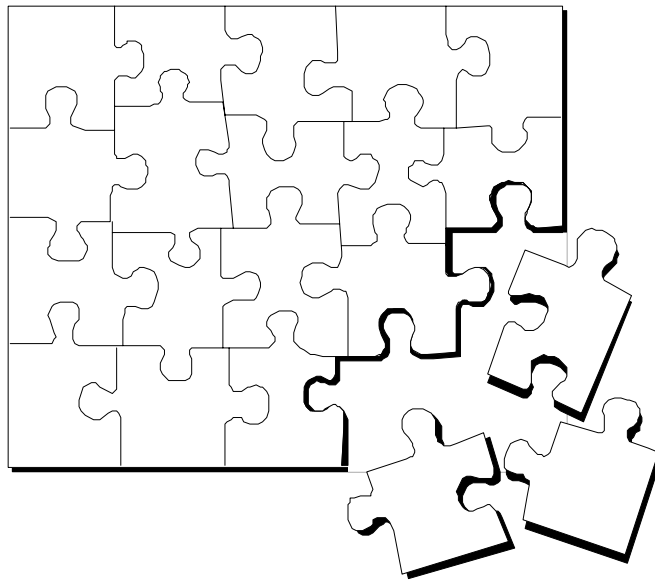


Masonic Etiquette
Protocol
and
Decorum



by
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for the
Committee on Masonic Education and Publications
2008

Foreword

Under an old system of Lodge education, candidates were carefully coached in the private work connected with the Degrees. This task was usually assigned to a dedicated Brother, who was concerned with having the candidate commit the questions and answers of the catechism to memory "letter-perfect." Sometimes he neglected to explain the meaning of the questions asked, and some coaches barely exposed the candidate to other key elements of Masonic education. In the mid-70's, the Grand Lodge of Virginia felt that, in addition to learning the catechism, the candidate needed to know more about the history, philosophy, and traditions of the Fraternity. The Mentor Program was designed to provide much of this added content.

The information associated with the precepts and principles of Masonic Etiquette, Protocol and Decorum, outlined in this paper, should prove useful to Mentors as a supplement to the Mentor's Manual.

Officers-in-training also will find these few pages useful as a periodic refresher and as: a point of departure for in-depth, small group discussions, a source from which to derive "case studies" for local practice sessions, and a reference upon which to base "new" Lodge traditions of gracious manners.

Those Lodges and districts that enjoy a good Masonic reputation usually pay particular attention to protocol, especially as outlined in the second section of this booklet.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact any member of the Committee on Masonic Education. The Division Provost, the District Educational Officer (DEO), or the Outreach Chairman of one of the local Research Lodges can be requested to make presentations, act as a seminar leader, or conduct workshops and clinics designed for your Lodge's specific training needs in this area of study.

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Table of Contents

Part	Topic Index	Page
	Foreword	1
	Table of Contents	3
	Introduction	7
 Part One - Masonic Behavior		
	Pertaining to God and Religion	9
	Pertaining to the Civil Government	9
	Pertaining to Private Qualities and Duties	9
	Pertaining to Private Behavior	10
	When in Presence of Strangers who are not Masons	10
	When a Number of Brethren meet without Strangers among them and not in a formal Lodge	10
	Behavior toward a Foreign Brother or Stranger	10
	Behavior behind a Brother’s Back	10
	Concerning Differences and Lawsuits.....	11
	Expected Behavior regarding Lodge	11
	Attendance	11
	While Lodge is Open.....	11
	After the Lodge is Closed	11
	Note Sheet	12
 Part Two - Information on Etiquette (alphabetical order)		
	Aged and Infirm.....	13
	Altar.....	13
	Anteroom.....	13

Table of Contents (Continued)

Part	Topic Index	Page
	Ballot.....	14
	Correction of Verbal Errors.....	14
	Decorum.....	15
	DDGM.....	15
	Distinguished Visitors.....	16
	Entrance During Meeting.....	16
	Etiquette Regarding Officers.....	17
	Examination of Visitors.....	17
	Jewelry (Masonic Rings and Pins).....	18
	Landmarks and Etiquette.....	19
	Letters to Grand Lodge Officers.....	20
	Non-Masons at Masonic Affairs.....	20
	Objections from the Floor.....	21
	Past Grand Titles.....	21
	Past Masters.....	22
	Practical Jokes or Off-Color Stories.....	23
	Preparation Room.....	23
	Quiet in Lodge Room.....	23
	Rebuke.....	23
	Ritual Etiquette.....	24

Table of Contents (Continued)

Part	Topic Index	Page
	Shouldering the Work	24
	Smoking in the Lodge Room.....	24
	Speaker in Lodge	25
	Stand When You Speak	25
	Titles	25
	Turn Cell Phones Off	26
	Unusual Circumstances	26
	Worshipful Master and Etiquette.....	27
	Note Sheets.....	28

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Introduction

Masonic etiquette, protocol and decorum, by definition, is not something left to an individual to decide or to carry out according to his own taste. He conforms to it because it was formally adopted as a conventional requirement for acceptable behavior whether he sees a good reason for doing so or not.

