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Does Freemasonry matter?

MW Bro. Raymond S. J. Daniels

Once upon a time Masonry did matter. Once upon a time Freemasonry mattered enough that the earliest settlers took time and made the effort to establish lodges in the pioneering communities they were carving out in the wilderness of Upper Canada.

Once upon a time Freemasonry mattered enough that working men saved the equivalent of two weeks wages to join a lodge. Once upon a time Freemasonry mattered enough that the leaders in federal, provincial, and municipal government were proud and active members of the Craft. Once upon a time our ancient and honourable society was invited to lay the foundation stones for every important public building. Once upon a time ...!

What has changed? Does Freemasonry really matter the way it once did?

The first Constitution of the

Grand Lodge of Canada, adopted in 1856 set the *per capita* fee payable to Grand Lodge at two shillings and sixpence.

What would the equivalent be in dollars today? Any mention of raising the *per capita* fee raises cries of alarm from the naysayers warning of the members we will lose. We cannot compare apples and oranges, but we must ask why there is such a vast difference in the membership fees members are willing to pay the golf club, the curling club, and other service clubs, and yet complain about the paltry fees payable to their lodge, which on average amount to \$15 a meeting.

During the most recent Conference of Grand Masters of the Grand Lodges of Canada, information was shared by the other Grand Lodges on the *per capita* fees levied: British Columbia, \$44; Saskatchewan, \$55; Alberta,



Unlike the Manitoba Legislature Building and the streetplans of Washington, DC, the British Columbia Legislature Building was designed by a freemason—sort of. Architect Francis Mawson Rattenbury was initiated in 1893 but never completed his degrees.

\$43 + \$5 for publications; Manitoba, \$65 (with a proposal to move it to \$75); Quebec, \$30; New Brunswick, \$35; Nova Scotia, \$32; Prince Edward Island, \$24 and Newfoundland/Labrador, \$26.

At a recent meeting of the masonic Leaders of Ontario, it was generally agreed that we have lowered the standards for admission, that we have sold Freemasonry cheap with ridiculously low initiation fees and annual dues in an attempt to increase membership quantity

at the expense of membership quality.

Once upon a time Freemasonry mattered to our predecessors enough that they contributed generously to building projects that provided the meeting places we enjoy today. Many of our masonic meeting places have been allowed to fall into disrepair, almost to the point of being a disgrace to the fraternity, all because we have been afraid to raise funds for maintenance

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Does Masonry matter *from page one*

expenses by increasing membership dues.

Freemasonry matters to me, and matters most, not because it has been my humble privilege to serve as Grand Master, but because of what Freemasonry means to me as an individual.

Freemasonry matters to the elected and appointed officers of this Grand Lodge who give freely of their time, energy and expertise as members of the Board of General Purposes, committee chairmen, and hard-working committee members, travelling at their own expense, to serve the brethren in the lodges. Does Freemasonry matter to you? ■

Excerpted from An Open Letter to the Masons of Ontario from the Grand Master 14 May 2011.

So mote it be

The phrase "So mote it be" is used by freemasons as a response at the end of a prayer. It comes from an Old English phrase that simply means "so may it be," and has been used in masonic documents since its earliest beginnings. Freemasons use it as a affirmation of a prayer as a response to amen, a word of similar meaning. ■

Sir?

By WB Barry Thom

Which is correct, Worshipful Master, or Worshipful Sir?

Worshipful Master is an official title, as is Grand Master. Being elected or appointed to a masonic office can convey a particular rank upon that individual. That rank can bring with it a title which is associated with that rank. The title signifies that individual's office.

The title, Worshipful Sir, applies to everyone who has ever been installed as a Worshipful Master, (and not achieved a higher office). So there can be several Worshipful

Sirs in a lodge, but there is only one Worshipful Master.

The Master of a lodge is therefore entitled to be and should be addressed by his proper title at all times, unless otherwise called for in our rituals and ceremonies. He is the *Worshipful Master*. ■

DeMolay

DeMolay is the premier youth organization associated with Freemasonry and is dedicated to teaching young men to be better persons and leaders. Under the advisement of adults; leadership skills, civic awareness, responsibility and character development are learned through a variety of self directed, real world applications and activities.

