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Why I continue to be a freemason

by MW Bro. George C. Derby

No greater compliment could be paid any man than to ask him to write his reasons for continuing to be a freemason.

At no time in the history of the world has the necessity for the practice of the teachings of our order been more necessary than at the present time. It is unnecessary for me to remind the reader of present-day world conditions, wherein not only individuals but nations and groups of nations are entirely disregarding our moral standards.

Treaties and contracts are only kept when it is more advantageous to keep than to break them. Actions of individuals and nations are controlled from the point of view of advantage only and not as to what is morally right.

Might and not right is the guiding force which apparently is in temporary control.

Is it not a comfort then to be one of a large group of men

spread over the whole of the habitable globe, who by example were taught, and sincerely believe, that it is better to suffer death than betray the sacred trust reposed in them?

Have not we who believe in the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man and the Immortality of the Soul, a tremendous responsibility not only to teach but to practice the teachings of Freemasonry?

Can we, in the face of our very serious obligations, disregard our responsibility to our fellow man? This is not the time or the place nor does space permit my discussing the tenets of our order, so I must confine myself to reminding my reader that no other organization has the responsibility we have as individuals, and as lodges, of exerting our influence for the betterment of mankind throughout the world.

Our order is particularly fitted for this in that we are



Western Regional Administrator for the Canadian Department of Veterans Affairs until 1956, MW Bro. George Cleveland Derby (1889 -1971) also served his community as chairman of the Alcoholism Foundation of British Columbia, director of the B.C. Children's Hospital and director of Grace Hospital, Vancouver. A founding member of the Grand Lodge Board of Benevolence in 1923, he served as chairman from 1938 to 1951. The George Derby Health and Occupational Centre in Burnaby was named in his honour. He served as Grand Master for 1935 - 1936.

non-political and non-sectarian. We have in our membership people of all creeds, men of experience and ability, men holding the highest positions in their various communities and countries, all with the privilege

of meeting on a common ground where they can learn from and impart knowledge to each other. Is this not in itself sufficient answer as to why I should continue to be a

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Why I continue to be a freemason from page one

freemason?

Other reasons too numerous to enumerate here, a great many of which are personal and selfish, explain why I personally continue.

My dearest and closest friends are those whom I have met in Freemasonry. These men have bestowed honours on me, which while serving to make me more humble, at the same time make me proud to have such men as friends.

While there are numerous other personal reasons for my continuing to be a freemason, I shall close by stating that, in my humble opinion, any man who has studied and understands the teachings and objects of Freemasonry cannot fail to continue to be a freemason. ■

Excerpted from *Masonic Bulletin*, September, 1937

Christmas observance

by RW Bro. James G. Bennie

The observance of Christmas doesn't seem to bring satisfaction to some people. On one hand, many say its too religious, and thus don't want Christmas trees in public buildings and nativity scenes within a shepherd's-crook length of government lawns. On the other hand, many say it's not religious enough; it's too commercial. They've been saying it for years—it's the central theme behind the charming animated cartoon *A Charlie Brown Christmas* which was made some forty years ago.

Setting that aside, what does Christmas mean to the freemason?

Certainly Freemasonry is not a religion, Christian or otherwise. It leaves the determination on spiritual matters to each individual freemason, so long as he believes in the Almighty Creator. But there are

certain messages from the story of Christmas that are applicable to all freemasons, not just those who celebrate a certain birth on 25 December.

Many Christians feel God gave His greatest gift to mankind, and that His birth is marked on Christmas Day. And the spirit of giving is also outlined in our masonic ceremonies. The new Entered Apprentice is reminded in the northeast corner of charity, and to practice it whenever possible. There's the monetary charity of that portion of our ceremony. And there's another kind. The one referred to in the charge in the same degree which admonishes "to relieve his necessities, soothe his afflictions, and do to him as you would that he, under similar circumstances, should do unto you." In other words, the Golden Rule, from the Sermon on the Mount.

Christmas is a time of faith for our Christian brethren. But all freemasons are reminded in the different degrees of the principle of faith. In the explanation of the First Degree Tracing Board, we hear "How ready and willing ought we to be to adore the Almighty Creator." Therefore, let this time of year serve as a reminder to all freemasons to practice their faith, whatever it may be.