An act of Masonic etiquette is some movement, action, courteous gesture or speech performed at a given time and place, in a certain manner, and according to rules, fixed and imposed by the Fraternity itself. Since the rules are for the good of the Craft as a whole, it affects each member.

An organization such as ours adopts these rules to better enable it to carry out its good work in an atmosphere of harmony. They are not empty and meaningless, and they are not arbitrarily enacted. The rules have been tested, and they work!

Lodge officers should have a firm grasp on Masonic etiquette, protocol and decorum. This is important because inadvertent breeches of appropriate behavior can, at a minimum, cause embarrassment and, at worst, result in disharmony. By discussing the proper way to behave and by rehearsing or role-playing certain situations during an officers' meeting, Lodge officers can become knowledgeable about proper protocol and more confident of their ability to handle most situations.

If a Master is in doubt about the correct form of etiquette for some particular occasion, he has several authoritative sources of information upon which to draw.

- He should consult publications provided by the Grand Lodge;
- He may confer with more experienced members of the Lodge such as Past Masters, who usually are knowledgeable about protocol issues;
- He may consult with the Grand Provost, members of the Committee on Masonic Education, or District Educational Officers who have broad personal experience and ready access to books and articles on Masonic etiquette; and,
- On matters of ritual he should confer with the Grand Lecturer, Division Lecturer, or District Instructor of Work.

In Section One are addressed the general requirements of Masonic behavior with regard to God, Country, our Craft Lodges, and our neighbors. In Section Two is additional, more specific, information.

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PART ONE - MASONIC BEHAVIOR

Pertaining to God and Religion

The Constitutions of Masonry require us to observe the moral law. Masons do not follow in the irreligious paths of an atheist or agnostic. We firmly believe in God and worship Him as the great Architect of the Universe.

Masons are to be good men and true - men of honor, integrity, and honesty; we vigorously reject all forms of bigotry. It is our duty to follow that golden rule, of "Doing to all men as we would have all men do unto us and those we love."

Pertaining to the Civil Government

Freemasons, since time immemorial, were taught to be lawful and concerned citizens of the place where they lived or worked. Today, we are admonished to be well informed, obedient to the civil powers, and mindful of the welfare of our country and our community.

Freemasons are lovers of peaceful dignity. But, a Mason is never to shut his ear to just complaints. When a Brother, or any member of the human family, is oppressed or suffers, he is called to take appropriate action, according to his capacity.

Pertaining to Private Qualities and Duties

A Freemason should avoid intemperance or excess, which might obstruct the performance of his duties, or lead him to actions that would stain his honor and reflect dishonor on the Fraternity. He is to practice the virtues of patience and forbearance, which give him command over his actions.

What leisure his labors allow should be employed in studying the seven liberal arts and sciences in order to better perform his duties to his Creator, his country, his neighbor, and himself. It is the truly indispensable character of a Master Mason, "to walk humbly in the sight of God, to do justice, and love mercy."

Freemasons promote warmth, love and service. It is mandatory to learn to abstain from malice, slander, evil-speaking, backbiting, and unmannerly, scornful, provoking, reproachful and ungodly language.

Pertaining to Private Behavior

1. When in presence of Strangers who are not Masons.

Masons ought to be moral men. They should be good sons, good husbands, good fathers, and good neighbors, who avoid activities injurious to themselves, their families, neighbors, or the Lodge. Moreover, they are to deal fairly and treat everyone with respect

When in the company of non-Masons, you must be cautious in your words, carriage, and motions; so that even the most penetrating stranger shall not be able to discover what is not proper. Avoid impertinent, ensnaring questions of those who seek to pry into our secrets and mysteries. Prudently steer the discussion to another subject, as your discretion and duty shall direct.

2. When a number of Brethren meet without Strangers among them and not in a formal Lodge.

In such a case, you are to greet one another in a friendly, courteous manner, calling each other Brother, and freely communicating knowledge, but without disclosing Masonic secrets except to those who are personally known by strict trial, due examination, or legal Masonic information, entitled to the same.

3. Behavior towards a Foreign Brother or Stranger.

You are cautiously to probe a stranger or foreign Brother, as prudence and the rules of the Craft direct. If you discover any one to be a pretender, you are to take care to give him no hints. But, those who are found to be true and faithful, you are to respect as Brothers. If they are found to be in want, help them to your ability. Employ them, if you can or recommend them for employment. When necessary, direct them to the Grand Secretary's office to find relief.

