

The Grand Master's Visit

By Worshipful Roger M. Firestone, PM

The Grand Master of Masons came to our Lodge the other night. You could tell from his bemused expression that it was a strange experience for him. Nobody addressed him as "Most Worshipful." He didn't wear a gold-trimmed apron of elaborate design, a chain of Office, or a pocket jewel with a glittering diamond.

There was no committee of distinguished Past Masters and Past District Deputy Grand Masters to present him in a dramatic, candle-lit ceremony held in an otherwise darkened Lodge room.

His wife wasn't introduced, or even invited, nor was there a ladies' program during the Lodge meeting for the Brothers; the wives stayed home for the evening.

The Master of the Lodge wasn't even there to greet him beforehand, nor was the Senior Warden; the Junior Warden was in charge of the Lodge.

Nobody received any special awards or certificates, carefully saved up for weeks, so the great man could make the presentation to the Brothers. No Brother took the man's auto to be topped off for his trip home.

There was no elaborate banquet before (or after) Lodge, complete with toasts and speeches, and tickets sold around the area, with many disappointed that they could not obtain one. Instead, the Stewards had some ice cream and cookies after the communication, and one Brother had made a pot of coffee for those who had come early.

What kind of sorry excuse for a Lodge is this, you must be asking? How could a Master plan so poorly or be so ignorant of the proper protocols and procedures for receiving

such an important guest? The Brothers of that Lodge must be embarrassed to have acquitted themselves so poorly and to have had such feckless leadership.

Nothing of the sort, I tell you! Every detail of the evening was in accord with the established customs and practices of the Craft. Not a letter or word of ritual was out of place, and all went according to the plan of the Worshipful Master, no matter how incredible that sounds.

You see, this was not the sitting Grand Master, nor a Past Grand Master, nor one of the Line Officers of the Grand Lodge acting as Grand Master or soon to be Grand Master. No, this man is the Grand Master of Masons some twenty-three years from now, and he was receiving his first degree in Masonry at our Lodge.

None of us knew, as we prepared him for his first experience in Freemasonry, that he would be Grand Master in somewhat more than two decades. Likely, he didn't know himself—in fact. He probably didn't know that there was such a thing as a Grand Master, and may not even have been clear on the idea of the Master of a Lodge.

His father was a Mason (how often we hear that!), but he never spoke much to his son about Masonry, leaving him uninformed of what Dad did those three or four nights of the month when the rest of the family ate dinner without him.

His grandfathers, too, were Masons, but our initiate was too young when they passed to the Celestial Lodge to have learned much from them about the Craft. So his initiation was an entirely strange experience, unlike anything he had encountered or heard of before.

It was a strange experience, but not an unpleasant one, because the members of the Lodge went out of their way to make the new Brother's first night as a Mason a welcoming event. Just as they have done for many another Brother and fellow before this one.

No one left him alone in the fellowship hall before or after the Degree while they talked with Brothers they already knew. No one made him feel that the ritual of the Degree was simply a long, boring ceremony to be gotten through. Rather, he was made to feel the center of the experience, and that a score of men had taken time away from their families, the work brought home from the office, the latest "reality" program on TV. The members of the Lodge gave him the impression that they were truly glad to have him become a Mason and that they expected him to be just as pleased to join them in the greatest organization in their corner of the world.

Why am I talking about this at our monthly ritual meeting? Because all of you are Masonic leaders, and all of you are likely to spend time with the candidate and the new Mason, and all of you will leave a lasting influence on him and color his view of Freemasonry.

So, ask yourself: when a candidate presents himself at Lodge for his Entered Apprentice Degree--or a sojourning Mason from some other jurisdiction who has moved to your neighborhood shows up at a stated communication and requests an examining committee--how do I treat him? Is he really a friend you haven't met yet, or are those merely words on a placard posted on the Lodge bulletin board?

Every one of those famous Masons on the lists we post around the World Wide Web was once a "nobody" being prepared by a Steward to knock at the door of the Lodge. Therefore, resolve to treat every new Mason and every new visitor as if he might be a future Lodge Secretary, if not Grand Master! Who knows but that this might be a prophecy that fulfills itself! Our actions, both for good and for ill, have consequences that we seldom foresee.