

"Counting Sheep"

Worshipful Brother Ted Snow and I just returned from Annual Communication. We had a great time. All of our Lodge Officers were able to attend this year. We enjoyed dinner together Friday night and an opportunity to spend some time discussing Masonry.

It's really important that Masons communicate to the extent that they can understand each other's opinions. I know our Secretary, a younger Mason than I, was surprised at my opinions. I guess that considering my age, he suspected that my opinions were far more conservative than his. Almost to his relief, he found that like many old Past Masters, I still had the capacity to consider new ideas and attitudes concerning our Fraternity.

A lot of delegates to Annual Communication think they have it all figured out, and they are surprised that, once the votes are counted, the result is quite different.

One thing I've learned for sure after 28 plus Annual Communications - you can't be sure of how the sum of the delegates feel about a particular issue. Sometimes it seems that the simplest issue gets the most debate, and the most far-reaching slide through without a word pro or con. It's quite interesting, and I never lose interest in the process.

The encouraging part about all this is that the delegates, given good information, will make good decisions. The challenge to leadership has always been how to communicate the facts without trying to bend opinion in a particular fashion. Sometimes we want to suggest that our opinions are the only ones that have value, and that we have all the answers. Fact is, that we don't have all the answers, and shouldn't be so quick to sort out what's best for our Lodge or the Fraternity without hearing the opinions of others with an open mind.

Brother Jim Holcomb has been raising sheep in the north end of our county for a number of years. The story is that one day Jim was working his flock in a fairly remote area, when suddenly a brand-new BMW advanced out of a dust cloud towards him. The driver, a young man in a fancy suit, Gucci shoes, Ray Ban sunglasses and YSL tie, leaned out the window and asked Jim.....

"If I tell you exactly how many sheep you have in your flock, will you give me one?" Brother Jim looked at the man, obviously a yuppie, then looked at his peacefully grazing flock and calmly answered, "Sure." The yuppie parked his car, whipped out his IBM ThinkPad and connected it to a cell phone, then he surfed to a NASA page on the Internet where he called up a GPS satellite navigation system, scanned the area, and then opened up a database and an Excel spreadsheet with complex formulas. He sent an email on his Blackberry and, after a few minutes, received a response. Finally, he prints out a 130 page report on his miniaturized printer then turns to the shepherd and says....."You have exactly 1586 sheep."

"That is correct; take one of the sheep." said Jim.

He watched the young man select one of the animals and bundle it into his car. Then Jim says: "If I can tell you exactly what your business is, will you give me back my animal?" "OK, why not." answered the young man. "Clearly, you are a consultant." said Jim, thumbs under his highback straps. "That's correct." says the yuppie, "but how did you guess that?" "No guessing required." answers Jim. "You turned up here although nobody called you. You want to get paid for an answer I already knew, to a question I never asked, and you don't know anything about my business.... Now give me back my dog."