Faith and Charity are names of principal staves or rounds on the ladder you see every meeting on that Tracing Board. But there is another round, and that is Hope in Salvation. While Salvation has a particular connotation to those who believe in the story of the virgin birth, the concept of some kind of reward for following masonic principles during our lives winds its way through the various degrees, as those of you familiar with the working tools explanations of the Second and Third Degrees well know.

So let this season of the year remind all freemasons, no matter what their religious

beliefs, to follow those universal tenets of the Craft—faith, hope and charity. Doing so should bring satisfaction to you at Christmas time. ■

In the news

An article in the 24 October 2009 issue of the *Globe and Mail* may come as a surprise to any freemason who may have read it. The claim is made that the Olympic Torch has its origins in a mystical flame found in the rites of Freemasonry, and that Freemasonry promotes a "belief in the regenerative power of fire." This is news to your editor. ■

Our brethren

Brethren of **Eureka Lodge No. 103**, Langley, are noticeably proud of their Bro. Percy Hall who was recently interviewed in the *Surrey North Delta Leader* and was selected to appear in a reality television series about the RCMP, "Courage In Red" that began airing Sunday, 1 November on the Outdoor Living Network.

RW Bro. Bruce Morrison, of **Omineca Lodge No. 92**, Smithers, was featured on the cover of the August 2009 issue of *IG Magazine* when he received the Herbert H. Carnegie Community Service Award from Investors Group Financial Services for his work in establishing the Osprey Community Foundation and serving as president for seven years. His spirit of volunteerism and active service with the Nelson Neptunes Swim Club, Nelson Rowing Club, Nelson Committee on Homelessness and the West Kootenay Planned Giving Round Table has led to his current three-year term on the Board of Governors of Selkirk College.

This past October the

brethren of **St. George's Lodge No. 41**, Kelowna, were pleased to see their lodge secretary, RW Bro. John "Smiley" Nelson recognized in the *Kelowna Daily Courier* when the park and playground at Maple Lanes Coöperative were dedicated in his honour for his contributions to the community by promoting safety in the schools as a member of the RCMP and later as a city councillor who promoted sporting initiatives. ■

Function

It is not the primary function of Freemasonry to initiate candidates, or to enlarge its membership. Were it so, there would be no basis for our laws against proselyting. The primary function of a masonic lodge—indeed, the primary function of our Craft, is to train its members to an understanding of the truths which its rituals and its ceremonies are calculated to inculcate, to develop its members as benevolent men, to cultivate the social virtues among men, and to propagate the knowledge of the art.

The chief concern of the lodge is with its welfare, the happiness, the masonic development of its members, not with the admission of those who seek entrance to its doors. Its success as a masonic lodge cannot be gauged by the length of its membership roll or by the size of its accumulated funds.

The beauty of our ritual, and the good fellowship among the members of our lodges, cannot be conserved when the chief aim is to make freemasons and money—"for a man's life consisteth not in abundance of things which he possesseth"—and a lodge's life does not consist of its acquisitions, but in the contribution which it makes to civilization and society through the influence of those whom it has helped to train to what we call masonic character.

Therefore, it should be the duty of every masonic lodge to put in action a plan for the education of its members in masonic history, symbolism, and philosophy, devoting more of its meetings to this much neglected function. ■

Reprinted from *Wenatchee Masonic News* in this *Bulletin* November 1950 p. 24.

Kamloops 2010

The host committee for the Grand Lodge Annual Communication in Kamloops is pleased to announce that their informational website is now online.

Visit kamloopsmasons.com and see what they have planned for June 2010. The University is ready to accept bookings for accommodation. Registration will open on 1 February 2010. ■

Our lost brethren

by *W. Bro. Laurence D.T. Johnson*

In discussing the future of Freemasonry with the active brethren the issue of retention inevitably comes up. My first insight into the issue of retention came soon after my graduation from Royal Military College.

The service requirement in those days was for three years service in the armed forces subsequent to graduation. Apparently, two-thirds of the graduates would leave the forces forthwith after completing this period of compulsory service.

