

What Have You Done Today?

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Virginia Research Lodge No. 1777

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A character in Lillian Hillman's play "Autumn Garden" says "There are no big moments you can reach unless you've a pile of smaller moments to stand on."

Let there be no doubt in anyone's mind this morning - the opportunity I am sharing with you today is no small moment for this Master Mason.

To me - this is the Olympics, the Super Bowl, and the World Series all rolled up into one.

I hold a great deal of admiration and respect for Masonic researchers. I agree, wholeheartedly, with a statement made by our esteemed Brother Allen Roberts in a talk he gave at a recent meeting of Iowa's Research Lodge No.2 in Des Moines this past December. This is what he said:

Research Lodge people are the cream of the crop.

I'd like to expand on that statement in just a minute but first let me go back to your selection of a person to fill this particular part of this important meeting. To be quite frank with you (and I'm sure several of you will agree before we're through this morning). To be quite frank - I don't think your selection committee was too particular in choosing me.

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It reminds me of a story that is related by a colleague of mine, Dwight McAlister, who is the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of South Carolina. Brother McAlister is a former Southern Baptist Minister and he tells the story of the little old lady in his church who had never chosen to marry. She was a chronic complainer and every once in a while, she would call Pastor McAlister and want to talk to him and he would go down and talk with her and counsel with her, and every time that he would go, he would have to listen to the story of her life from the day she was born, up to the present time. And on this particular day when she called him, he was just a little out of sorts, but he went to see her anyway and she began as always telling him how bad off she was. And she said, "Preacher, I'm so glad that you came to see me." She said, "I don't think I'm long for this world. In fact," she said, "I don't think it'll be long before be crossing over Jordan and be on the other side. In fact," she said, "I don't think it'll be too long before I'll be layin' my head on Lazarus bosom." And he said, "Now you wait a minute, sister. In the first place, I don't think you're all that sick. And in the second place, I think you've got your men folks mixed up. I think you mean Abraham's bosom, not Lazarus' bosom." And she said, "Pastor -if you'd been alone as long as I have - you wouldn't be too particular either."

So while this is one of the biggest thrills of my Masonic Life - I don't really think your Speaker Selection Committee was too particular in their choice.

I hope none of you are expecting to hear a lot of funny stories from me. In the first place, I'm not a funny story person - and in the second place, as I told the Brethren of Babcock Lodge last night - I have not driven 1,000 miles to tell funny stories.

It's not that there's not a time for laughter, and good times, and funny stories in Masonry. (Those of us who love it the most have to laugh and have good time together). It's simply that this is neither the time nor the place for funny stories. So let's get together this

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afternoon and swap a few stories and have a good laugh or two. But for now, let's get serious about Freemasonry and talk about the important role that Masonic researchers play in guiding our Gentle Craft through this, the most crucial period in our history. But first I want to go back to Brother Roberts' reference to "Research Lodge People" being the "Cream of the Crop."

As far as I'm concerned Research Lodge people fit perfectly into the mold that was cast by Brother Will Rogers when he said --

You can't start a furnace with a snowball --
You've got to know what you're doin'
You've got to love what you're doin'
You've got to BELIEVE in what you're doin'.

That's the end of Brother Rogers' quote but I'd like to add to it these words:

You've got to CARE about what you're doin'.
And research people really do care about Freemasonry.

Masonic research work is certainly not the most glamorous, and it's not "where the action is," but it is very, very necessary.

I don't need to tell you Brethren that Masonry is being inspected today. Our temples are being inspected; our members are being inspected; we as individual Masons are being inspected and our Masonic principals and beliefs are right up there on the block too. We're being inspected by our neighbors, by our friends, by our clients, by our patients, and our customers. Our employers and our employees are inspecting us too and so, even

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are our families. These people are all asking some pretty pertinent questions. They all want to know - "Is it really worth all the time and effort, and money, and sacrifice they put into it?" "Do Masons really believe all the things they say they do?"

"Does Freemasonry REALLY have a valid place in today's society?" And you know, it's up to us, the 10% of the active members of our Craft to pass that inspection. And if we don't pass it, then our great and beloved Fraternity is going to be the loser.

It's time we all took a good close look at the physical appearance of our Temples, of the caliber of the degree work that is being conferred, and the caliber of the candidates we are electing. And it's time we all took a good hard look at what Masonry really means to us - and if we aren't proud of our final assessment - then maybe we'd better take another accounting of our Fraternity AND OUR RELATIONSHIP TO IT. Because as someone else said: "If you are not doing something to solve some of our problems -- then you ARE A PART OF THOSE PROBLEMS."

And Masonic researchers play a much bigger part in whether or not we pass this inspection than appears on the surface. Masonic history is extremely interesting and invaluable in understanding the Craft's lessons. Masonic research is useful in creating appreciation of and respect for the art. But until what has been learned is translated into ACTION by the Craft, its worth is little more than academic. And the way this information is taught, the manner in which it is presented to the Craft, has a direct relationship with the way it is learned and the force with which it is translated into action. And the Virginia Lodge of Research is surpassed by none in the field of that translation.

