

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH  
650 Fisgard Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1R6  
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**SOME THOUGHTS ON THE CUSTOMARY GRAND MASTERS ITINERARY**

by

M.W. Bro. D.J. MacLaurin P.G.M. G.R.B.C.

In this paper the phrase "The Grand Master's Itinerary" means that part of the activities of a Grand Master given to attendance at Lodge communications, and other functions and events in his capacity as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia.

Each year the Grand Master- elect plans an Itinerary for "his year". Its form and content have been developed through precedent and past experience. Participation in the customary matrix of events which comprise the itinerary has become a very major part of a Grand Master's itinerary. I join with my many predecessors in affirming the very real pleasure that comes from having such experiences.

Over the years there has evolved and been established, largely from the cumulated ideas and contributions of many Grand Masters, the presently accepted practise - and perhaps firm expectation - that this Itinerary will include:

1. Attendance at one or more meetings in each District where at the Masters and Brethren of Lodges in the District greet and meet the Grand Master (The form of these meetings appears to be fixed by Section 181A (1977) of our Constitutions, comment on which will be made later in this paper);
2. Attendance by 'tradition' at various annual Special events such as the Reunion at Caribou Lodge in Barkerville during the first weekend in August, Burns Nights at Landmark and other Lodges, International Night at LaFayette Lodge in Seattle, the Installation Ceremony at Victoria-Columbia Lodge, Empire Night at Empire Lodge and several other annual events;
3. Attendance at the Banff and the All Canada Annual Conferences, and at the Annual Communication of selected Grand Lodges;
4. The Itinerary also necessarily includes presiding at the Annual Communication of Grand Lodge and at all Emergent Communications of Grand Lodge called to perform the various ceremonies detailed in our Forms and Ceremonies should occasion arise;
5. Attendance, time permitting, at various special non-recurring events such as "Honour Nights", anniversaries, workshops, Church Services, Lodges of Education and Research, and even the Grand Master's own Lodge.

The number and geographical distribution of these many events which now form the expected Itinerary has gradually increased to a present level of between seventy-five and one hundred meetings in a year.

To the preceding summary must also be added attendance at the Grand Lodge Officers for Committee and Board Meetings and for touching bases with the Grand Secretary. Also to be included is attendance at meetings and events held by related organizations.

Thus it seems reasonable to conclude that arranging and carrying out the currently accepted Grand Master's Itinerary requires considerable time and effort on the part of many Brethren, including the Grand Master. On the average, at least, two to three engagements per week, excluding July and August,

with related traveling time is about the size of it.

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The purpose of this paper is to make some observations and generate wide discussion on the present form of this Itinerary. Also to offer some recommendations relative to the Itinerary, aimed at benefiting the whole Craft in this Grand Jurisdiction. All of which are the personal views of the author and are based on his actual experience, supplemented by gleanings from many volumes of our Proceedings and the helpful input from many dedicated Brethren with whom these matters have been discussed.

#### OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. At the outset it may be well to recognize that all aspects of the Itinerary - its development, its implementation, its funding and the final written report on it - appear to rest entirely on unwritten precedent and the personal choices of the Grand Master. However, here and there throughout our written Law are passages which appear to be aware of the existence of an Itinerary. This seems to be a happy blend of flexibility and established custom which works well. The process should not be frozen by the hobbles of written law. In light of the overall non-legalism of the Itinerary, it appears somewhat contradictory to find the quite precise limitations apparently imposed on it in certain instances by Section 181A (1977) of the Constitutions. While it does seem proper to assign, in a general way, to a District Deputy, the duty under certain guidelines, of arranging such meetings as the Grand Master may wish to hold within a given District, it does not seem proper to eliminate the freedom of the Grand Master to say how a meeting he wishes to hold is to proceed. Accordingly, I offer:

#### Recommendation A

That appropriate action be taken to delete Section 181A from our Constitutions, and instead there be added to Section 74, as a duty of DDGM's, a further subsection as follows: "To arrange such meetings of two or more of the constituent Lodges in his District, as the Grand Master may direct, at a Communication of one of them hereinafter called the Host Lodge. Unless otherwise directed by the Grand Master, the following provisions shall apply to these meetings:

(A) The communication of the host lodge shall be convened and opened as a regular or emergent communication thereof in accordance with its by-laws and these constitutions.

(B) The other lodges asked to attend need not convene a regular or emergent communication or open lodge, but the officers and members will be notified to attend at the time and place appointed for the communication of the host lodge in accordance with Section 180 of these constitutions.

(C) The expenses incurred by the host lodge in respect of the meeting as approved in advance thereof by the Junior Wardens of the other lodges, shall be shared among all the lodges asked to attend, including the host lodge, in proportion to their membership.

