

The District Light

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Remember When?

Masonry has depth and breadth and we all have experienced it to be both daunting and inspiring.

Let's look back on our beginnings by sharing in the recollections of a newly-made mason.

Mark Walter was recently initiated in Merritt Lodge. His journey is a good overview of what men thought at the time of their introduction to the craft.

The Beginning



Wow! Talk about overwhelming! I had coffee with two people I had never met before, to discuss joining a group which I knew nothing about (at least

nothing officially), just to learn I would have to be "investigated" by another group of strangers, before I could be initiated. Among many other thoughts, some of my first were, "What did I get myself into?"

Aside from being a little nervous, there were also thoughts of excitement. Originally, these were centered on the unknown and the rumours that I had heard.

I didn't really know what Freemasonry was or what Masons did. What would I learn? What would I do? Who would I meet? And most importantly, do they know the secrets of the universe?

After my first discussion at Tim Hortons, then again after my discussion with the investigating committee, my excitement shifted a little without me even realizing it. By that point, I had met five Masons; two the first time and three the second, and only for about an hour each time, but I felt as if I had already made new friends and had known

them for longer. That was my first look into what Freemasonry could possibly be. I thought that if I could meet five strangers and they were able to make me feel comfortable enough to speak openly as if we were already friends, and that's the kind of people that Freemasonry attracts, then I had made the right decision in asking to meet.

If I could make people around me feel at ease like that, I would definitely be on my way to being a better man, even if I still had no idea what actually went on in meetings.

That First Evening

Speaking of meetings, my first meeting started with many of the same feelings of nervousness, but I was told how the night would go: "Things might seem a little strange, but don't worry, we've all been through it before" and, "If you're unsure of anything, just relax and ask. We're all here to help."

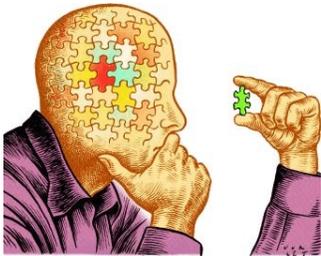
And then, "OK, so what we're going to do is strip you naked, blindfold you, and lead you around the room for your initiation!"... That was the last time that I have taken Brother Muha seriously since.



But all the comments helped, and I was feeling reassured that all would be well.



Questions



My thoughts after the first few meetings were a jumble of a whole bunch of things. Why are they yelling when the third guy can hear the first guy anyway?

Why is everyone walking in squares and right angles? Is all we do is approve minutes from the last meeting and decide which charities to help? I didn't even bother asking about Grand Honours!

Although I don't completely understand the meetings and their structure yet, what I have learned makes sense so far. And as odd as it might seem at first, I like that there is a base in tradition.

The other thing I've noticed is that there are a lot of people who have been Masons for a long time, and whether the meetings make complete sense to me yet or not, if people have been around for a while, they must see something in it or they would have left. I'm sure I'll get the hang of the meetings and formalities. I enjoy learning that kind of thing. I am more interested in the bigger picture, and that part is making sense.

The Experience

The thoughts and ideas of Masonry are a challenge. How do I become a better man? What if I can't? What if I'm not good enough, or my ideas don't align with the group?

As daunting as all my questions may be, it's just a newcomer over-thinking things. I know I'm over thinking because when I attend a meeting, it's not the thoughts I enjoy, but the overall experience. I feel as if I'm part of something bigger.

Right after my most recent meeting, which was only my third, a few things dawned on me. I wrote out a few points, trying not to analyze but just to write whatever came to mind about why I'm here and why I feel like Masonry is good for me and, by extension, the people around me. These are what they all seemed to boil down to:

The 'Good' is . . .

- The feeling of belonging and the ability to do good as a group, even if it's as small as approving a donation to a charity or volunteering time.
- To never again have that sinking feeling of being asked if I had anything to give (during initiation) and not being able to give anything.
- To always be able to help someone when they need it (I realize how it was used for initiation, but the feeling stuck anyway)
- The fact that we care for sick brothers. Whether it's visiting or sending a card, I think those kinds of things make a big difference. And it reminds me to reach out to anyone else who may need it as well
- To better myself and to learn more about myself, about the craft, and about life.

You Might Just be a Mason if . . .

- ✓ You are surprised when you do not get a masonic handshake;
- ✓ You don't like to go counter-clockwise;
- ✓ You tailgate to see if the bumper sticker is masonic;
- ✓ You check to see if a distinguished gentleman you see is wearing a masonic ring;
- ✓ You knock at doors using one of the three knocks;
- ✓ You study old buildings looking for symbols of the craft;
- ✓ You realize that your attention span has increased, especially at meetings;
- ✓ You sometimes quote part of a charge;
- ✓ Your family is curious about your little black book and why you take it into the bathroom;
- ✓ You get a thrill when you learn that a famous person was a mason;
- ✓ You react to seeing bad behaviour by thinking, "A mason wouldn't do that."
- ✓ You wonder if some of your acquaintances would make good masons;
- ✓ You realize that you have become a better person since you joined the order.

Another Mason Speaks

At the recent Installation at Macnab Lodge, Bro. Rex Harrison gave this speech during the social hour:

Good Evening Gentlemen,

First, I would like to thank everyone who came tonight and supported not only our Lodge for the Installation, but also our new Worshipful Master, Brother Brent Tarabalka.

It gives me great pride, as I am sure it does the other fellow members of Macnab, and Masonry in general, to be a part of something like what we have here: a place where a man can go to meet other men interested in similar ideas, beliefs, and moral alignment, regardless of age or race or creed. A place where being a good person, a good husband, a good father, and a good friend are not only the most important things, but the only important things.

As our initiation taught us, we are a society of men who prize honor and virtue above the external advantages of rank and fortune.

As our officers move up in rank within our lodge, let us not forget to be humbled by that very lesson. Our order has been comprised of many great figures throughout time, and has many more to provide us with, so let us continue to lead by their example, and set the same example for those who follow us.

Our new Worshipful Master, Brent Tarabalka, is one of those great leaders, and it will be an honor to serve as your Senior Warden, Worshipful Sir.

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Can We Fix This?

Here lies the tragedy of our race:

Not that men are poor;

For all men know something of poverty.

Not that men are wicked;

For who can claim to be good?

Not that men are ignorant;

For who can boast that he is wise?

But that men are Strangers!

Brotherly Love [author unknown]

A Masonic education course I recently attended describes Brotherly Love this way:

“It means that we place on another man the highest possible valuation as a friend, a companion, an associate, a neighbor, a fellow.

Merely to be with him, merely to spend hours in his company, to have the privilege of working at his side, is all we ask.

We do not ask that from our relationship we make money, or further our business interests, or achieve some other form of selfish gain.

Freemasonry takes brotherly love for granted, provides opportunities for us to have fellowship, and encourages us to understand and to practice it, and to make it one of the laws of our existence.”



Why Did You Join?

Two men were riding together through Montana observing the wildlife along the way.

Upon spotting a wild elk, the first man said to the other, "Did you know that elks have sex about 4 to 6 times a day!?"

The other man replied "Oh no!"

"What's wrong?" the first man asked.

"I just joined the Masons!"



Q: How many Masons does it take to screw in a light bulb?

A: Three. One to screw it in, one to read the minutes of the previous light bulb replacement, and one to sit on the sidelines and complain that this wasn't the way they USED to screw in light bulbs.