It is true that historically, Masonry has relied upon the individual to find the way to express in action what he has been taught in principle. In past generations a comprehensive grasp

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of the Craft's history, coupled with a clear understanding of its principles did, in most cases, become a powerful factor in the formation of an upright moral character. In those days when there was so much time available and life was far less complex; when lodges were smaller and admissions fewer, members, on the whole, seemed to regard their Masonic obligations with greater seriousness. Under these conditions, the reflection of Masonic knowledge and study could be expected in all of a brother's activities. This in turn had a direct or indirect constructive influence upon all phases of community and national life.

Increase in numbers of lodges and membership has not resulted in a proportionate degree of influence on the life around us. Indeed, many Masonic leaders view the impact of Masonic principles and teaching upon society as being less in these modern times. If this view is correct, some part of the loss can be traced to diminishing stress upon the application of Craft knowledge in public as well as in private life. In that case, it would seem to be a part of the work AND THE RESPONSIBILITY of each lodge and particularly every lodge of research to provide information and instruction on how Masonic knowledge, and principles may be applied to help solve some of the complicated and vexing problems of today.

Mt. Wor. Harry S. Truman expressed the importance of Research Lodges in still another way as he wrote these words in the Foreword of the book 10,000 Famous Freemasons:

We know that research is the most important step in the study of history. Comprehensive and accurate information must be available for those who would interpret trends in world happenings.

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History is made by men. It is therefore necessary to know about the men who have made history. In the study of the past we must know the motives that inspired men who made history. Events and dates are of no value unless we can discover what caused those events.

Masonic history and historians are of prime importance to the present day strength AND the future growth of FREEMASONRY. But there is still another element that is equally important. It is this other element that I would devote my thoughts and enlist your consideration on this morning.

If an address of this kind needs a title -- then let's call this one:

"WHAT HAVE WE DONE - TODAY"

Years before Charles M. Schwab had become head of one of the nation's largest steel companies, he worked for the legendary Andrew Carnegie. The little Scotsman taught his young employee the hard lessons of the commercial world: "One day's laurels are of little use on the next."

"All records broken yesterday," Schwab once wired his chief. In reply to that message, Carnegie telegraphed back: "But what have you done today?"

Charles Schwab's success in life was the direct result of learning one of life's most important lessons: "But what have you done today?"

In the same way someone once remarked, "It isn't being busy that counts -- it's what you get done."

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As wonderful as it is to recall, the past achievements of our Order -- and there are many -- our most important task is to turn our attention to TODAY. We can be justly proud of our accomplishments and we should support them to the best of our ability. BUT what we do today and tomorrow is every bit as important.

In travelling back and forth across the heartland of Iowa I observe the pride the Iowa Brethren have in their Grand Lodge Scholarship program, the Iowa Masonic Library and Museum, the two fine Masonic Homes they support, and the financial support and leadership they give to our Masonic youth groups, the \$30,000 they contributed to the Ronald McDonald House in 1984, and the \$115,000 they recently gave to keep the Statue of Liberty's Torch burning. This is good and we're glad they are proud of these things - But seldom - all too seldom, do we hear a brother boast about HIS lodge, about HIS Masonic Temple, or about HIS Worshipful Master. We need, in some way, to bring this fraternal pride down to the local level. The brethren in every single lodge in your jurisdiction and in mine need to be jealously proud of their Masonic Lodge, their local Temple and of their membership therein. And if they cannot be proud of these things - ALL of these things - then, they need to ask themselves:

"What is wrong and how can I make it right?" and

"What is good and how can I make it better?"

The epitaph on the stone marking the last resting of former President and General Dwight D. Eisenhower says "He loved the world and wanted to leave it better than he found it." We all love Masonry - if we didn't, we wouldn't be here at this time of the morning - so what's wrong with trying to leave it better than we found it?

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We are told that Freemasonry is a way of life - a way of life that projects the character of a man to usefulness far beyond his immediate kin - IF HE BUT WILLS IT SO. But Freemasonry cannot project that character, or other character, if we who profess to love her, FAIL TO SERVE her.

And how do we serve Freemasonry?? A thousand ways and one. We serve Freemasonry when we serve our family and our Nation. We are serving Freemasonry when we serve our local communities, and our public schools; and we serve Freemasonry when we serve God.

Service. Other people have said it better than I. Robert Stockman said it this way, "SERVICE IS THE RENT YOU PAY FOR YOUR ROOM IN THE WORLD." Evangeline Booth said it in still another way as she was scrubbing the sores of a drunken woman in a squalid slum when a friend told her, "I wouldn't do that for a million dollars." Evangeline Booth replied simply, "I wouldn't either." President John F. Kennedy spoke of service when he said, "Ask not what your Country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your Country." And the National Commander of the Salvation Army spoke of service in these words, "The Salvation Army needs men and woman of TOTAL COMMITMENT - and if they are not totally committed - they do not stay with the Army long."

SERVICE - That's what he's talking about. The same kind of service that President Kennedy and Evangeline Booth and Robert Stockman were talking about. Service to your family, to your Nation, to your community and to the public schools. Service to God and to your Masonic lodge.