(D) The Grand Master shall be received as established in our Forms and Ceremonies.

2. The present customary Itinerary has some perceived shortcomings. It is so demanding of a Grand Master's time and energy that this high office tends to be

restricted to either retired older men or to men who, because of their private circumstances or professions, can assume these duties. For example, it would have been impossible for me to assume the Office of Grand Master during my working years. Thus, we tend to ensure that younger men, in their forties or fifties, are unlikely to come forward as candidates

In no way should this observation be construed as an adverse reflection on Grand Masters, past or present. I suspect, however, that it would be of profit to the Craft to widen the field and lower the age from which candidates for the highest office could come forward. Consider too the benefits which could accrue from a larger body of unexpired Past Grand Masters.

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Another shortcoming is related to the non-involvement, officially, of those who are moving through the several chairs toward the Grand East. Our present system provides little, if any, training experience through formal participation to those Brethren. During my three year program, prior to becoming Grand Master, of visiting every Lodge in British Columbia, I was told many times how much these visits were appreciated and enjoyed. Behind such kindly flattery I'm certain there was being conveyed the message that there is an unfilled opportunity, particularly in the Lodges further removed from the Lower Mainland, of direct one-on-one contact between the brethren of such Lodges and the elected Grand Officers in line for the highest office. There is mutual satisfaction and enjoyment in such meetings. Often I was told such as "We've never had a Grand Warden visit this Lodge in all my fifty odd years here. Your visit sure helped our Lodge."

The heavy demands presently placed on the Grand Master, and the perceived adverse side effects, together with the apparent joy with which visitations by other elected Grand Officers are welcomed, seem to point to a possible mutually beneficial action. This is to devise a program of visitations under which the present Itinerary is shared between the Grand Master, the Deputy Grand Master and the Grand Wardens.

One possible such program of shared visitations is shown in the table sheet titled "Proposed Visitation Schedule", attached to this paper. Let us examine that program. The basic concept is that the Grand Master would visit about half the Districts in all geographical areas of British Columbia in a given year. In that same year, a Lodge in each of the Districts not visited by the Grand Master would be visited by either the Deputy Grand Master or one of the Grand Wardens. Obviously, such a program would reduce the demands on the Grand Master and officially involve the other officers all the way along in their progress to the Grand East. It is interesting to note that for many years in the early part of this century our Deputy Grand Master did have a formal share in the Itinerary and did report in writing to the Grand Lodge on his activities in that connection. Undoubtedly such a shared program would suggest some reallocation of the monies now allotted the Grand Master toward the costs of the Itinerary. Based on the foregoing observation and suggestions, I now offer:

#### Recommendation B

That steps be taken to have the concept of a shared Grand Lodge Officers' Itinerary be formally considered by every Lodge in this Jurisdiction, using the program herein suggested as an example, and that each Lodge report the results of their considerations, as directed, all with a view to establishing any revision of our present practise as the Brethren may indicate would bring profit and pleasure to our craft.

As a final consideration, it might be a happy furtherance of the chief point of Freemasonry if meetings arranged for the Itinerary were scheduled to begin on a Saturday afternoon with a Communication or a Workshop for Moral Instruction followed by a gala banquet and evening with the ladies and other friends at which we would be happy ourselves and communicate that happiness to others.

PROPOSED VISITATION SCHEDULE

VANCOUVER	AREA	YUKON	CENTRAL	FRASER	GREATER	OKANAGAN
KOOTENAY	ISLAND		-PEACE	TERRITORY	VALLEY	VANCOUVER
B	GROUP	A	B	A	B	A
B	A	B	A	B	B	A
	DISTRICTS	3	4	25	18	2
14	7	9		1	21	11
11			19	12		
13	16	9	8		5	27
15	20				10	22
17	24					
23	26					
.						
NUMBER OF VISITS						
G.M. Visits Districts Others visit Lodges						
.						
.						
	G.M.					
2A	Given year	2A		1A		5A
.		3A			1A	
5B	Next year		2B		1B	
1B		3B			2B	
.						
	DGM					
	Given year			1B		2B

1B					
.	Next year			1A	
2A				1A	
.					
	SGW				
	Given year	1B			2B
1B		1B			
.	Next year		1A		
2A		1A		1A	
.					
	JGW				
	Given year	1B			1B
1B		1B			
.	Next year		1A		
1A		1A		1A	
.					

In a given year the GM visits all group "A" Districts and the DGM, SGW and JGW visit 4,5 and 4 Lodges (on a rotation basis) respectively in the Group "B" Districts. The following year the GM visits all "B" Districts and the other Officers visit Lodges in "A" District.

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