

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
650 Fisgard Street, Victoria, B.C. V8W 1R6
1997-5

At our regular meeting of November 18, 1997, W. Bro. G. Sinclair P.M., St. Andrews Lodge No. 49 B.C.R. gave a presentation titled "Masons in a Day" in which he related having been informed of an interesting account of a ceremony performed at a Grand Lodge Communication in Hawaii at which time some 200 candidates were admitted into the Masonic Order by receiving the three degrees consecutively in one day. He submitted the following paper he received designed to explain their rationale in observing this procedure.

ARE WE READY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY?

By Herbert G. Gardiner, P.G.S., Grand Historian
Pro tem Grand Orator

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Grand Lodge Officers, Distinguished Guests, and Brethren:

The Grand Lodge of Hawaii is entering its eighth year of existence and in that comparatively brief
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span of time considerable progress has been made. But none of us can afford to sit back and rest on our laurels. There is still much to be done, and "growing pains" can no longer be attributed as the cause of some of our more serious problems.

The Craft has prospered for 154 years in our Islands and if we wish to see it continue to be a viable organization in the 21st Century, we must take an objective look at ourselves and make some changes in the manner in which we conduct some of our affairs.

There are three primary areas of concern which I would like to bring to your attention. They are as follows:

- I. CHANGE
- II. MASONIC EDUCATION
- III. COMMUNICATION

-CHANGE-

Freemasonry is a fraternity that is fluid in its nature and is constantly evolving. It is not now, nor has it ever been a static organization frozen in a pristine state unchanged from time immemorial. One learns from experience and the careful analysis of pertinent events to determine if a change is in the best interest of the Craft.

Brethren, for purposes of this oration I will divide the membership of the Hawaii Jurisdiction into two groups. The first category will be Group A, which is comprised of all the brethren who became members when our Lodges were under the Grand Lodge of California and also those brethren who joined our Lodges since the Grand Lodge of Hawaii was instituted in July 1989. Group B will consist of the new brethren who became members by attending a "One-Day Class" in 1996.

Let us briefly examine the two groups of members starting with Group A. This group contains the power structure or Grand Lodge Officers, and the so-

called "elder statesmen." Group A consists basically of the old timers, the veterans you might say. I might add, there is also a sub-group in category A, sometimes referred to as "the over-the-hill gang." The sub-group in case you haven't figured it out, includes the 40 and 50-year plus, members like myself; several of whom are still very active. Most of the Masonic education of the majority of the members in Group A was acquired under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of California. Among other things, the vast majority of these brethren had to learn and pass what is now referred to as the long form of proficiency. There was no such thing as the present so-called "short form." This group of brethren includes the Past Grand Lodge officers, Past Masters, former Lodge officers, coaches, inspectors, committee-men, trustees and those who faithfully manned the columns, most all of whom are of another era.

On the basis of the length of time and experience these brethren have in the fraternity, they have all experienced changes, and it is generally assumed that they are a vast storehouse of Masonic knowledge, and many are. If they were recognized as being successful by their peers and the brethren in the columns, the odds are that they have acquired wisdom through experience and have much knowledge to impart. The members in Group A, and its sub-group, apart from their knowledge of Freemasonry generally fall into two categories, those who look at change with an open mind, and those who tend to reject most any change in the manner in which Freemasonry is practiced in Hawaii.

The "one-Day Class" brethren in Group B are generally speaking young men, perhaps the youngest group in the Hawaii Jurisdiction. However, it is recognized that there are also some in Group B that are not so young. But I believe it is accurate to say that for the most part "One Day" classes consisted mainly of young men who are distinguished from group A by at least a generation. And these new Freemasons also represent a variety of professions, crafts, vocations, the business community, and the military services. At this stage of their Masonic journey "change" in the Masonic context has virtually no meaning

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for them. These men have just entered the threshold of Freemasonry and look to their senior brethren for guidance and enlightenment about the Craft. Let us always present them with facts, not bias, so they can make informed decisions.