4. Behavior behind a Brother's back, as well as to his face.

Free and Accepted Masons have ever been charged to avoid all manner of slander and backbiting. They do not talk disrespectfully of a Brother or his performance. Nor do they allow others to gossip or to injure his character behind his back. But, they shall defend him, and give him notice of any danger or threatened injury.

5. Concerning Differences and Lawsuits, if any should unhappily arise among Brethren.

If the matter wholly concerns Masonry, lawsuits are to be entirely avoided. Your Brethren, in this instance, are always the best referees to assist in reconciliation of such differences.

If a Brother injures you, or if you have any difference with him about any worldly or temporal business or interest, first apply to your own (or his) Lodge to have the matter in dispute reconciled by the Brethren. If either party is not satisfied with the determination of the Lodge, an appeal may be carried to the Grand Lodge.

Please refrain from entering into a lawsuit, except as a very last resort. And, even then, you must follow the general rules of brotherhood, avoiding all wrath, malice, rancor and personal ill will in carrying on a suit with a Brother. Take care not to say or do anything to hinder the continuance or renewal of brotherly love and friendship, which are the cement of our Fraternity.

Expected Behavior of Masons with Regard to Lodge

1. Attendance.

Every Brother should belong to some Regular Lodge. He should endeavor to attend all stated or emergent meetings, and he should always appear on time, properly clothed, subjecting himself to all its by-laws and general regulations.

2. While Lodge is Open.

While the Lodge is open, Masons must hold no private conversation without permission of the Master; nor talk of anything foreign or disrespectful of the work being done; nor interrupt the Master or Wardens, or any other Brother addressing himself to the Chair. No private piques or quarrels or discussions about sectarian religious matters, or politics must ever be brought within the doors of the Lodge, when open.

3. After the Lodge is closed and before departing for home.

When the Lodge is closed, and the labors of the day finished, there should be time for fellowship with the Brethren, but no Brother is to be hindered from going home when he pleases. Masons should avoid all excess in both eating and drinking.

PART TWO - Information on Etiquette (Alphabetical Order)

Aged and Infirm

If a member is infirm, he should be assisted to enter the Lodge and to salute on the arm of the Junior Deacon. If he requires it, a special chair or seat should be provided for him.

However, it is not fitting or proper to attract undue attention to his infirmity.

If an older member cannot attend Lodge, some mention of him should occasionally be made at a communication, and the Master should see to it that he is visited and otherwise reminded that he is present in the minds of his Brethren. A visitor should occasionally come to him as a Lodge emissary, speaking officially in its behalf, not as a private friend only, and for that reason should act as he would act in Lodge, and in Masonic decorum.

Altar

In American jurisdictions, the altar stands at the center of the Lodge room. It is a place of prayer and meditation, a pedestal that the Great Lights rest upon. The three Lesser Lights stand beside it; the Obligations are taken in its presence; the Worshipful Master greets candidates across it; and it is, in addition, a symbol and emblem of religion.

Members and visitors stand before it to salute the East when entering or leaving the Lodge. Masons, when near it, stand with dignity and act with reverence. It should not be draped or covered with flags, bunting, banners, or draperies of any kind, which carry the insignia of any association other than the Lodge or Grand Lodge.

It should be kept clean, its paint or varnish not marred, cracked or scratched. The top and kneeling pad, if upholstered, should never be allowed to become ragged, run-down or shabby. The ground between it and the East is a sacred precinct, which is not crossed by officers or members during Lodge communications, except as required during certain ceremonies.

Anteroom

The anteroom is not a separate place, but a part of the Lodge room. The decorum and etiquette of the Lodge room governs it too.

Since the Tiler is in charge of the anteroom, he is responsible to the Master to see that etiquette is observed. It should not be used as a storeroom, but be clean and neat, with no litter lying about, the furniture in place, aprons correctly placed and stored. Loud talking, joking, noise and needless moving about are considered inappropriate.

The Tiler should introduce himself to a visiting Brother the moment he enters the Anteroom, and should see to it that he has a seat, if he must wait before entering the Lodge or while waiting for the examining committee. The door to the Lodge room, while guarded by the Tiler, is opened by the Junior Deacon. The Tiler should never open or talk through the door, but first knock and then wait for the Junior Deacon to respond.

When a member enters Lodge through the Anteroom after the Lodge is open, he is to observe a Ceremony of Entrance, and the Tiler, according to a fixed process, initiates this ceremony.