DeMolay builds confidence, teaches responsibility, coöperation and community service and fosters trust, respect, fellowship, patriotism, reverence and sharing.

The Order was started over 80 years ago in Kansas City, Missouri. DeMolay is a character building organization for young men who are twelve years to twenty-one years of age.

In over 700 chapters throughout Canada, United States, Brazil, Australia, Germany, Panama, Japan, Italy and the Republic of the Philippines these young men have the opportunity to develop management, leadership and social skills as they participate in community projects, sports and other educational programs .

More than one million young men have been members of DeMolay. Alumni members including John Wayne, Pete Rose, Walt Disney, Dan Rather, Willard Scott, Burl Ives and countless others.

DeMolay's alumni are distinguished leaders including several US senators, state governors, US astronauts, professional athletes and major US corporation presidents.

DeMolay provides young men the opportunity to practice leadership techniques and the real world application of the same through its chapter activities.

The organization assists young men in growing into responsible adults with good moral character while providing them a place to go, have fun, find companionship, be accepted by peers and develop solid values. DeMolay is not only teaching young people about the working tools of life, it is serving as the cornerstone of our next generation. ■

Etiquette

Did you know all lodge communications should to go through the lodge secretary? He has the tools and methods to ensure all the bases are covered. This includes all notifications within as well as outside the membership of the lodge. With the introduction of media such as email there has been a tendency for some lodge Masters to go directly to the individual rather than utilize the secretary's office. This is not proper etiquette as often it creates missing pieces where there is no trace or record kept of the communication.

The effective Master utilizes the officers for individual rôles and responsibilities to ensure an efficiently run lodge. ■

What Masonry means to me

by Bro. Shane W. Firlotte

I was blessed in the 1990s to live on the Rhine River in Baden-Baden, Germany. It was a deeply personal time for me. My grandfather had fought in the liberation of Holland in 1943 and participated in the 1944 final push to the very river I peacefully walked along

decades later. As a Canadian soldier myself, the blood shed on both sides of this beautiful river was never far from my thoughts as I strolled along the river bank.

The peacekeeping ended for me in October 1992. Within weeks, I found myself many hundreds of kilometres south, quietly walking along the Gard River in Southern France.

There is a beautiful set of stone arches that stretch the width of this mighty basin and the length of over 2,000 years. Pont De Gard has three levels of stone arches, its purpose to bring fresh, life-sustaining water to countless generations. It is a stone testament of compassion for the common people, regardless of their station; an acknowledgment that equality is often treating others with heartfelt love and respect.

Multitudes have climbed to the top of nearby Chateau De Peyrepertuse since it was built as a Cathar fortress in 1115. Here I knelt by the stone walls and aged altar—long abandoned by knights and warriors—a supplication to heal the hurting memories of war.

Raw winds circled me as I struggled to stay upright for those few short minutes. Nothing softer than stone survived this place now. I hoped that this place was sacred for all who knelt here.

The smell of roasting chestnuts in the cool autumn weather pleasantly awakened my senses as I travelled the 2,600 year-old Celtic cobblestone streets to the Palace of the Popes in Avignon, a walled city, not unlike Carcassonne. Here I sensed a place of historic power from a time of two Popes, with ramparts strong, high, and fortified. And from this unwanted and now-healed historic division, I sense forgiveness.

Travelling north, I entered the Abbey of Saint Martial in Limoges, to find an overwhelming gift, a sight

second to none. The cathedral was painted with the night stars; and many who walked this path of experience; both the narrow path of the warrior and the faithfulness of others, all were held motionless by the brush of an artisan's hand.

I struck a candle for my grandfather and wept, for the gentle reminder of stone crypts sharing the floor with me, the visitor, an open acceptance that all paths may lead to heaven. ■

Funerals

by *RW Bro Phil Elam*

Conducting masonic funeral services is as old as the fraternity itself. In the days of operative masonry, stonemasons buried their own with great solemnity and reverence.

The deceased brother was a man they had worked with side-by-side for years — perhaps even their entire lives. They extolled his virtues and the contributions he had made to the Craft's work. They spoke of the eternal life after death, and the need to perform "goode worke" toward all humanity throughout the course of a man's life.