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So - what kind of service have YOU rendered lately? Not the things you HAVE to do, or the things you are expected to do. Whom have you helped lately that you haven't really HAD to help?

I know you pay your taxes, you keep your family well dressed and comfortable, you try to go to church and lodge regularly. You pay your lodge dues on time and last year you gave \$10 to the Lodge Building Fund. You even became a Circus Daddy when you bought that whole book of Shrine Circus tickets last summer.

But that's not the kind of service Kennedy and Booth and Stockman were talking about. That's not TOTAL COMMITMENT!! To be totally committed, you have to do something "of your own free will and accord." That's the real guts of it you know: "Of your own free will and accord." It's got you to where you are in Freemasonry today. So what have you done with it lately? Whom HAVE you helped that you didn't have to? Or, as the title of my talk asks: WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TODAY?

What have you done today to improve the image of Masonry in the eyes of your "inspectors"? What is the image of Freemasonry today? In order to find the proper perspective it is helpful to consider its image in the past as well.

When Freemasonry consisted of guilds of operative craftsmen, the members of those guilds were respected for their ability and knowledge in constructing magnificent buildings. What they accomplished stood for all to see. They needed no publicity; and many sought to become apprentice to those fellows of the craft, and to work under the masters. The image of operative Masonry was good and in their travels, freely through different countries, Freemasons were respected.

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When speculative Masonry grew out of the mason guilds in the 18th century, the image changed. No longer was there the exclusiveness of craftsmanship. No longer could the brethren point to a beautiful cathedral as a mark of their accomplishments and it became difficult to point to the intangible art of character building. Thus started the change in the image of Freemasonry. Other so called Masonic orders were formed using as many gimmicks as there were orders. Let me tell you about just one of those "other orders".

Let me start by asking: How many of you belong to the Order of the Owls? [None.] Well then let me ask: Are there any of you who would like to join?

One final question: How many of you have heard of the Order of the Owls? Would you believe me if I told you that the Order of the Owls had 12,000 members less than three years after it was formed?

Let me quote from the 1890 Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Ohio (it was copied from a local Chicago newspaper carrying a date line of September 27 and the caption read):

OWLISH ORGANS WILL PROBABLY DISTINGUISH THE ORGANIZATION OF A MASONIC SIDE ORDER TONIGHT AT CHICAGO

The first Chicago Nest of the Order of the Owls will be instituted here this afternoon, and prominent members of the Masonic Fraternity from half a dozen nearby states are arriving this morning to signalize the event by their presence. A special car filled with Owls arrived from Terre Haute this morning. Headquarters have been opened in the Grand Pacific Hotel, where Dr. G. F. Pennington, of Baltimore, the Supreme Sapiant Screecher of the World, is being heartily welcomed.

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The Owls hold the same relation to Masonry as do the Mystic Shrine. The Order is but three years old, but has a membership in the United States of nearly twelve thousand, restricted generally to the leading officers of the leading Masonic Bodies in the country. The initiation this evening will be witnessed by a large and distinguished audience, and after the Nest has been brought into existence, elections will take place to the offices of Sapiant Screecher, Sapiant Bag-holder, Lord High Executioner, Tooter, Hooter, Blinker, and Recording and Property Owls.

Needless to say the Order of the Owls did not project a very favorable image. What kind of an image could you expect with titles like "Sapiant Screecher, Lord High Executioner, Tooter, Hooter, and Blinker?" And maybe that's one of the reasons the Masons of today have never heard of the Order of the Owls. How about the image of Freemasonry in your local community today? If a stranger comes into your town, how many people must he ask before he finds out where the Masonic Temple is? And when he does find it, does it present an appearance that makes him want to attend lodge there? What kind of community activities does your lodge sponsor? What kind of Masonic image do the officers and members of your lodge project? And finally: "What have you done today to project a favorable image of Freemasonry?"

You can, and probably will, forget everything I have said this morning, but please, if you can, please, remember that the opportunities that lie before Masonry today almost stagger the imagination.

In a world that cries for decency and morality -There is Masonry. In a bigoted world that still separates men by their color - There is Masonry. In a society where men climb over the bodies of other men to positions of influence and prestige -There is Masonry.

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Please remember, also, that people are illogical, unreasonable and self-centered. LOVE AND TRUST THEM ANYWAY.

If you do good, people will accuse you of having selfish, ulterior motives. DO GOOD ANYWAY.

If you are successful, you win false friends and true enemies. SUCCEED ANYWAY.

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. DO GOOD ANYWAY.

The biggest men with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest men with the smallest minds. THINK BIG ANYWAY.

People really do need help, but may attack if you do help them. HELP THEM ANYWAY.

Give the world the best you have and you'll get kicked in the teeth. GIVE THE WORLD THE BEST YOU HAVE ANYWAY.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight. BUILD ANYWAY.

Editor's Note: At the conclusion of this address, Brother Eggleston ran a multimedia slide program entitled: "Masonry - A Mission with a Purpose" which had been developed by him and his wife. It proved to be interesting and instructional. He went to New York after visiting Williamsburg and Yorktown where, because of the work he had performed in Iowa for the Statue of Liberty restoration project, he and his wife were guests of the officials for the July 4th festivities.