Ballot

The ballot is secret, sacred, and inviolate. It has legal status and must be conducted according to established rules. It is etiquette for the Lodge room to be in complete silence, without whispering or discussion of the candidate, while waiting to cast your Ballot. This decorum continues through the declaration of the results by the Master, and the return of the participating officers to their places.

Every member of the Lodge, who is present, is obligated to ballot and should take this responsibility seriously because the ballot is of great significance to a candidate and to the Lodge. It is not proper for anyone to ask how a member has voted.

Correction of Verbal Errors

Grand Lodge custom requires that no one except for the Worshipful Master or his prearranged designee, may correct any mistake that may occur during the course of a ceremony, and even he does so only when the error is a serious one.

It is discourteous to point out others' mistakes in front of the Lodge members. If you are in possession of a mind, which allows you to be able to perform each and every degree and ceremony perfectly, please advise the Worshipful Master of such that he may take advantage of your services to mentor others.

Decorum

It is difficult to establish a hard and fast line between etiquette and decorum. Both deal with propriety and good behavior. However, there is a sharp contrast between the two.

When we speak of etiquette, we are talking about established rules of manners and behavior at certain times and places. When we talk about Masonic etiquette, we are talking about rules established by the Craft that we must learn and follow.

The principle of decorum stands at the opposite pole, for it includes good manners and irreproachable behavior required by a man's own sense of dignity and good taste. Thus, within the bounds of good manners, each man must fashion his own sense of decorum.

There are points at which the two converge, such as when the Master must act to restore order and dignified behavior. He should reprove all disturbances quietly, promptly, without personal feeling, and attracting as little attention to the matter as possible. A glance of the eye or a soft tap of the gavel's handle is most often sufficient for the purpose.

District Deputy Grand Master

A District Deputy on an official visit is received in a manner that reflects the fact that he is the personal representative of the Grand Master. When he is present in the Lodge room, it is as if the Grand Master was there in person.

When he enters the anteroom, he announces his presence to the Tiler. The DDGM is not required to announce a visit in advance, but it is considered good form to do so. A committee is formed to escort him into the Lodge. He is presented at the altar and conducted to the East; Grand Honors are rendered; after which he receives the gavel. The Lodge is symbolically in his charge, until he returns the gavel and directs the Master to continue with his work.

He is never permitted to seat himself on the sidelines, unless it is at his own (specific) request.

- a. A Master cannot fail in his practice of protocol, if at all times he extends to the District Deputy the ceremonial forms that are established as proper and correct in his official dealings with the Grand Master.
- b. Proper deference to the DDGM includes allowing him the privilege of "final comment." No one should rise to speak on any issue after

the DDGM has completed his prepared remarks, so the Worshipful Master should encourage the Brethren to make announcements before the DDGM speaks.

Distinguished Visitors

If a visiting Brother arrives who, because of his title or standing in the Craft or some similar reason, is one who the Master desires to introduce to the Lodge, he may follow any of the following procedures.

- a. Have him presented west of the altar by a committee of his peers; ceremoniously conducted to the East and saluted. You may request that he be seated in the East.
- b. Instruct the Senior Deacon to conduct the visitor to the altar and introduce him there (if he isn't a Past Master); after which, he may be conducted to the East or back to his seat.
- c. Ask him to rise at his seat and introduce him to the Craft there, if he feels more comfortable that way.

Please remember that the Master must stand and remain standing until the completion of this ceremony if the Brother is a Past Master or holds title or office in any Grand Lodge.

In the original Mentor's Manual, Most Worshipful Archer Bailey Gay wrote that it is not proper to call upon the Senior Deacon to present guests who are Masters or Past Masters. Some have confused one of the duties assigned to the Senior Deacon as being connected with the introduction of distinguished guests. In fact, it should be a committee, not the Senior Deacon, who presents distinguished guests.

Entrance during Meetings

Except with the permission of the Worshipful Master, no member of the Lodge or visiting Brother should enter from the preparation room. When entering from the anteroom after Lodge is open, he waits until signaled by the Tiler, steps through the door and advances to the altar in due form; the Worshipful Master acknowledges the salute either sitting or standing. It is a ceremonious action on the part of both the Lodge and the Brother, and protocol requires that it be correctly performed. If a Brother ignores the formality, or is unfamiliar with it,

the Senior Warden may whisper instructions about the proper procedure to follow.

Etiquette Regarding Officers

An office has a station or place of its own in the Lodge, with duties, responsibilities, and dignities inherent in it. The etiquette and protocol accorded to an officer represent the properties of the office, and is not directed to the officer personally.

