

**Editorials**  
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These editorials are referred to in the text of "Whither Are We Traveling?", by the same author, and are reprinted from *The Indiana Freemason* as supplementary subject matter.



## Leadership by Endurance?

ON MANY and many an occasion in the past decade callers in the Grand Lodge office, disturbed about a falling off in attendance and interest, have been told, *There is nothing wrong with your Lodge, nor with Freemasonry, that good leadership will not cure.*

Nothing has happened to change my mind. The experience of each successive year only serves to strengthen my belief that in any Lodge the attendance, the interest of its members, its activity, its strength as a Lodge and its standing in the community are in direct proportion to the effectiveness of its leadership. And that means long range leadership - not one strong Master followed by four weak ones.

Another month and the Feast of St. John the Evangelist will be upon us. In Indiana, that date governs annual Lodge elections. For good or ill, each one of our 547 Lodges will choose its Worshipful Master, and thereby determine the level of interest, the attendance, the activity and the standing in the community of that Lodge for the year forthcoming.

For those concerned over the future of our Fraternity (and there are many), I offer one thought: Is it not time that the practice of ladder promotion of officers be called in question?

After all, are there not qualifications for a Worshipful Master more important than the winning of an endurance contest?

It is possible that the strongest and most capable leadership on the Lodge roster may be found in a man who simply can not spend seven or eight years of his time keeping a seat warm.

And it may be that the man who does keep a seat warm and win the endurance contest is not the man who can provide good leadership or command respect in the community.

Before any Brother disagrees too violently, let me suggest: First, that he take a long and thoughtful look at the names of some of the early Past Masters of his Lodge; second, that he think it over for the next twelve months. -(November, 1961.)

## No Substitute for Quality

*Masonry and its associated bodies has not been receiving its proper share of publicity in the newspapers.*

**IT WAS SOMETHING OF A JOLT** to read the above paragraph in the address of an American Grand Master before the annual communication of his Grand Lodge. I blinked my eyes and looked again to see whether I might have been wrong. Unfortunately, it read just the same the second time. I was glad it was not the Grand Master of Masons in Indiana who was speaking.

So Freemasonry has not been receiving its proper share of publicity. Just what is our proper share when all the drivel known by the name of publicity is parceled out?

The very word publicity is anathema to an old newspaper man. Around newspaper copy desks the more cynical of the journalistic craft like to recall the difference between news and publicity. It goes something like this: Publicity is that which is of little or no interest, but which individuals seek mightily to get into print; news is that which is of great interest, but which individuals seek mightily to keep out of print.

To an old newspaper man who also is a seasoned Freemason, the word publicity is double anathema. Grand Master or no, the man who asserts that Masonry is not getting its "proper share" of publicity has a lot to learn about Freemasonry - its traditions, what it is and what it is not, what it does and what it simply does not do.

Certainly no one will quarrel with the premise that when Freemasonry does something worth while and something that can command public interest, the story should be told. But the moment our ancient Craft adopts the methods of the ten thousand organizations which clamor and compete for attention, support and funds, that moment will the Craft slide into its decline. It will be on the way out because it will have ceased to be Freemasonry. It will have thrown overboard one of the principles by which it has gained and held popular esteem.

Not long ago it was my privilege to present fifty-year buttons to two highly respected citizens of a small Indiana town. The gathering of friends to witness that simple ceremony was moving; the tributes paid by one speaker after another were heart-warming. Freemasonry needed no press agent in that community - the

two men honored that night for half a century had done the best possible job of advertising.

Not so many years ago, another small Indiana town set aside a special day in honor of its veteran physician. He was a country doctor of the old school. For more than fifty years he had brushed aside suggestions that the city might offer better facilities, more money, a less strenuous life, and had stayed on among the people he loved, and who loved him. They turned out four thousand strong to pay him tribute. Incidentally, he had been Master of the Masonic Lodge several times. No one needs to advertise Freemasonry in that little town. The Doctor takes care of that. He is Mr. Mason.

In another small Hoosier community the Lodge had just completed a costly building project. Out of a clear sky, news came that the widow of a deceased member, living in a distant city, was destitute. No one remembered her; few remembered her late husband, but the course of action was clear. Voluntarily, without asking anyone and without pressure from the top, the Lodge levied a \$2 assessment on every member to provide funds to meet the emergency until an application to the Masonic Home could be processed. One Past Master went so far as to say that that one simple act had done the Lodge more good in the community than anything that had happened within his memory. There is no need to seek publicity for Freemasonry in that town.

