

## **AN ACTION TEAM-IN ACTION**

This Short Talk Bulletin has been adapted from an article in Fall 1987 edition of The Freemason, official publication of the Grand Lodge AF & AM of Missouri and is used with the kind permission of its Editor.

Just before closing John Blair Lodge No. 700 in its last meeting of the summer, Bro. Hugh Jones spoke up when Worshipful Master Dick Smith asked if any brother had anything to offer. The Master recognized him somewhat reluctantly because it had been a kind of draggy year in the lodge and Hugh was always wanting the lodge to do something besides just meeting. Besides it was a warm night, and the brethren seemed anxious to get out so they could have refreshments downstairs in the dining room.

"Worshipful Master," began Hugh, "I wonder if any plans have been made for us to celebrate the Bicentennial of the Constitution in September."

The Master stuttered a bit. He remembered that the lodge secretary had read the proclamation from the Grand Master calling for a lodge observance of the 200th anniversary of the United States Constitution on September 20.

"No, Brother Hugh," he replied, "I was going to get around to it, but I guess I just forgot it."

Brother Jones pressed his point. "Worshipful Master", he explained, "the way our meetings come, we'll have just one communication in September before the 20th. If we're going to get anything done, it's going to have to be in shape before that time. I think we ought to have a special committee make plans for this, but we ought to have a little discussion about it before the committee is appointed."

"Worshipful Sir," said Jim Post, the Senior Warden, "we've had lots of committees that never functioned. When we went to the Grand Lodge Leadership Seminars this past year, they said we ought to call them Action Teams. That way you'll expect them to do something."

The Master noticed that several of the brethren were sitting up in their chairs while others were squirming a bit as if they wanted to get out of the meeting. He felt that the subject was getting away from him, so he had better take charge again.

"I'll appoint the committee or action team or whatever," he asserted, "but I think you'd better give them some direction."

There was a momentary hesitation on the sideline, and old Worshipful Brother Golightly was heard to mutter, "We've never done it this way before." Brother Samuels, who was a deacon at the church down the street, laughed and declared, "That's what they said about our church when somebody proposed something new. They called it the seven last words of the church. Maybe it's time the lodge did something new."

Several of the brethren were nodding assent to this, so the Master felt he ought to follow up by making the appointments.

"Hugh, since you brought this up," he addressed the brother, "I'm going to make you chairman of the committee, or let's just call it an action team."

A wild thought came into the Master's mind. Perhaps there were some brethren who had the ability to work with Hugh and make a go of this thing. It might turn out a good way to wind up his term as Master

of John Blair Lodge. Besides some of the newer members had been wanting some special activities which would make the lodge more visible in the community.

"I'll also appoint Brothers Sal Minnicello and Hardy McClellan," Worshipful Master Smith announced. "Hugh, you get them together."

A brother objected, "Sal hasn't been a citizen too long. He just came from the Old Country several years ago."

"That's a lot of hogwash," argued Bro. Samuels. "He probably knows more about the Constitution than most of us because he had to do this studying before he became a citizen."

Another brother spoke up, "I hope we'll make this an open program on the 20th. Perhaps we can get people to come to the lodge who've never darkened the door of the temple."

"Yes," added another brother, gaining enthusiasm, "we certainly ought to invite the ladies, for that matter, maybe the general public."

He turned to Junior Warden Tim Kelog. "Maybe your wife would bake or get us a cake with red, white and blue icing for refreshments."

"I think we ought to have a speaker," said Jim Post. "Maybe we could get Prosecuting Attorney Hill to speak. He pays dues at this lodge, but we never see him except in election year."

"Worshipful Master, I have another suggestion" said Hugh. "It might be fine to have Brother Hill make a short talk on the Constitution then, but we might have another short talk by Mr. Walker, the history teacher at the high school."

"He's not a Mason", objected another brother.

"That's true," Hugh replied, "but he could talk to us about the history of the Constitution. Besides he had always indicated some interest in Freemasonry, and this just might be a way to lead him to ask for membership."

Brother Brown, who was the Chapter Dad of the local DeMolays, spoke up:

"We might have the DeMolay boys come and present the colors and lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag." Others around the hall nodded assent to that.

Lodge Secretary Rider had been searching through his desk drawers while all this discussion was going on. He triumphantly held up a handful of booklets.

"Here, Worshipful Master," he almost shouted. "I knew I had some pamphlets on this. Here's Famous American Freemasons and a Lodge Guide for Celebrating the Bicentennial of the US. Constitution. I'll bet there are some other books out in the lodge library. Maybe the committee, excuse me, action team, can use these."

Old Brother Golightly, who generally was so contrary, stood up with a new interest in his face. "Worshipful," he said, the old timers used to tell us that this lodge was named for John Blair, who helped sign the Constitution along with George Washington and the others. You know, this town of Blairsville was founded last century by settlers from Virginia, and John Blair was a Grand Master of the state. We've

got a lot of history right here in the lodge and this town. We know what it means to say WE THE PEOPLE. We're the ones they made that Constitution for, and we're the ones who're going to have to keep it."

After a bit more discussion, Worshipful Brother Smith closed the lodge, but everybody knew that the spirit of Freemasonry was going to keep alive and well over the summer. The brethren had great things to look forward to in the fall.

When the members parted in a little while, Hugh Jones found himself thinking about the Masonic phrase, "who have gone this way before me" and he also thought about those names on the plaque in the anteroom, brothers of another day who had lost their lives in the struggle for freedom. Perhaps their September 20th celebration could be a little way of saying "Thank you" for a country and a Constitution like this.

How did the program turn out? Well, you'll have to wait and see how John Blair Lodge No. 700 and dozens of other lodges around the country did. It's pretty important because I don't reckon that any of us are going to be around to celebrate the 300th Anniversary of the Constitution.

The preceding story is fiction. John Blair Lodge No. 700 does not exist. The characters are reflections of the author's imagination. However, the action of the story could have taken place in any of thousands of lodges ... maybe yours!

A master is faced with many challenges, not the least of which are preparation and planning. He must be prepared for any eventuality. There are many aids and "tools" which are available to assist him. He must have clearly defined objectives and a firm timetable of intermediate goals to reach them. To do this, he must communicate with his officers and members and get them all involved. Before he can motivate the membership, he must himself be motivated. That's leadership!

There are literally hundreds of Masonic publications which can be used to assist lodge officers. Unless they are used, they don't do a bit of good-especially if buried in the Secretary's desk.

All of us want to feel that our lodge is the "best" lodge. We want and expect our lodge to be active, involved and needed. To accomplish this, we must follow the example of those master builders who erected the beautiful cathedrals with such exactness. They laid out their designs on their trestleboards and followed each detail in the construction. Just as the Builders were working at their Craft, so must we be workers in preserving our Craft.

The key words are WORK and ACTION.