A sloppy, lack luster manner of saluting, of approaching the East (or any other station), of standing, and of speaking to an officer, is a reflection on the Lodge for a failure to give to the office the respect, which it is due. The Master should expect of every member, and of every other officer, a faithful rendering of the form of etiquette that is to be accorded to his own office, as it will create a more faithful observance of the form at every other station or place.

Examination of Visitors

The substance of an examination is fixed by the Constitutions of Masonry and our Methodical Digest. The manner in which it is to be conducted is the focus of both etiquette and protocol.

The Examining Committee withdraws with the visitor to a private place. They are in an official relationship with him, and therefore, their manners are formal.

Committeemen must keep in mind that their purpose is to satisfy themselves that the visitor is, or is not, a Master Mason from a jurisdiction with whom we are in amity. They are NOT called upon to test his proficiency in the ritual or to be heavy-handed or personally inquisitive.

If the Examining Committee has the right to satisfy itself that a visitor is a Master Mason in good standing in a Regular Lodge, the visitor also has a right to make sure that the Lodge he comes to visit is itself a Regular Lodge. He may therefore, ask to see its Charter. But, what if the Lodge is already in session and the charter is hanging on the wall over the Secretary's desk?

It is etiquette to grant his request to see the Charter; on the other hand it is etiquette that we not disturb the Lodge by going to fetch it. Thus, in such a situation the etiquette of the Lodge would take precedence and the visitor should be told in a friendly manner, that if he wishes to examine the Charter, he must come at another time, and before Lodge is opened.

If the visitor satisfies the committee, and if the visitor himself is satisfied, the visitor still possesses no right to enter until after the Worshipful Master has consented. They conduct the visitor to the anteroom and introduce him to the Tiler, who after receiving specific permission from the Master, ceremoniously hands him over to the Junior Deacon.

Visiting is a privilege, not a right (to seek to visit a Lodge is every Master Mason's right) and a Master may for good reason, refuse admittance to any visitor (except the DDGM and Grand Lodge Officers). If the Master does refuse, decorum requires that he calls the Senior Deacon to his side and privately instruct him to go to the anteroom to instruct the Tiler not to admit the visitor. A visitor may be refused admittance for reasons that do not reflect on him personally. Such an occasion might be when a particularly sensitive piece of Lodge business is about to be conducted or if a reprimand is to be administered.

Jewelry (Masonic Rings and Pins)

There is no hard-fast rule with regard to wearing Masonic rings or other jewelry. This subject is one which Grand Lodges have made no regulation, and popular opinion is divided.

When the Square and Compasses is displayed on a building, pennant, button, or watch charm, universal custom requires the points of the compasses point downward. When displayed on the altar, they point away from the Master.

Some say, that as the wearer of a pocket watch views it, the points are down and away from his eyes. In a similar way, he should view the emblem on his ring with the points down, away from his eyes.

Others say the square is the symbol of earthly and the compasses of heavenly perfection. As a combined emblem the ends of the square point up as a symbol of man's aspirations towards God; the points of the compasses represent heavenly qualities coming from the Supreme Architect as viewed by the eyes of the wearer.

I maintain that a ring is usually a gift from a loved one, and has sentimental value for the wearer. It doesn't matter whether the points go up or down!! In truth, I believe there is no right or wrong way, so long as he wears the attractive token with singular pleasure to himself and great honor to the Fraternity.

In this matter, I feel that we should probably take a page out of the Boy Scout's manual. A young Scout employs his ring as a constant reminder that he's under

an obligation to do good turns. The ring starts out in the morning, on his finger, one way and is physically removed and flipped over when he completes his daily good-turn mission.

Landmarks and Etiquette

The Grand Lodge of Virginia has not adopted and published any single list or set of enumerated rules, such as Anderson's 25, that are labeled Landmarks. To me however, a Landmark is some principle, rule, or usage that belongs to Freemasonry and is such that if it were to cease, Freemasonry as we know it would cease with it. Therefore, the phrase "Observe the Ancient Landmarks" is, to me, another way of saying, "Do not act in such a way as to destroy Freemasonry." Our identifying principles are clearly delineated. They are found in our Book of Constitutions adopted by Grand Lodge in the year 1791.

These Landmarks have a place in our history. They focus on fundamental, ageless practices of ethical and moral behavior. There are some that say that Masonic etiquette, as a whole, is a basic principle and itself can be considered a Landmark, for if Masonic etiquette were eliminated, Freemasonry as we know it would cease to exist.

