

Beware of Dog

Brother Abner Hall is a past master of Acacia 357. I've known Abner for years — he coached me a bit on the First Degree Lecture. I remember the first time I went to his home — he had invited me to his workshop so we could spend a couple of hours on my memory work. I parked in the front drive like he told me, and proceeded around the house toward his workshop. I could see him inside rebuilding a rabbit hutch.

As I approached the open bay door, I noticed a large sign that read “BEWARE OF DOG” I immediately began to look around for the dog when I saw Zeek, a large blue tick hound sleeping on the garage floor. Old Zeek laid there the whole evening, and never moved. As I rose to leave, I asked Abner about the sign.

“Don't worry none about Zeek,” said Abner, “He won't harm a soul — but since I put the sign up, folks stopped tripping over him.”

Abner taught me the First Degree Lecture, but he taught me a lot more — seems all good coaches do that. I guess the thing he taught me that I've used the most through the years is how to involve people in lodge activity.

“Never get one volunteer when three can do the same job,” Abner used to say. If he was in charge of cooking a meal at the lodge, he would call one Brother and ask him to make biscuits, another to do the dessert, another to fry the chicken, and another to set tables. For good measure, he would ask another member to bring ice, and another to come and ask the blessing — he reserved these duties for two members he figured wouldn't have come otherwise.

When he was master, he would split up all the work — he even had members sharing a lecture, invited others to present the working tools, and in the Master Mason Degree, he used a completely different group of members in the second section. He had to really work to get it done — he made a lot of telephone calls. His tactic was that he needed their help — whether he did or not — and few members turned him down. The result was increased attendance and participation.

It still works, and when I can, I never use one volunteer when three can do the same job.