We have all heard the expression "I am open to change, but I don't want change simply for the sake of change." Apart from its questionable value in sales promotional gimmicks, I suspect all of us here subscribe to that concept. And one would hope that any changes proposed in our fraternity are not in that vein. But some of the cynical brethren among us, and there are a few, tend to view most changes as change for the sake of change. There is also a time-worn expression frequently used by some Past Masters when they disagree with a change in the Craft and it goes something like this "It couldn't happen in my year. "That expression unfortunately implies that a change, whatever it may have been, was not proper or at least inappropriate and should not have been approved. I am not suggesting a condemnation of the expression, what I am saying is that generally in the Masonic context it is often made with a disregard for changing cultural conditions and life-styles which have a definite impact on the Craft. In a sense it represents a desire to turn the clock back, to look to the past rather than to the future. Some people would say it is a subconscious desire to return to the "Good Old Days." Well my brethren, the so-called "good old days" may have been in an era when life was much less complex than it is nowadays, but seldom was it ever as good as we tend to portray it in our minds. This is not to say that we should not learn from experience, we do, for it is only sound judgement to do so.

Freemasonry is not a static organization. There have been changes through the ages and there will continue to be. If Freemasonry had not made changes it would never have survived to this day. The Craft would have been relegated to the dust bin of history a long time ago if it had not made changes to accommodate certain shifts in cultural patterns and life styles.

The present United Grand Lodge of England is not the original Grand Lodge founded on June 24, 1717 by the 4 Lodges.... it is the result of the union on December 27, 1813, between the so-called Antients and the Moderns. It involved a change of monumental proportions. The Hawaii Masonic Code which in large measure we adopted from the Grand Lodge of California, has undergone many changes in the short history of the Grand Lodge of Hawaii.

The most dramatic change made in the Hawaii Jurisdiction to-date was accomplished by Most Worshipful Bennett K.C. Ing, Grand Master of Masons in Hawaii. It was he who initially proposed the idea, and followed through with the program to accomplish the "One-Day Classes" whereby a great number of candidates went from Initiation to Master Mason in one day. The rationale of Grand Master Ing for this bold stroke was simple. Considering that we are next to the smallest Grand Lodge in the United States with a membership at the time of about 2,150, and losing more members than we were gaining could spell disaster in a few years. Most Worshipful Ing was faced with a critical decision. He could have chosen to increase the number of "Layman's Night" meetings for potential members and their ladies, which would perhaps have netted at best a handful of new members, or he could have tried some other time-worn stratagems, none of which would likely have had any significant impact on membership. In selecting any of these options he could always claim that at least he tried to increase our membership, and drop the subject, or he could have totally ignored the problem. Most Worshipful Ing chose instead, a bold change by creating the "one-Day Class." The result was an unprecedented success, and resulted in a huge increase in membership. Also of almost equal significance, the average age of the overall membership was reduced dramatically as a result of so many young men joining the Craft.

Not all the members were enthusiastic about the concept of making a man a Freemason in a "One Day Class." Some felt that it was too much, too fast. Others felt that the mass ceremony detracted from the solemnity of the occasion, and others objected because they felt it would leave their Lodge with very few candidates for the balance of the year. There were some members who objected simply because it was a change of a magnitude they never experienced before. There were also a few brethren who felt there were some procedural problems. Many brethren who were skeptical at first, later came to fully appreciate the program and gave it their total support.

One of the most noticeable changes that has come about has been the tremendous increase in Lodge attendance and activities. At the December Stated Meeting of one Lodge I had the pleasure of witnessing the presence of one-hundred members!

No advocate of the "One Day Class" claims that the men in Group B could have possibly absorbed as much about Freemasonry in that one day as those who received the degrees of Masonry in the conventional manner. That subject will be addressed under the heading of Masonic Education.

There is a significant difference between form and substance. Form is not synonymous with substance and one should not be confused with the other. Changing form or style can be accomplished without compromising a principle, or

making a change in substance. For the good of the order, any proposed change should be examined thoroughly to determine its worth and appropriateness, it should not be rejected simply because it has never been tried before.

-MASONIC EDUCATION-

The late Chief Justice, William O. Douglas who was also a Freemason, once said the following about education: "If we are to receive full service from government, the universities must give us trained men. That means a constant reorientation of university instruction and research not for the mere purpose of increasing technical proficiency but for the purpose of keeping abreast with social and economic change."