Along that line, to illustrate the importance of Landmarks to the Masonic community -- each year the *Commission on Information for Recognition of the Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in North America* receives requests from various "new" Grand Lodges seeking recognition. They diligently study available authoritative information and apply rigid, time-tested standards to evaluate the regularity of that Grand Lodge. Please note; the Commission is a source of and only provides reliable compiled data. It neither advises nor recommends that recognition be given or denied to any Grand Lodge, but carefully indicates whether or not it considers that the Grand Lodge in question satisfies all of the basic conditions of regularity. One of the key essential standards for recognition is:

Adherence to the Ancient Landmarks - specifically, a Belief in God, the Volume of Sacred Law as an indispensable part of the Furniture of the Lodge, and the prohibition of the discussion of politics and religion.

Letters to Grand Lodge Officers

Protocol dictates that any correspondence intended for the Grand Master, District Deputy Grand Master, Grand Secretary, other Grand Lodge Officers, or members of Grand Lodge Committees in their official capacities which call for an

official reply, should be addressed in full and correct form. Even if a Grand Lodge Officer or Committeeman may be an intimate friend, this rule is binding. Since the letter calls for official action, it may be referred to other Grand Lodge Officers, will go into an official file, and may even appear afterwards in printed records, in which even personal familiarity is out of place.

It is also a courtesy to a Grand Lodge Officer to include in the letter the writer's Lodge (its name and number), address, and also its district.

Since there are many Lodges in our Jurisdiction, no Grand Lodge Officer can be expected to carry each and every one in his memory. The letter should state the writer's own position in the Lodge, whether as a member, officer, past officer, or committeeman. To include such data in the correspondence, may save the recipient the time and trouble to look it up. Also, (and sometimes this point is important), it makes a prompt reply to your inquiry possible.

In some instances, a letter addressed to the Grand Master or Grand Secretary may contain subject matter that will affect another Grand Lodge Officer or will be of special interest to him. In that event, a photocopy may be mailed to the latter.

When this is done, the correct form is to indicate at the bottom of the letter that a copy of the letter has been sent to the other individual, i.e. "cc: so-and-so." If a member of a Lodge writes a letter in which the matter should, in courtesy, to be known by the Worshipful Master, a copy is mailed to him and the fact is noted in a similar manner as described above on the original letter.

Non-Masons at Masonic Affairs

On Masonic occasions where non-Masons are invited, there are three rules of etiquette and protocol to be applied:

- a. Non-Masons are not asked or expected to participate in any ceremonies or formalities, which are Masonic.
- b. The non-Masons are present as guests; the Masons are the hosts; the guest-host relationship is therefore observed.
- c. There are some usages of etiquette, which belong to esoteric Masonry and are never employed when non-Masons are present.

Other usages are not esoteric and such of these may be employed as are appropriate, at the discretion of the Worshipful Master. Order-of-precedence protocols observed during Masonic processions, for example, are non-esoteric and may be used when non-Masons are present and at Masonic banquets when ladies are guests.

Objections from the Floor

If a Lodge member believes that he has good cause to object to something that is occurring, or believes that something said or done wrongs himself or another, or questions the appropriateness or legality of something said or done; there is a specific way that rules of Masonic etiquette and the practice of decorum would have him act:

- a. He rises, salutes the Master, and patiently waits until the Master recognizes him.
- b. He states his objection, criticism, etc., in as few words as possible.
- c. He salutes smartly and is seated.
- d. The Master makes a reply or takes action.
- e. The proceedings are resumed.

In any event it is not for the member himself to decide or to take action, for that responsibility belongs to the Master. He merely states his objection and does not elaborate or discuss it, unless requested to do so by the Master. The member himself is finished with the episode when he has spoken and re-seated.

It is essential to exhibit a gentlemanly behavior at all times, especially during Lodge activities. If you disagree with the Master's decision, you may appeal the action by elevating it, in writing, through the DDGM to the Grand Master.

Past Grand Titles

In American Grand Jurisdictions, there are one or two common variants of the uses of each Masonic title; the correct form for a particular Grand Jurisdiction can be found in its Proceedings, usually under the heading "Roster of Officers."

In the majority of Grand Jurisdictions, the titles run as follows:

- a. The Grand Master has the title of "Most Worshipful." This is written or printed in full, or may be abbreviated in the form "MW." A Grand Master is not usually addressed "Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the State of A-B-C;" but as "Grand Master of Masons IN the State of A-B-C."
- b. A Past Grand Master has the same title. Care should be given to the form used during introductions. He can be introduced as Past Grand Master of Masons in Virginia. But, if there are other Past Grand Masters present, he should be addressed as "Most Worshipful (full name), Grand Master of Masons in the year xxxx." Don't fall into the trap of saying, MW (full name) Past Grand Master in the year xxxx." Why? Because that was the year he was our Grand Master. He didn't earn the status of Past Grand Master until his successor was elected and installed!
- c. The same general principles apply, when referring to or addressing our appointed District Deputy Grand Masters.
- d. Every Mason carries the title "Brother." This title is employed in Lodge whenever a Mason is addressed or reference is made to him. It is considered a **major** breach of good manners and propriety to address or refer to him as "Mr. Smith," or simply as "Smith."

