

The District Light

The information bulletin
of Niagara B District

March, 2014

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Better?

It has often been said that Masonry “takes good men and makes them better”, and we probably all believe that, because we see it in ourselves and others. But the question then is, “How?”

One Ontario Mason, Terry Spalding–Martin, had this to say on the subject:

I consider Freemasonry, to be the biggest and oldest self help group in the world. The emphasis is on “self”.

For the most part, our society wants everything given to them. We will move mountains, if it means we don’t have to do any work. Thus, making men better is generally perceived as something Freemasonry *does* to men. It is, actually, something Freemasonry *makes available* to men. Freemasonry holds it out, and then, the brother has to do some work in order for it to happen.

You have also heard, “you get out of it, what you put into it,” and it’s true. If you just sit on the bench, nothing much happens. You don’t become better, you don’t become any smarter, and you don’t become anything, other than older.

Brethren may question the relevance of learning ritual. What’s the use of learning all that archaic language, and then saying it to someone?

By learning ritual, we expand our capabilities for memorization; something many of us haven’t done since public school, if ever.

By delivering ritual, we overcome our fear, and learn to speak in public. This capability boosts our self-worth, and self-confidence.

Then consider the responsibilities associated with membership: being part of a team effort; interacting with people we do not know; meeting a new man and taking responsibility for guiding him; setting goals; organizing volunteers to accomplish a set goal; keeping minutes. Each is a valuable skill to learn and to practice.

But we actually have to do it ourselves. Nobody can do it for us.

So How?

We internalize what we experience; we put it away into one of the brain’s compartments.

It’s All In Your Head

We used to think the brain was like a computer, but now we realize that’s not true – there is no *programming* of the brain. The brain is more like a large corporation. In a corporation, you have subdivisions that operate independently of the main office.

One of those sections is the unconscious mind, which reacts faster-than-thought to moments which require emotional or ‘gut’ reactions.

The subconscious mind is like a fertile plain. Whatever you plant there can grow and become powerful – and that makes you the person you are.

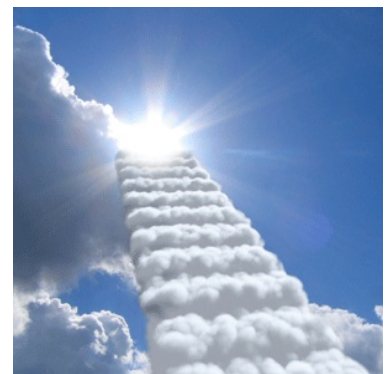
The subconscious mind is responsible for directing almost everything you do:

1. your thoughts
2. your habits
3. your attitudes, confidence, enthusiasm
4. the feelings you experience

This is why it is important to be careful about what you accept into your head. The effect can be profound.

Masonry offers us instructions and examples for our consideration and absorption. It makes available a direction or point of view for us to evaluate and accept, if we find it worthy.

Each time we ‘believe’ the message, our subconscious is tuned to the new concept and we become a slightly different person. We create a new step in our upward path.



My Path, So Far by Trevor Beattie, Phoenix

I was raised in Ireland.

My father never became a mason, but he would have made an excellent one. Being a printer, he used to print the monthly summonses for several lodges in Belfast. When he took upon himself a task,



he carried it out to the best of his ability and with the sincerity and quality it demanded. One of the things that I remember he told me when I was fairly young was a quote on a summons where it said something like “Go home after the meeting and tell your wife you were the first one to leave”.

26 years ago I was initiated into a lodge in the centre of Belfast.

It did seem to appear at the time that Masonry was a secret society, but that was due to the “troubles” in Northern Ireland where organizations came under the watch of the paramilitaries. Another reason is that there were a large number of members of the Masonic Order in the security forces (police, prison wardens, army reserve, and civilian security), and they wanted to feel secure associating with brethren they could trust to keep their link to the security forces unknown.

It is so good now being able to be open about being a mason and not always having to look over my shoulder to see if I am being watched. On the contrary, being watched now is something to be proud of as we can prove to our neighbours we are just regular people trying to make someone’s life a little better.

I have met a lot of great people through masonry and I am grateful for my journey both here in Canada and back in Northern Ireland. Recently I have found a new enthusiasm for the order and have become more involved.

I believe that old adage, “You only get out of something what you put into it.” I am hoping to get a lot more out of Masonry in the years ahead.

European Lodges by Jack Harrington, Adoniram Lodge

During my tour of duty in Lahr, West Germany from 1964-72 (we had east and west then), I became a member of Lodge 911 which we shared with the principle German Lodge. We came under the jurisdiction of the American/Canadian Grand Lodge of Germany.

Our rituals were the same as those we practice in Ontario although the American Lodges on the US military bases used the New York rituals.

During my tour I had the opportunity to visit many American and German Lodges and was able to appreciate the differences. The German lodges were quite formal and serene. The music was very classical, probably Wagner.

The Junior Warden’s Banquet was something else. Imagine a table long enough to seat about 30. The W.Master sat at the end of the table and asked masonic questions of the brothers, ad lib. The Brother, if he failed to answer the question correctly, would pay a penalty as prescribed by the Master which was to drink so many sips of Wine. (That’s a penalty?) However – you guessed it – the Canadian lodge adopted the same system.