Certainly the wisdom contained in the words of our late Brother Douglas apply to Freemasonry. By shifting the thrust of his theme from government to Freemasonry, it becomes obvious that Masonic education is a vital cog in the machinery that makes our fraternity function successfully. The constant reorientation (he referred to) is most appropriate for our purposes if we are to keep abreast of the times within and outside of the Masonic fraternity. But like the cog in the machinery that isn't properly maintained and lubricated, and ultimately fails, so does our Masonic education system when it is left to wither. Unfortunately, except in a few Lodges real Masonic education has almost vanished from the scene.

It is well known that when one mentions "Masonic Education" among some members, it is frequently followed by much moaning and groaning, particularly among our old-timers. Perhaps it is because they have been saturated with it in the past or, it was presented in such a dull uninteresting manner that made it a good substitute for a sleeping pill.

Masonic education is vital not only to our existence, but necessary for continued progress. The members of the "One Day Classes" obviously should have the benefit of the best education in Freemasonry that we can provide. Those young men who received their degrees in the conventional manner are also in need of Masonic education. For it is the young Freemasons of today who will be the future leaders of our fraternity which we so highly prize. It is they who will continue to maintain the mystic tie long after many of us have departed from this world. The Masonic education of our members should be comprehensive, even to the extent of including the distasteful subject of anti-Masonry.

Masonic education although a dual function that falls on the shoulders of the Grand Lodge and the constituent Lodges, is primarily a Grand Lodge responsibility. If for no other reason than for standardization purposes, it should be headed by the Grand Lodge.

Classes of Instruction held by the Grand Lecturer periodically, are primarily for the Lodge officers and those who aspire to be officers, with emphasis on the performance of the ritual. But as a rule do not explain what the ritual is intended to convey. As such, it is a form of specialized training. Masonic education which includes the history of the Craft and explaining the meaning and intent of our ritual is a subject that cries out for increased emphasis, and no effort should be spared in providing it. A well

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informed Freemason is a very important asset to his Lodge, and the Craft in general.

Everyone of the "One Day Class" members that I have spoken to has expressed a

keen interest in Masonic education. It is our duty not to let them down.

The Honolulu Masonic Public Library located in the Scottish Rite Cathedral is stocked with a wide range of excellent books on Freemasonry. The new Master Mason will find books that encompass the entire gamut of Freemasonry to choose from, which will greatly enhance his knowledge of the Craft.

The emphasis on Masonic education is not a plea to establish a Masonic Lodge of Research in Hawaii, although having such a Lodge would be a boon to the Hawaii Jurisdiction.

-COMMUNICATION-

The world, as we learn from television and personal computers has entered the communications era.

Good and timely communications within an organization are one important link in the chain of successful operations. It would appear that perhaps in some respects we are lagging behind in the very vital area of communicating.

I am referring to the publications that should originate in the Grand Lodge which are for the benefit of the Lodges and the brethren, and publications that should be prepared by the Lodges and distributed to their members. I strongly urge that every effort be made to revive the practice of publishing the Annual proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Hawaii. In that same vein I also vigorously recommend that the Grand Lodge revive the publication of an Annual Journal with a copy distributed to every member of each Lodge in this jurisdiction. Freemasons are no different than anyone else, they simply want to know what is going on around them.

The coffee coterie that holds court most every morning in a corner of the banquet hall is frequently accused of spreading rumors that on occasion are less than accurate. When the Grand Lodge begins to once again publish its Proceedings and an Annual Journal it will result in some noticeable improvements in the morale of the brethren. First, the members would be informed about what is going on at the Grand Lodge level and the jurisdiction in general, which would make for more knowledgeable members. Two, it would give the brethren a strong sense of belonging, and feel they are more than just a dues card carrying member. And three, the rumors that supposedly originate with the coffee coterie would be just good clean fun and be seen as nothing more. Seriously, the brethren are keenly interested in the activities of the Grand Lodge and the Hawaii Jurisdiction as a whole, and unless they receive official information on a timely basis in an appropriate manner, they have no alternative but to listen to, and speculate on rumors.