Past Masters

In many societies, an office holder reverts to the same status at the end of his tenure, which belonged to him before. The rule in Masonry is different. A Lodge member who has held the highest office in the Lodge has for life a Masonic position of his own. It has its own identity and recognition and carries with it the title of "Past Master."

Past Masters have standing in Masonic law; certain duties may be assigned to them. In etiquette, they are entitled to a deference that belongs to their position; in protocol, they are entitled to a certain order of precedence.

Similarly, a Past Master is bound by the same rules of etiquette that are observed toward the Worshipful Master by all other members of the Lodge.

Practical Jokes or Off-Color Stories

The great lessons of Masonry, which are the focus of our ritual, should never be demeaned by levity or pranks. The Lodge room is not a proper location for making practical jokes, horseplay, or the telling of off-color stories.

Preparation Room

The preparation room is a sanctuary for the candidate and the officers preparing him. It is necessary that the door to it be closed-in and that its privacy is strictly preserved.

It is a breach of good manners for the candidate to be made the subject of unkind remarks. The officers preparing him must act with dignity and are not expected to discuss with him anything in the Degree he is being prepared for apart from what is in the Grand Lodge publication: "Questions and Answers for the Postulant."

It also is appropriate to review any Degrees that he has already taken and coach him to respond to questions in the same form and tense that they are asked. For example; "Is it, etc.?" Answer "It is."; "Do you, etc.?" Answer "I do," Instead of "yes, sir" and "no, sir" which in Lodge sounds unsuitable.

Quiet in Lodge

When, during its proceedings, a Lodge is unnecessarily disturbed by any officers or members who are conversing, rattling papers, etc., the Master should give a light tap of his gavel and ask for quiet.

If the proceedings are brought to a standstill, until something necessary to the proceedings has been done, and the Master anticipates that the wait will last for some modest extended period of time, he may tap his gavel and say, "Be at your ease." In that event, and no other case, is it permissible to rove about the Lodge, informally visit with the Brethren, and have private conversations in a low tone of voice.

Rebuke

If it becomes necessary for a Master to reprimand a member who has been unruly, he may do so after Lodge is closed, in person, and in private. If it is required that a rebuke be administered while the Lodge is in session, the method to be used is at the Master's discretion but, the etiquette required of him is that he shall deliver it in a friendly, even-handed manner. Decorum dictates that it shall

be dispensed in a way that will not attract undue attention to the matter or create an additional disturbance.

Ritual Etiquette

The etiquette governing the conferral of Degrees is strict. There shall be no talking or whispering, or laughing, or disturbances during the Degree work. It is not an occasion for mirth. There should be no needless moving about. The officers participating shall never step out of their roles/parts, to hold side discussion, private conversations, to make comments, to indulge in pantomime, or to make remarks about the candidate.

There is general agreement not to improvise while a Degree is in progress. Nothing outside the Standard Work taught by the Grand Lodge Committee on Work shall be substituted.

If costumes are worn, they must be correct and appropriate. Detailed arrangements are always completed before the Degrees begin.

Shouldering the Work

It is a breach of etiquette to ignore a request made in the name of the Lodge. If you are assigned a piece of work, such as to be a conductor during a Degree, or to learn a short part, or participate as a member of an Examination Committee or Investigation Committee, as determined by the Lodge's needs, it is discourteous to refuse, except in the case of physical disability.

It is a singular honor to be requested to take part in any Lodge work. To refuse is to be viewed as a weak link in a strong chain. It is saying that you simply want to sit and enjoy the entertainment, the camaraderie and the food, without shouldering the necessary work that must be done for the benefit of all.

Smoking in the Lodge Room

There is no smoking in the Lodge room during Degree work and other ceremonies.

While there are Lodges who allow smoking during the business meeting (you must be guided by the customs of the Lodge), the ceremonies you take part in and watch are solemn occasions. In most Lodge rooms, it is considered poor taste and VERY disrespectful to smoke while the ceremonies are taking place.

Smoking may take place in other parts of your building or outside and during refreshment.

Speaker in the Lodge

If a speaker travels a long distance at the request of the Lodge, the Master should ensure that he is met at the airport, train or bus or at some specified time and place. If he comes in his own car, the Master should also ensure that he is given directions, is helped to park, and conducted to the Lodge. Someone should be assigned to see that he is comfortably seated in the Lodge.

The Master should introduce him, and such information shall be given about him as will make the Lodge feel acquainted with him before he begins his address. The Master, or some officer designated by him, should remain at his side after Lodge is closed. He should be escorted to his hotel, train or to his car, if he came that way.