The entire guild and all of their families turned out in force to mourn their brother's passing, and to express their sympathies to the brother's family. This tradition has been carried forward for centuries to our present day speculative masonry.

The first thing any non-mason will observe is the size of the turnout. If it is small, they may conclude that his lodge did not hold the deceased brother in very high esteem. Or, even worse, that freemasons are much too busy with their own private lives and interests to practice the tenets of charity and brotherly love of which we so loudly boast. In other words, they may conclude that we do not practice what we preach. If the turnout is large, the non-mason is likely to come away with a

very different impression of both the fraternity and the deceased brother.

Always remember that a masonic funeral service is the final tribute we can pay to our departed brother. That is the appropriate time to thank the brother's family for allowing him to share his time on earth with our fraternity. No, you may not have known the brother personally, but if he was a member of your lodge, he certainly deserves your presence at his funeral service.

If he was a brother, then he is entitled to all of the "lights, rights and benefits" of being a freemason — and that certainly includes a well-attended masonic funeral service. Attending these services is, in many ways, just as important as attending lodge meetings — perhaps, even more so, because, as we can do nothing more for our brother, the funeral service is really for the benefit of the deceased brother's family and friends, and it exhibits our genuine care and concern for one of our own.

For those that may have forgotten, the masonic funeral service is one of the most beautiful pieces of literature ever written. Simple, honest, and straight-forward, it offers each of us an opportunity to reflect upon our own mortality, and to reaffirm our individual faith in the Great Architect.

It draws forth its inspiration and words of comfort not only from the Volume of Sacred Law, but also from many of the world's greatest literary geniuses. No one can listen to our service and not be impacted by the gentle, yet powerful, words that touch the heart of every person present — both freemason and non-mason alike.

Consider the sobering passage from our masonic funeral service: "One by one they pass away, the brothers of our adoption, the companions of our choice. A brother whose

hand we have clasped in the bonds of fraternal fellowship is now passing from our sight, and we know that we shall meet him on earth no more."

One day, and we know not when, each one of us will be that brother who has passed from sight. One day, each one of us will have ended our journey in this life. As your then cold and lifeless body is commended to the grave eternal, will you want your masonic brethren to be present and among those that mourn you, and to offer comfort and consolation to your loved ones?

As stated in our funeral service, you can do nothing more of a material nature for the departed brother. Nevertheless, you can cherish his memory, and offer the tribute of respect and love to the late brother's memory. Of even greater importance, you can be there to extend our fraternal sympathy to our brother's deeply afflicted and sorrowing family in their bereavement. We must tell his loved ones, and demonstrate it by our physical presence, that our promises to be true to them are not hollow or empty words. We owe our Brother something, and this may be the very last opportunity we will ever have to repay that debt.

Brethren, if you receive a call from your lodge or see a masonic funeral notice in your local newspaper, take the 20 or 30 minutes out of your busy lives to make this final act of respect and tribute. No, you may not have personally known the brother, but he was your brother and that alone is enough to justify making the effort to attend and to demonstrate to the world that we freemasons do, in fact, sincerely care about each other—both in life and in death.

Each of us will one day cross death's threshold. After spending years in the masonic fraternity, how would you feel if most of your lodge brothers



Freemasonry
:
the art and
science of
right living



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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

were too occupied with their own self-interests to attend your masonic funeral service? How will your loved ones feel about the organization you belonged to for so many years cannot even muster more than a small handful of members to stand around your casket?

This is one obligation and commitment that each of us should earnestly strive to fulfill even if we cannot always attend lodge meetings. Let us demonstrate before the world that we are men who practice brotherly love — all the way to the grave's edge."

Originally published in The Missouri Freemason "Nuggets From The Quarry" column by RWB Phil Elam.

Health

Bro. Ayron Howey

In the Declaration of Principles found on the Grand Lodge website it states that it is a brother's responsibility to strengthen and improve the character of the individual. Furthermore it promotes the idea of personal responsibility. It is to this end that I will endeavor to pass on my knowledge in order to assist my fellow brethren as I feel it is required of myself under these principles.

