here is an opportunity to gather with like-minded leaders of our organization (young, old, past, present and future) together in an environment conducive to working, learning, sharing knowledge and experience, and forming relationships that will be beneficial to you and your lodge now and in the future.

Download the registration form at freemasonry.bcy.ca/mlc2012.html

Masonic Leadership and Ladies Conference

13 - 15 April 2012
Penticton Lakeside Resort

they are there at his bidding or summons.

The Master's term in office, his supervision of the work, must all fail unless the workmen are interested in their labours, unless they have pride in the kind of work they present for inspection, unless each proudly presents a master's piece to be set into the temple, unless each workman is able to envision the completed work and voluntarily uses his gavel to produce a finished ashlar of service, that ashlar to either support or surmount the perfect ashlars of other brethren. ■

Excerpted from 3-5-7 Minute Talks on Freemasonry by Elbert Bede.

A full slate of speakers

A full slate of speakers on a wide variety of topics has been confirmed for the Lower Mainland Grand Masonic Day scheduled for the Vancouver Masonic Centre on Saturday, 21 January 2012.

The topics, designed to be of masonic interest or of interest to freemasons, cover a wide spectrum and include The Urantia Book; The Ancient Order of Free Gardeners; Investing in our Communities; Houston, we have a problem; Attributions of the Tree of Life in a Masonic Temple; Freemasonry, Answering Why; Church of St. John "Church of The Skulls" and the connexion with Rosslyn Chapel; and a discussion on how the builders of King Solomon's Temple might have moved and placed the giant stones that were used.

Junior Grand Warden RW Bro. Philip Durrel will be the luncheon speaker.

Registration will open at 8:30 am, and the Grand Master will open the day's programme at 9:45. First presentation will

begin at 10:00 am, with each presentation limited to 30 minutes, discussion included.

Cost for the day is \$30 (cash or cheque only) which includes refreshments during the registration period, a coffee break, luncheon, and a copy of the proceedings for the day. Dress is "business casual" — no aprons, no regalia.

Although advance registration is not required, indication of your plan to attend would be appreciated for catering purposes. Please contact Bro. Wes Regan at 604-805-3591 (wesregan@shaw.ca) or VW Bro. Erik Futrell-Frühling at 778-232-5748 (erikff@telus.net). ■

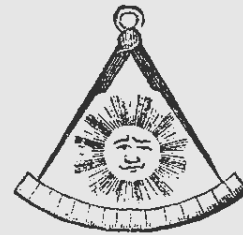
Quatuor Coronati

Quatuor Coronati Lodge No 2076, warranted by the United Grand Lodge of England, is the premier lodge of masonic research, having been founded in 1884. Membership is by invitation and is limited to forty.

Membership in the Correspondence Circle (QCCC) is open to all Master Masons in good standing. QCCC members receive on joining a copy of a recent volume of the research journal, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* (AQC), receive annually the latest volume of AQC and receive a newsletter with masonic information including the activities of Quatuor Coronati Lodge. This will usually include a 'questions and answers' section largely inspired by queries which have been sent in by Circle members.

Members are also entitled to attend all meetings of Quatuor Coronati Lodge in London; to participate personally in the discussion of papers after their delivery; and to dine with members of the lodge after the meeting.

There is a joining fee (for both individual and corporate



GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY OCTOBER 2011

1	S	District 12	Kitimat 169	Kitimat
6	Th	Presentation	Nechako 86	Prince George
8	S	Hands Across the Border,	Lynden 56	Lynden, WA
12-14	W-F	Western Canada Conference		Banff, AB
15	S	District 8	Mountain 11	Golden
20	Th	Railway Night	Acacia 22	Vancouver
21	F	Principal Officers	Grand Lodge	Vancouver
22	S	District 22	Discovery 149	Campbell River
29	S	Districts 24+17	Hollyburn 135+King David 93	W. Van
30	Su	Church Parade	Oakridge United Church	Vancouver

membership) of £27 (GBP) \$52 (US) for the soft bound volume, or £30 (GBP) \$60 (US) for the hardback volume.

There is an annual renewal fee of £22 (GBP) \$40 (US) for the soft bound volume, or £24 (GBP) \$45 (US) for the hardback volume.

Any brother in our jurisdiction who wishes to join is advised to request an application form from the QCCC local secretary at qccbc@freemasonry.bc.ca, giving his full name and address, plus the name and number of his lodge. If a lodge in this jurisdiction wishes to join as a corporate member, the Master or secretary should request the application form, giving a contact name and address, as well as the lodge name and number.

Each application for joining the QCCC requires sponsorship, either by a Circle member or by the secretary of a recognized masonic lodge; in our jurisdiction, the QCCC local secretary will usually act as sponsor.

Also, a facility exists for making payments by credit card, and details are sent to all applicants. ■

Constitutions

It is important that every active member have a current version of the *Book of Constitutions*. The latest version, with revisions current to this past Annual Communication, are available in the members section of our Grand Lodge website. Brethren should contact their lodge secretary for the URL and password.

In the meantime, take this little test:

Know your Book of Constitutions

- Q:** Can any member of the Craft may sign a petition for initiation in a lodge?
A: No. Only Master Masons of the lodge may (Regulation 136).
- Q:** Can the lodge may tell the Worshipful Master how to vote at Grand Lodge?
A: Yes (R61).
- Q:** Can a lodge officer resign or demit?
A: He can, if he moves from the jurisdiction or for health reasons (R107).
- Q:** Must every member cast a ballot when one is conducted?
A: Yes (Rules 1906). ■