Not many years ago I sat in a called meeting of a large suburban Lodge of perhaps a thousand members. Before Lodge was closed, the Senior Warden announced that the large family of a Brother recently deceased was in desperate circumstances. He called for donations of clothing, groceries, fuel. "In recent years, demands on our Relief Fund have not been frequent," he said. "Now, *this is our opportunity* to put some of the tenets of Freemasonry into practice." I saw Brethren compete for a privilege that night. It was one of the most enriching experiences of my life. No press releases are needed to advertise Freemasonry in that suburban community. No Masonic publicity is needed in any community, where Masons look upon Masonic benevolence not as a duty, but as a privilege. Significantly, that Lodge is not plagued with attendance problems.

We are far off the beam when we get to thinking that our problems can be solved simply by tooting our own horn in the public press and on the TV screens. In Freemasonry, there is no substitute for quality of the product. And if the product we present to the public is short on quality, no amount of publicity will repair the damage.

Yes, and we are far off the beam when we begin to get itchy and restless for Freemasonry to adopt the methods of the ten thousand organizations and "causes" and "projects" and "drives." It takes a steady eye to keep on the course. God help Masonry if it surrenders to expediency. God help us if we permit our Craft to be absorbed by the organization mind and the organization technique if we permit Freemasonry to become anything other than Freemasonry! -(August, 1961.)

### **Where Your Treasure Is..**

**IN** 1911 Floyd F. Oursler was making ten dollars a week as an apprentice printer. The fee for the three degrees in Winslow Lodge No. 260 was twenty dollars. That was the full amount of two weeks' pay.

Of course, in 1911 a dollar was worth a dollar, and there was no withholding tax for printers making ten dollars a week, no gross income tax, no social security. Just the same, twenty dollars was two weeks' pay - all of it. And Floyd Oursler thought enough of Freemasonry to empty his pay envelope twice to enjoy the privilege.

Today, fifty years later, the minimum fee that may be charged by Lodges in Indiana has been increased to thirty dollars - and one Lodge out of every five charges the absolute minimum that the law will permit. (If the minimum fee were still twenty dollars, I daresay at least 75 Lodges would be charging that figure.)

If the same relationship between wages and fees as prevailed in 1911 were maintained in 1962, Lodges now charging from thirty to sixty dollars would be charging \$100 to \$150 - and the Fraternity probably would be stronger and better thereby.

Like it or not, I am convinced that one of the principal reasons for the present-day decline in Lodge interest and activity lies in the fact that the privileges of Freemasonry have been made available to too many men who can pay the fee-and little else.

Yes, I know-the internal, and not the external, qualifications of **a** man are what render him worthy. Nevertheless, if we make Freemasonry too easy to obtain, we are going to get far too many members and far too few Masons. If some degree of sacrifice is required for the privilege of becoming a Mason, that in itself will serve to separate the men from the boys. Those who want to unite with our

ancient Craft enough to pay until it hurts are likely to appreciate the emblem they are permitted to wear.

There is nothing in a high initiation fee that will guarantee a high class of petitioners. But if we ourselves place a cheap value on Masonic membership, how can we expect petitioners to prize it?

And if we rate the Ancient Craft Lodge far down the list of goals a man may strive for, how can we expect him to rate it high on his list of loyalties?

In Freemasonry, there simply is no substitute for quality - and quality is not often obtained at a bargain counter. *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* -(February, 1962.)

### **Attendance Is Not The Ultimate**

**WHEN THE** superintendent of a large Sunday School called a meeting of his officers and teachers on a Sunday afternoon to receive booklets for the new curriculum, he was dismayed and hurt that only two showed up. It had never occurred to him that no person in his right mind would waste a Sunday afternoon going back to church just for distribution of printed materials.

That story is significant because it illustrates rather vividly the totally unrealistic attitude of our American society on the subject of attendance at endless meetings.

Freemasonry is in the throes of great anguish over lack of attendance at Lodge meetings. That is why *The Indiana Freemason* is publishing a series of articles and editorials on the subject. For some reason, attendance is looked upon as the ultimate of all good things that could happen to a Lodge, even though it might not know what to do with a large attendance if it had one.