If he has training aids or other baggage, he should be given assistance transporting them. At that or a subsequent meeting, the Lodge should adopt a suitable resolution of thanks, a copy of which should be mailed to him by the Secretary.

Stand When You Speak

No one should sit while addressing the Master in Lodge. As a matter of respect, to the office of Worshipful Master, and as a courtesy to the Brethren, you should stand straight and tall, without slouching, so all may see who is speaking.

Titles

A Master's title of "Worshipful Master" in his own Lodge or in any other Lodge or Jurisdiction is an official title, and wherever he goes is entitled to recognition as being an official one. If his own Grand Lodge is in Annual Communication, his title gains him an unchallenged admittance to the floor; if he visits another Lodge, he receives deference due his rank.

If a Master is a member of a body in another Rite (the Royal Arch, Consistory, etc.), his title hasn't any legal lineal precedence (no such body has an Office of Worshipful Master) but should be extended as protocol dictates (i.e., the ceremonial forms and courtesies that are established as proper and correct in official dealings). The converse is also true when the Presiding Officer of a body in another Rite visits a Craft Lodge or when he sits in it as a member. Although

his title has no official standing, the application of Masonic protocol requires his title to be used, as a practice of good manners, when introductions are made.

Turn Cell Phones Off

All cell phones should be turned off or placed into a vibration-mode before entering the Lodge room, so as not to disrupt the proceedings.

Unusual Lodge Circumstances

An unprecedented situation may suddenly arise in any Lodge. The Master may be caught unprepared by a condition that he and the Lodge had not encountered before, and not know of any pre-set rule to go by. In most instances etiquette is not involved; in other instances, etiquette is the substance of the matter.

Let's suppose that you have a visitor from another Grand Jurisdiction, where Lodge customs differ radically from our own, and the visitor does something or says something unexpected.

In that event, the Master does not first address himself to the visitor but to his members. He explains to them that the visitor is acting according to the rules or customs in fashion in his home Jurisdiction. By indirection, he makes it clear to the visitor in what way he has acted uncommonly in this Lodge.

Important Note:

*IF THE VISITOR IS NOT AT FAULT,
WE SHOULD NOT EMBARRASS HIM*

*IT IS THE AIM OF ETIQUETTE
NOT TO EMBARRASS HIM!*

Once in a great while a particularly sensitive, unprecedented condition may arise. In these cases, there is a broad general principle for the Master to apply. He stops the proceedings where they are and addresses himself to the Lodge. He may:

- a. Ask them to be at ease for a short time, and take the needed opportunity to quietly reflect on the situation;
- b. Call an officer/member to his side for private consultation;
- c. Call off, if more time is needed; or,

- d. If appropriate, assign the problem to a committee for research and concrete recommendations.

Only after he has sorted through all the facts, explored the possible solutions, and weighed them carefully to determine their long-term consequences, should he make and announce his decision.

Worshipful Master and Etiquette

The Worshipful Master is the officer whose first duty it is to see that nothing is ever allowed to harm the Lodge that is entrusted to his care. For that reason, he cannot tolerate a careless practice of etiquette. If, upon coming to the East, a Master finds that indifference to, or a casual practice of etiquette has crept into the Lodge, he should find an early opportunity to address the subject with the officers and members.

The Worshipful Master has the authority to rule any Brother out-of-order on any subject at any time. He decides what can and cannot be discussed. Should a Brother believe that the Master is arbitrary, unjust or unfair or is acting in an illegal manner, he can appeal to the District Deputy Grand Master. If the DDGM agrees that the appeal is a valid one, he will forward the complaint to the Grand Master. If, however, that Brother insists on continuing to speak after the Master has ruled that he is out of order, he may be committing a Masonic offense.

Finally

What is the place of Masonic etiquette in the Craft? It has no "SPECIAL" place! It has every special place! It is ALWAYS observed whenever or wherever Masons assemble, or speak, or act in the name of the Craft! For that reason, it is described as "Masonic." If it belonged to the Ritual of the Degrees a Master might conceive it to lie outside the span of his responsibility.

The Grand Lecturer and the Committee on Work may critique, consult, confer, and advise concerning a Lodge's practice of etiquette, but they cannot act officially FOR the Lodge. The Worshipful Master has full responsibility for etiquette, as he has total responsibility for all things in the Lodge. Like all leaders, the Worshipful Master may delegate certain authority, but the responsibility resides with him alone. Our Brother, President Harry S Truman, said it best, "The buck stops here!"

The Worshipful Master is Master of the Lodge's etiquette in the same sense and for the same reasons that he is Master of the Lodge. It is as much his duty to