The perception, which was probably correct, was that these graduates joined the forces with the prime intention of obtaining a university education and not for the purpose of entering into a career in the armed forces. Perhaps some changed their

minds, staying in for a career, while others who intended to stay left seeking the proverbial greener pastures elsewhere.

Amongst some graduates who stayed, or critics of the ROTP programme, were a large number who would express their concern at the concept that a significant investment had been made by the armed forces in educating and training these graduates which investment was now lost to the system.

Now years later, I am hearing the same criticism from the active membership. The Order goes to great lengths to put candidates through the degrees (read investment) only to find that some do not actively participate in their respective lodges subsequent to obtaining the Master Mason degree. Some even in short order request a demit.

I have never felt that those that left the forces or Freemasonry after a short active engagement were a complete loss to either organization. Remember that when you are made a freemason you will always be a freemason just like the graduate who received the Queen's commission will always be an officer. Any oath which was taken through the degrees is still binding. While some consider these brethren lost, I consider them to be passive ambassadors for the order. They do increase our imprint in the society at large. Further, I have no knowledge of these brethren causing the order any harm by extensive disclosures or harmful allegations. Perhaps quietly and unknown to us they might still any ignorant allegations raised by their friends and acquaintances who through their ignorance criticize us. ■

Xmas?

The word Christmas originated as a compound meaning "Christ's mass". It is derived from the Middle English *Christemasse* and Old English

Cristes maesse, a phrase first recorded in 1038. "Cristes" is from the Greek *christos* and "maesse" is from the Latin *missa*. In early Greek versions of the New Testament, the letter X (*chi*), is the first letter of Christ. Since the mid-16th century X, or the similar Roman letter X, has been used as an abbreviation for Christ. Hence, Xmas is often used as an abbreviation for Christmas.

After the conversion of Anglo-Saxon Briton in the very early seventh century, Christmas was referred to as *geol*, the name of the pre-Christian winter festival from which the current English word 'Yule' is derived. ■

Investigate

by *W Bro. G. A. Lyon*

One of the greatest concerns of lodges today is an ever increasing lack of attendance and far too many dropouts. There have been many reasons given, and much has been and is still being said on this subject. It has been summed up by the the Grand Secretary — in his annual report of 1965 when he said "Far too many candidates are being admitted into Freemasonry who should never have passed the investigating committee."

Years ago, very shortly after I had become a Master Mason, I was part of an investigating committee. I called on the man, and carefully asked him all the questions on the form provided and filled in the answers he gave. The answers appeared to me to be satisfactory, the applicant seemed to, be a pleasant, intelligent person with a good, responsible position and a pleasant tidy home. Here I reasoned is a man recommended by two of our brethren who presumably know him better than I. Who am I to doubt their opinion of this man? I signed the form recommending his application and returned it to the secretary.

Secrets of Freemasonry revealed!

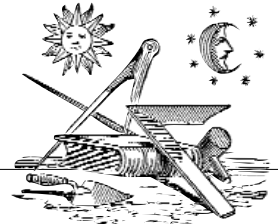
Plan now to attend the Grand Masonic Day in Langley on Saturday, 6 March 2010.

Contact :

VW Bro. John Keirstead

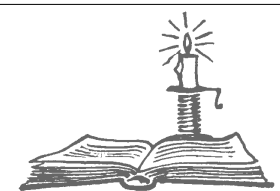
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The applicant was in due course balloted on and accepted, passed and raised and he never came to lodge again. Later I learned the reason for his dropout—his wife. She did not want him to join in the first place. If I had talked with her during my interview with the applicant I would have found out her feelings in this matter and certainly would have noted this fact on the form and would not have recommended him

The fact that two members of your lodge have proposed a man does not necessarily mean that they know this man so intimately that their opinion of him should be sufficient, nor should it sway your decision in the slightest.

Let me take a case in point. A man whom you have known in business, or a neighbour whom you may not know too well, approaches you on the subject of joining, knowing you to be a freemason. You know nothing against this man. As far as you know he lives and conducts himself in an exemplary manner. He has a good job and you like the man. Why shouldn't you give him an application form? You find another member of the lodge to add his name to the form and leave it to the investigating committee to check further on this man.

