

February 2007

Master's Message

My Brothers,

“Obligation – sticking to the thing you said you were going to do, long after the mood you said it in has left you.” - George Zaluki

Some time last year, right around the time Gray 329 was putting the finishing touches on the new lodge, several young men from a church down the road walked over and introduced themselves. They were curious about our stupendous edifice and thought that we were building a church. When the several of us explained that we were a Masonic Lodge, the attitude quickly turned decidedly unreceptive.

In the brief conversation that followed, these young men were quick to bring up the most anti-masonic sentiments you could have imagined. The several of us there made a feeble attempt to point out the truths of our fraternity, but to no avail, the mood had changed. The conditioned blinders were on and their minds were closed.

Anti-masons are often so fully convinced of their antipathy towards freemasonry that it is almost a religious devotion for them to oppose Freemasonry. As a consequence, any statement by a Mason, in their eyes, must be untrue by definition. Most anti-masons are well read but only in a very one-sided way. The frustration is that no matter what you tell an anti-mason, no matter how true your statements, how well documented, how obvious, or significant, they just are not going to believe you.

This reaction, in a subtle or gross form, is something that all Masons have experienced at one time or another – the strange glare at your ring, the odd look at the square and compass sticker on your car, the intuitive sense that they have just prayed for the salvation of your soul.

But, we Freemasons are conditioned too. Freemasons usually don't discuss Masonry with anti-masons. It is not because we cannot defend Freemasonry or that we don't know the facts. The reason that we Masons don't try to convince anti-masonic zealots of the falsehood of their views is that it is almost always a frustrating waste of time.

For those of us who are active Masons, we know what a worthy and valuable organization it is. But you have to be active, even if it is an occasional visit to lodge.

We know how much fellowship and growth has come from our participation with the good men of Gray 329, most especially with our younger brothers.

So, every once in a while, in our zeal for the institution, we forget that arguing with those who desire only to tear down and not to build up is not time well spent for a craftsman. The time well spent for a craftsman is in the company of the craftsmen. To quote one of the charges found in a Masonic monitor, "Neither are you to suffer your zeal for the institution to lead you into argument with those who, through ignorance, may ridicule it."

Brothers, at some time you took an obligation, you made a commitment. And for those of you I have never met, or rarely know, somewhere along the path, the mood changed. Has our society created a culture where the desire to go along to get along is worth more than the obligation you made at some time?

Come to lodge just once. It is that simple. You will be impressed with the accomplishments of your active brothers. No one has left the building after standing on the checkered pavement of Gray 329's Lodge room without being awed, inspired, impressed and amazed. One visit will invigorate the obligation you made, and one visit will renew the mood you said it in.

WM Bill Ehmling

“I've found that luck is quite predictable. If you want more luck, take more chances. Be more active. Show up more often.” - Brian Tracy

What is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry is a system of morality, veiled in allegory, illustrated by symbols. Not a religion but religious in character, it is a philosophy of ethical conduct that imparts moral and social virtues and fosters brotherly love. Its tenets have endured since man turned the first pages of civilization. They embody the understanding by which man can transcend ordinary experience and build "a house not made with hands" in harmony with the Great Architect of the Universe. Yet Freemasonry can never conflict with a man's relationship to God or fellow man. Sectarian religious or partisan political discussion in a lodge is strictly prohibited. Every Mason stands equal among his brothers, regardless of walk of life, and none is ever turned away for financial need.

Masonic Historical Allusions

The town of Joppa was seaport town that supplied Jerusalem during the construction of King Solomon's Temple. By 1870 it was called Joffa, and today is a suburb of the modern Israeli town of Tel Aviv.

In the Middle Ages, it was customary to bury Knights Templar and other knights who had taken the vow to fight in defense of the Christian Religion, with their legs crossed. This posture can be seen in a number of stone edifices in England and Europe, including Westminster Abbey.

In lodges of the 1700's the emblems and symbols of the different degrees were drawn on the floor of the lodge with chalk or charcoal. They were obliterated at the end of each meeting because lodges met in rented rooms, and they did not want strangers viewing their secret writings. As this was troublesome and messy they were next painted on cloth or canvas, carried to each meeting and laid on the floor, hence the name 'carpets'. Today, these carpets, or charts as they are now called hang from walls or frames, and are displayed as required for the different degrees.

Certain present day Masonic words and meanings seem rooted from the time of the early Egyptians of this era: The virtues of truth and justice were said by them to be “on the square”. Confucius in 500BC referred to the squareness of actions; even Aristotle in 350 BC associates square actions with honest dealings. The square and its symbolism is very old and has maintained a remarkable consistency of meaning over the centuries.

A Provincial Grand Master in England once recovered a very curious relic, in the form of an old brass Square found under the foundation of an ancient bridge near Limerick, in 1830. On

it was inscribed the date, 1517, and the following words: " Strive to live with love and care, Upon the Level, by the Square."

Useless Facts

The average life span of a major league baseball is 7 pitches.

In the 1940s, the FCC assigned television's Channel 1 to mobile services (two-way radios in taxicabs, for instance) but did not re-number the other channel assignments. That is why your TV set has channels 2 and up, but no channel 1.

Each king in a deck of playing cards represents a great king from history. Spades - King David, Clubs - Alexander the Great, Hearts - Charlemagne, and Diamonds - Julius Caesar.

"I am." is the shortest complete sentence in the English language.

Hershey's Kisses are called that because the machine that makes them looks like it's kissing the conveyor belt.

The first toilet ever seen on television was on "Leave It To Beaver".

The only two days of the year in which there are no professional sports games (MLB, NBA, NHL, or NFL) are the day before and the day after the Major League All-Star Game.

Houston Masonic Library and Museum News and Views

The Board of Directors, Elected Officers and the core of dedicated volunteers are putting the final details together for the 2nd Annual Dinner and Auction Fundraiser at Braeburn Country Club. If you have not reserved your seats yet; you are running out of time. Seats are \$50 each. Payment should be sent to P.O. Box 941771, Houston, Texas 77094-8771 (Our Lockbox)... Last year was a blast and we raised over \$30,000. There is something of interest for all so come out and join the fun...

If you have an interest in assisting the HMLMF in cataloging books, organizing artifacts or donating masonica - just call 281.497.6161 or visit the website houstonmasoniclibrary.org and send an email.

Raffle calendars are still available for \$25 each. As of now, there are still 61 drawings left in the year worth a total \$11,100 in payouts. Remember you can win more than once. You can't get winning potential like this anywhere but here.... Contact Randall Slinkard or a Board Member today.

Time Capsule will be sealed April 21, 2007.... If you want to place something in it that will raise eyebrows in 100 years Contact Doug Hissong (doug.hissong@sbcglobal.net). Please do not wait until the last day to donate your item... All items must be scientifically treated before being placed in the stainless steel, argon gas, hermetically sealed container for their 100 year sleep.....!!!!

The Board of Directors of the Houston Masonic Library and Museum Foundation is proud to announce Right Worshipful Brian R. Dodson, Immediate Past Grand Master of Masons in Texas was duly elected to serve at the January stated Board Meeting. With continued and growing support for the efforts of the library we give thanks and count our blessings... We have come far

(it feels far) in the plan to bring the Houston Community at large an open and friendly environment where the Mysteries of Masonry are explained and promoted and Masonica is preserved for generations to come, but the list of tasks is still very long and the time is now...We already feel the positive influence we are making and hope that we continue to gain the trust of support of all regular Masons the world over. It is the sincere hope of everyone currently supporting in the Library effort that more of you will join us and have your voice heard both in your Lodge and on our roll of charter supporters...