I have been a martial artist for thirty years and I am a personal trainer. I would like to start with a simple workout that can help any brother, regardless of his age, but of course is dependent on his present health status. No equipment is required:

Squats—stand with your feet wider than shoulder width, keeping your head looking forward bend your knees as low as you are able. Then return to the standing start position. Repeat for a total of 10 times with as many as 40 times if you feel able.

Wall Pushups—stand facing a wall about 2-3 feet away and place your hands shoulder height and shoulder width

apart on the wall with your fingers pointing up. Lower your nose to between your hands resisting the urge to push your head forward with your neck. Return to the start position by pushing evenly with the arms until the arms are straight. Repeat for 10 times up to 50 times if you are able.

Crunches—lie down on your back with your legs bent but with your feet flat on the floor. Cross your arms over your chest. Slowly lift your shoulder blades off the ground, reaching your nose up to the ceiling. Remember to just lift the shoulder blades or upper back, not the entire back. Return the back to the ground to the start position laying flat. Repeat for 10 times up to 40 times if you feel strong enough.

A simple, easy workout that can lead to a more active lifestyle and better health. ■

Eastern Star

The Order of Eastern Star in British Columbia and Yukon have a long history of working to conquer cancer.

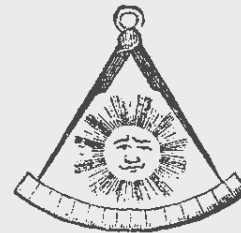
Queen City Chapter No. 5 OES in Victoria celebrated its centenary this past spring, producing a cookbook that raised \$1,100 for the Cancer Car Program.

Since 1947, volunteers from the OES have produced and distributed—free of charge—over 22 million wound dressings. Among other projects, the Island chapters together donated \$50,000 to the BC Cancer Foundation's Daring to Believe Campaign. ■

Jobies

Many freemasons may not know that an organization exists within the masonic family that is especially for girls between the ages of ten and twenty. This is Job's Daughters International.

They may not know that to



GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY NOVEMBER 2011

| | | | |
|-------|---------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 5 S | International Night | Lafayette Lodge No. 241 | Seattle, WA |
| 10 Th | District 28 | Tuscan Lodge No. 138 | Port Coquitlam |
| 11 F | Remembrance | Vancouver Cenotaph | Vancouver |
| 18 F | Installation | Ymir Lodge No. 31 | Salmo |
| 19 S | Fall Ceremonial | Shrine | Burnaby |
| 22 T | Blighty Night | Comox Lodge No. 188 | Cumberland |
| 24 Th | District 23 | Joppa Lodge No. 112 | White Rock |
| 26 S | District 3 | Kamloops Lodge No. 10 | Kamloops |
| 30 W | Appreciation Dinner | Cancer Car Program | Marpole |

become a member of Job's Daughters, a girl must be able to trace her right to membership to a freemason. Her father, stepfather, adoptive father, a grandfather or great grandfather, uncle, grand uncle, or brother must be a member in good standing in a masonic lodge or have been a member in good standing at the time of his passing.

They may not know that our girls are proud of their heritage and their membership in the masonic family; that they regard all freemasons with respect and that freemasons are most welcome at all Job's meetings. That Job's Daughters run their own meetings and engage in fund raising projects to support their bethel and the activities in which they take part, just as freemasons do.

It may not be known that each girl owns a ritual and is responsible for memory work; that the Bible is open during our meetings; that we honour the flag of our country and that charity and benevolence to those less fortunate is part of our creed. We support our official charity HIKE which helps children with mild to severe hearing loss.

Our membership is now at the smallest since we began

over 80 years ago. Now more than ever we need the assistance of the masonic lodges to help our order grow.

We would be happy to receive the names of your daughters, granddaughters, nieces or other young female relatives. We know they will benefit from membership in Job's Daughters and in turn greatly help this branch of the masonic family tree to grow.

For more information please contact Mrs. Hayley Kelland at kelland@island.net ■

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. Join the Grand Master on 13 - 15 April 2012 at Penticton Lakeside Resort. Download the registration form through the Grand Secretary's page on our website: freemasonry.bcy.ca ■