

MASONIC EDUCATION FOR SOJOURNING MASONS

We thank M.W. Brother Raymond H. Bachman Grand Master of Masons in Illinois, for permitting us the use of this paper as a Short Talk Bulletin. It is adapted from a presentation which he made to the Midwest Conference on Masonic Education in 1981 at Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

In a discussion on the subject of Masonic education for sojourners, we need, first of all, to determine what the word "sojourner" means. The Random House Dictionary defines the word as "to stay for a time in a place; live temporarily; a temporary stay; rest, stay. " When we refer to a sojourner in the Masonic Fraternity, we think of one who is away from his home lodge. He may be from another part of his own state, from another state, or even another country.

It is very evident that man has always had a responsibility to the sojourner even before the existence of Freemasonry. We read in Leviticus 19:33,34 these words: "And if a stranger sojourns with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself." In Hebrews 13:2, one of the most poetic of Biblical phrasings, tells of the rewards of entertaining sojourners: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."

During that period when all members of the Craft were Operative Masons, as set forth in the Regius Poem (the oldest extant written document), members were bound by many rules of moral conduct. There is also strong evidence that Masons had a word which was used as a means of recognition. It was known as the "Masons' word." A means of recognition was necessary because Masons did travel a great deal to be employed in cathedral construction projects. Resident Masons were duty bound to give shelter to these travelers, to feed them, and to give them money to be able to travel. It was then important and helpful to be a member of the Craft while sojourning away from home. With passage of time, the necessity of belonging to a special group to gain sustenance has become less urgent. As a result, it becomes more difficult, and in some cases almost impossible to locate the sojourner. There are some avenues, however, that provide some assistance.

Most of our appendant bodies do not require a petitioner to be a member of a local lodge. If access can be gained to their records, every sojourner in their membership can be located. This is probably one of the easier courses to pursue. Many communities have an individual who welcomes each new family that moves into the community. They usually present them to their new surroundings. It is simple for this individual to determine whether or not a new family has any fraternal ties.

Possibly this is a good place to mention something not to do. A certain individual received a publication from an out-of-state lodge and folded inside was a similar piece addressed to an

individual on the other side of town. He did not know this man. He drove to the home to deliver the publication. No one was home. The publication was placed in the mail box. He gave the name and address to the Master of his lodge so that he could call or write this brother to invite him to lodge. Several months later, he asked the Master if this sojourner had visited lodge. The Master said he had not contacted him yet. Something like this is hard to believe and is inexcusable.

Many sojourners, of course, look up the local lodge as soon as possible after arriving in a new community. They enjoy the fellowship found among their brethren and it helps them to immediately get acquainted with others and to develop family friendships. Notices in the local newspapers concerning special events, i.e., Past Masters' Night, pancake breakfast and any other social event will attract some sojourners.

Another likely place to meet sojourners is at your place of employment, particularly in a manufacturing area that attracts new people. Sojourners can often be found in the church which you attend. They will usually be identifiable by a pin or ring which they wear. This gives a topic on which a conversation can be initiated and acquaintance made.

After the sojourner is found, what is to be our relationship with him? First, and foremost, certainly will be the offer of fellowship. We can invite him to lodge functions as well as those of appendant bodies of which both we and he are members. Oftentimes he may be able and desirous of participation in the conferral of degrees. He may also have some special ability that he would like to share that would be advantageous to the local lodge.

There are some who think that a concerted effort should be made to get the sojourner to transfer his membership. He may have sentimental reasons for not transferring his membership, or he may expect to move back at some future time.

Also, some jurisdictions require a certain number of years of continuous membership (Illinois requires ten) in the state before they become eligible to live in the Home for the Aged. Dual membership can perhaps be pursued if the brother can afford it. This would allow him to hold any office in his new lodge if he so desired.

It is to the advantage of the sojourning Mason to make himself known to the local lodge for different yet similar reasons to those of the cathedral builders. Here he has someone who can give him immediate help and assistance in an emergency, until his local lodge can be contacted. Contact with his home lodge can be made by the local lodge if he should be incapable of doing it himself.

If the sojourner has some special ability he may find an outlet for it with his newly found brethren to their mutual satisfaction and education.

Lastly, there is a tremendous opportunity for the transfer of knowledge between the sojourner and his newly discovered brethren. This is particularly true if he should be from another state or country. Masonry is taught in many different ways in all parts of the world even though the ultimate lessons are the same. Both the sojourner and the local brethren can exchange

information and both learn more of Masonry and be the better equipped to live and practice the profession. We all learn from others because every man knows something we do not.

I See You've Traveled Some

Wherever you may chance to be Wherever you may roam, Far away in Foreign lands, Or just at Home, Sweet home It always gives you pleasure, It makes your heart strings hum Just to hear the words of cheer "I see you've traveled some."

When you get the brother's greeting, As he takes you by the hand It thrills you with a feeling That you cannot understand, You feel that bond of brotherhood That aid that's sure to come When you hear him say in a friendly way "I see you've traveled some. "

And if you are a stranger, In strange lands all alone, If fate has left you stranded Dead broke and far From home, O, it's grand and glorious Feeling, It thrills you--makes you dumb When he says, with a grip of Fellowship "I see you've traveled soome."

And when your final summons comes, To take a last long trip, Adorned with Lambskin Apron White And gems of fellowship; The Tiller at the Golden Gate, With square and rule and plumb Will size up your pin, and say, "Walk in--I see you've traveled some."