One cannot discuss communications nowadays without considering the major role of computers, and the Internet. But until all of our members have computers equipped with a modem so they can benefit from FAX and the Internet it seems like we will have no alternative but to rely on the old fashion method of publishing our proceedings and journals and distributing the material using plain old fashion mail. It is a curious dichotomy where Freemasons in other jurisdictions can acquire more knowledge about the Craft in Hawaii via the Internet, than the brethren of Hawaii Lodges who do not own a computer.

The first print-communication link that a member learns of is, or should be, the publication of his Lodge. The frequently used excuse for not having a Lodge publication is "If a member wants to know what is going on in his Lodge he should attend the meetings." No one will argue against that in principle. But it

is an inescapable fact that as a practical matter, a large number of members do not attend the meetings of their Lodges. Some have moved away from the Islands, some are confined to their homes due to illness, others no longer drive after dark, some have to work, and still others are care-givers for loved ones who are ill, and they may rarely get to attend their Lodge.

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As one very popular Past Master of yesteryear once mentioned to me, "I can't get to Lodge very much any more but I would like to read about what is happening in the Lodge, but the only time I ever hear from the Lodge is when they send me my annual dues notice, they never forget me then." There is also the comment usually from an officer of a Lodge that is not very active, "There is nothing to write about." I find this difficult to accept. But if such is really the case, then perhaps something should be done to breath new life into the Lodge.

The Lodge publication is basically intended for the purpose of informing the members of what is going on, what is planned, and space permitting, something about the history and members of the Lodge. The lodge publication be it quarterly or semi-annually is one of the important links between the Lodge and the individual members. Some Lodges feel that they don't have the financial resources to produce a Lodge bulletin. This is a mistaken notion because a Lodge publication does not have to be an elaborate newspaper or booklet. Even a very modest publication will be appreciated by the members. In our jurisdiction Lodge publications range from excellent to non-existent.

If we Freemasons of Hawaii have any expectations of prospering in the 21st century, and retaining the interest and support of our young and elderly members, some bold and innovative changes will have to be made now. If we do not intensify our efforts to promote and strengthen Freemasonry among our brethren, and develop a greater positive public awareness of the fraternity, future generations may have to go to the State of Hawaii Archives or the Bishop Museum to find out what Freemasonry was!

In closing, my Brethren, I will leave you with this thought by Thomas Carlyle the famous English historian and philosopher: "To-day is not yesterday. We ourselves change. How then, can our works and thoughts, if they are always to be the fittest, continue always the same. Change, indeed can be painful, yet ever needful; and if memory have its force and worth, so has hope."

Honolulu, Hawaii, January 11, 1997 Annual Communication

The Lambskin by Edgar Guest.

It is not ornamental, it's cost is not great,
I have things more useful, but I'll truly state.
That of all my possessions there is none can compare
With the white lambskin apron that all Masons wear.

As a boy I often wondered just what it all meant
When Dad busiled around and much time was spent,
On dressing and shaving and looking just right,
Until mother would say, "It's the Masons tonight."

And sometimes in the winter she'd say, "Oh Dad must you
go?

To the Lodge tonight through the sleet and the snow.
You see these same things many times in the year."
And Dad would reply, "Yes I know that my dear.

true,
For forty years now I've seen these same things it's
Yet each time I see them they seem just like new.
For the hands that I clasp and the friends that I greet
Seem a little bit closer each time that we meet".

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Years later I stood at that very same door
With good men and true who had entered before.
Within I knelt at the altar and there I was taught
That Virtue and Honor can never be bought.

That the spotless white lambskin all Masons revere,
If worthily worn grows more precious each year.
That service to others brings treasures untold,
And a man can be poor though surrounded by gold.

I learned that true brotherhood flourishes there.
That enmity fades neath the compass and square.
That wealth and position are both thrust aside
When men meet on the level and there they abide.

So honor the lambskin, may it always remain
Forever unsullied and free from all stain.
And when we are called by the Great Father's love,
May we all meet again in the Grand Lodge above.