At one period the Grand Master of the American/Canadian Grand Lodge was a Canadian school teacher from a DND school in Lahr. I later met him in Richmond Hill Lodge after I retired from the Air Force in 1973.

I shall have more stories of some of the differences I noticed while visiting various lodges.



A Family Story by Dave Chamberlain,
St. Andrew's Lodge

My involvement with Masons is a direct result of being the great nephew of V.W. Bro. Bill Vaughn.

I spent my teen years growing up on my Uncle Bill's farm and it's during that time that I realized what a great man he is. I didn't know that my uncle was a Mason but I did know that he was a good man and that he was, and still is, revered by many.



Over the past 20 years I learned about Masonry through my own perusal of magazines and online literature, and it is during this time that I was informed of my Uncle Bill's involvement with Masonry. It wasn't until recently that I felt that I had something to offer the brotherhood. of which I had been interested for years but did not want to pursue anything until I felt it right in my heart.

I knew of one man who was a Mason, and he just happened to be related to me, so I asked my uncle to introduce me to the Craft. I am 40 years of age and was giddy at the idea.

I decided to join St. Andrews Lodge #661 and can proudly and with all sincerity, tell you that I love it! I love the new friendships made, the feeling of doing something better with my life, the comradery and support from gentlemen that, six months ago, I didn't know.

I can now, proudly and with all humility, say that I was recently raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason.

My Masonic journey is just beginning. I am looking forward to joining "The Scottish Craftsmen's Association of St. Catharines and District".

I'm sure that my time with Masonry will be a long and prosperous venture.

I look forward to being a better man, father, brother, son, friend, and husband.

The Story Continues still by Dave

I was trying to travel to other lodges and immerse myself in the craft as much as I could. when my daughter moved to St. Catharines, staying with my wife and me for a time.

She saw me leaving to visit other lodges and attend Masonic functions several times a week. I came to suspect that she was holding a little animosity towards Masonry and was maybe feeling a little jealous of the time I was spending with my brethren.

I tried to explain to her that this was something that I needed to involve myself with; that this was something that I felt I needed in my life.

I thought that if I brought her to a Masonic function, she could see where I go and what I do while I'm out of the house.



My name is Tyr Laffrenier.

I just recently had the privilege of going to one of the masons' get-togethers. My father has done nothing but say "WONDERFUL" things about the Masons and how they will help him to be a better man!

Before my father, I had never heard of the Masons, but I was assured that they were a caring and giving organization.

Getting to spend a little time with them was a wonderful experience. They welcomed me with open arms and big smiles. I was fascinated by all their aprons, and just plain uniqueness! I learned a lot that night; things I would never have had the opportunity to know if I hadn't agreed to go with my dad.

I believe, with my father joining the Masons, it has truly made his life fulfilled. I hope I get the chance to meet the gentlemen from the Masons again, but for now I wish my father the best for his Masonic years to come and a very big thank you to the gentlemen I met that night for making me feel very welcome and for giving me that special experience.

Now An Entered Apprentice

by Erick Escolero-Cañas, St. George's

Since I was a child, I have had the opportunity to be surrounded by Masons. Samuel Cerna, one of my best friend's father is Mason. He was the one who supported me as an adoptive parent.

Since my teens he guided me and advised me that my studies were the most important goal in that time, and he showed me how to develop myself professionally in my work.

The other Mason is Dagoberto Orrego, my wife's grandfather, who I learned to love as my own grandfather. Dagoberto always advised me and showed me how a man with morality and strong principles behaves.

They were the best role models for me – men with good morality and goals obtained through their own efforts and knowledge.

One day I asked a Mason how to become myself a mason, and here I am, starting my journey.



W.Bro. Mark Anderson McGaw and me at my Initiation

A Completely Different Topic

Giving someone the "third degree" may come from the three degrees of questioning a suspect: the first degree was simply questioning, the second degree was questioning under oath, and the third degree was questioning under torture.

But today, the phrase is understood by masons to refer to the non-violent ceremony of accepting a brother as a Master Mason.

The Altar Extended



King Edward VII Lodge in Chippawa rented to Centennial Lodge until their charter moved to Hamilton. Many members of that lodge affiliated with King Edward VII, as did members of Stamford Lodge when it went dark.

To memorialize the other two lodges, R.W.Bro. James Healey has constructed satellite altars to flank the main one. Each is draped with the altar cloth of the respective lodge.

Have a look when you come to visit.

Other Places to Be

Each of the following events would be worth your time:

Official Visits: March 4: Palmer in Fort Erie

March 6: Dominion in Fort Erie

March 10: Merritt in Port Colborne

March 19: Temple Lodge in St. Catharines

March 7: Masonic dinner at Chatter's Grille

March 20: Masonic lunch at The Falls Manor.

March 30: Charles A. Sankey Lecture at Brock U. at 3:00 p.m. on the topic, "Brothers in Arms; Freemasons and the War of 1812"

April 5: Friend-to-Friend Event, hosted by Perfection Lodge and assisted by Niagara 'A' District, held at 23 Centre St., St. Catharines, 11:00a.m. – 3:00p.m.