Now if you, the committee, take the attitude that the two brothers who proposed the petitioner must know him well enough, (who am I to doubt their opinion?) then the whole structure set up to screen applicants becomes valueless and you might as well forget about an investigating committee, and simply leave it to the ballot to decide.

The investigating committee is a very serious and important one and must never be conducted lightly.

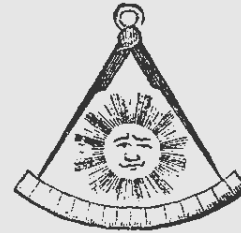
Here are a few points to think about and a few questions to ask that are not found on the form provided:

Make sure that if he is married his wife is present at the interview. Ask her outright how she feels about his joining the lodge and being out regularly on certain evenings. Don't be afraid of asking personal questions. Most questions are asked to determine character and you must not be embarrassed at having to ask them. After all, he has invited those questions when he voluntarily asked to join our ranks. If he is not prepared to satisfy you, the investigating committee, as to his moral suitability you must state so and reject his application.

One of the last questions on the form reads "Are you a member of any club, society or order?" Go into this one thoroughly and find out how active he is in any or all of them. There are far too many men who seek to join every organization that will accept them and then attend none. If he is active in all or many of them—how much time has he left to devote to Freemasonry?

Ask yourself why he should treat our lodge any differently from the others. Ask him about his availability on *all* Wednesday evenings. Does his work conflict with his regular attendance? On the question, what is your object in seeking admission to the order, try to get more than the usual trite answer—for friendship etc.

Most candidates don't know what they are getting into. Tell them. Apart from our secret work there is much you can and should tell him. It may change his mind and prevent a dropout later. If he is, let us say a salesman, and is seeking to join with the idea of furthering his business interests and has formed the idea that a secret grip, or some such thing, may gain him ready admittance to business offices he now has difficulty in gaining admittance to, relieve him of that notion right away. There have been far too many men join our order



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8 Tue Grand Lodge Principal Officers meeting Vancouver

for this type of reason. They are among the many who don't attend anymore. Make sure that he is aware that quite a bit of memorizing will be necessary for his various degrees. Make sure he is ready and willing to undertake this.

Finally, make sure that both the applicant and his wife understand that no monetary benefits will accrue from his becoming a member.

We are not a philanthropic society and pay no sick or death benefits. While we can, and do if asked, perform the burial service, the lodge does not bear the cost of the funeral. One last word. If finally the candidate you have investigated and recommended is admitted to the order, look for him when he comes to the lodge. Make him welcome and help to keep him a regular attending member. ■

From a talk given in Composite Lodge No. 76 by W Bro. G. A. Lyon, Masonic Bulletin April 1970.

Stop, brother

Stop, brother, Just a moment... Before you enter this Holy of Holies, ask yourself in your innermost heart "Am I duly and truly prepared?" If you listen you may hear a voice within saying, "It is a brother desiring admission."

Can you enter this sanctuary this night as, indeed, a brother? Have you divested yourself

of garments of hate, envy, jealousy, deceit, hypocrisy, and put on the robe of brotherly love? Can you stand before the holy altar, which recalled to your mind memories of bygone days and looking into the eyes of your Worshipful Master, extend a greeting to those about you, "Behold, a brother?"

Can you enter the lodge tonight with a desire not only to receive, but to give?

Should you entertain a spirit of enmity in the slightest degree for a brother in this lodge, go in, take the hand of that brother of yours, talk it over with him in the fraternal spirit you should, and watch the mists disappear and the sunlight of masonic brotherhood illuminate your heart and his. Just try, brother, you will not be disappointed. The noblest work of God is man, and the ancient landmarks of Freemasonry are the handiwork of man's highest nobility. Unless then you can claim to be a freemason, good and true, I beseech you to turn back, and do not enter. But if your aims and ambitions are the highest calling of the brotherhood of man as taught throughout the ages by the fraternity of Freemasonry, and sanctioned in nature and revelation by the approval of the Great Architect of the Universe, enter here, for within you will find that which you seek. ■

Found at the door of Myrtle Beach Lodge No. 353 and Seaside Lodge No. 419, SC.