What, for example, would a Lodge do if all its resident members happened to come to a meeting at the same time? There are few Lodge rooms in Indiana that could accommodate even half their resident members - some not even one-third. And if a Lodge hall cannot seat comfortably its entire resident membership, it is not the hall that is too small; it is the Lodge that is too large.

After all, is attendance the ultimate? If the Parable of the Sower (St. Matthew 13: 3-9) means anything in this mid-Twentieth Century, it certainly is not.

No, I cannot accept the premise that attendance is the ultimate, nor can I cherish the fond hope that if somehow members would attend their Lodge meetings, all would be well. It isn't that simple.

When men are interested in the work of an organization, they will be on hand to participate in its program. When there is nothing that interests them, they will not be there no matter how much we nag. Hence, if Master Masons are not attending meetings of their Lodges, one of two things may be wrong:

*First*, there may be nothing of interest to them, and,

*Second*, perhaps they should not have been elected to membership in the first place.

Make no mistake about it: Intelligent men are not going to spend their evenings hearing the minutes read and the bills allowed, or watching other men exemplify poorly the same ritualistic work they have seen a score of times. Ham sandwiches and pie on paper plates at 11 o'clock at night will not induce them to come more than once. Silly little quiz programs will not attract them, nor will "lecturettes" read by a man who doesn't know what he is talking about.

Make no mistake about it: Unless Freemasonry presents what it has to offer in a challenging manner, intelligent men will not be on the sidelines to witness and participate. Nothing we can say will change that fact, and we might as well stop butting our individual and collective heads against the wall.

Old St. Andrew's Lodge in Boston did not have a very large membership on a memorable evening in 1773. No, the Lodge even met in rented quarters - a fact that would be looked upon with horror today. It did not have much in the way of numbers, but it had the men who counted.

Attendance is not the ultimate. Size is not the ultimate. An imposing temple is not the ultimate. In Freemasonry, there is no substitute for quality.

When a Lodge has membership of quality, good leadership will be in command. If good leadership is in command, the Lodge program will be challenging, and in the best of Masonic traditions. If the Lodge program is challenging and thoroughly Masonic, there will be interest among the members. And if there is interest among the members, they will be in attendance.

It is time we are unhitching Old Dobbin from his place behind the cart and putting him between the shafts in front where he belongs. -(March, 1962.)

### **First Things First**

**SIDE BY** side at the top of an inside page of the Sunday paper were three news dispatches, with photographs, telling of the death of as many prominent Hoosiers. All three were Master Masons, yet the news accounts made mention only of their membership in organizations dependent for their existence upon Freemasonry.

The natural reaction would be to place the blame upon the newspaper, but having been a news man myself, I know that newspapers obtain their obituary information from the family of the deceased. There was no doubt in my mind that the families of the three Brethren attached little or no importance to their membership in a Lodge of Ancient Craft Freemasonry.

Just two or three days after the Sunday paper incident, a gentleman came into the Grand Lodge office to see what could be done to get his father admitted as a member of the Indiana Masonic Home. It developed that the father, a Past Master, had demitted from his Lodge 16 years ago, but had maintained active affiliation with other organizations dependent upon Freemasonry. It was quite a shock to learn that membership in an Ancient Craft Lodge is, on occasion, rather important.

A Grand Master of Masons in a neighboring Jurisdiction recently wrote of the "vanishing emblem" - the plain unadorned Square and Compass which men by the thousand seek the right to wear and then proceed to discard in favor of something they deem of greater worth.

Such incidents, if they were isolated, would mean little or nothing. But sadly enough, in the minds of far too many Master Masons, the Symbolic Lodge occupies a place of second- or third-rate importance. Significance is attached only to that which sounds big, and exclusive, and affluent.

Happily, in Indiana there is no question of loyalty to the parent body. Here we are fortunate enough to enjoy both pleasant relations and active cooperation.

But there is more to loyalty than the mere act of sitting in the cheering section. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." Our Masonic structure is weakened



whenever and wherever there are Master Masons whose sense of values leads them to put first things last and last things first. American Freemasonry has a lot to learn. For one thing, we have not yet faced up to the fact that our strength is being sapped by too great a stress on the tail which can, and may, wag the dog.

Those of us who are concerned about the future of Freemasonry can render no greater service than this: To remember ourselves and emphasize to others that certain values are fundamental, and that one of those values is a recognition of the prime importance, the supremacy, the dignity and worth of the Symbolic Lodge: "Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." (Isaiah 51:1) -(*December, 1961.*)