

MASONIC FUNERAL PLANNING

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"So live that when thy summons comes to join the innumerable caravan that "So live that when thy summons comes to join the innumerable caravan that moves to that mysterious realm where each shall take his chamber in the silent halls of death ..." (from the Grand Lodge of Missouri Masonic Funeral Service).

We have all listened to these ageless words spoken in honor of departed Brethren. The question I am asking is:

When it is you these words are spoken over, have you made the preparations necessary to satisfy the laws of the land and to ease the burden of your passing on your family?

It is something we should all consider in a timely manner and especially while we are of sound mind and body and can make proper decisions regarding our possessions and last wishes.

Approaching this task from the standpoint of membership in the Fraternity, we must deal with the long-standing tradition not to discuss, in detail, the business and customs of the Fraternity with family members. Therefore, many widows and children have no idea who in the Lodge needs to be notified of our passing. Let us make a few suggestions that will ease the burden on your family and, at the same time, ease the burden on the Lodge Secretary and the Master.

Include with your important papers, envelopes addressed to the Lodge Secretary and the secretaries of all the appendant bodies in which you have membership. Put a sheet of paper in each envelope with your Masonic history (if you have been a member of more than one Lodge, be sure your list reflects the correct names and locations of all Lodges in which you have held membership in case you have transferred your membership) and a place for your survivor to write the date of your passing and such other information that might be of interest to the Lodge and/or appendant bodies. Attach to the envelopes a sheet of paper with detailed instructions that explain to your next of kin the importance of notifying each Masonic body of your passing. If you are uncertain what the correct address is, look at the return address on your latest dues notice. Also, include with these important papers a sheet of paper with instructions on whom to contact to request a Masonic funeral service. The Master of your Lodge is always an appropriate person to contact when requesting a service. If he is unavailable, contact your Lodge Secretary.

It would be a good idea to write a draft of your obituary so that those things that were important to you, in your life, will be known to others. It also insures your Masonic memberships, titles, and honors are spelled accurately. Include the full name of each body as well as the complete

title of each office you have held. Be sure to also include specific instructions on the disposal of your Masonic ritual books, pins, aprons, and related items.

If you have been a collector of Masonic books, pamphlets and other such items, be sure to suggest proper disposition of these articles. This may be to a Masonic relative who is interested, to the Lodge for their library, or a brother who you know will keep and treasure your books as you did. Alternatively, you may want to donate your books to the Lodge with instructions to sell them and use the money earned for upkeep of the Lodge hall or for a Lodge charity. Whatever your personal wishes, make timely plans and leave clear instructions. It is sad to go to a flea market or yard sale and see someone's Masonic book collection lying in a neglected heap on a dusty table.

Now for a look at the worldly side of the issue of death. As in disposition of your Masonic belongings, it should be a priority with every brother to make final plans. You should contact a funeral director and ask him or her for assistance in pre-planning your funeral and burial. Your funeral director can assist you in developing a pre-need plan. This plan can be purchased and paid for at any time. The funeral director will help you select your casket, service, vault, grave plot, and grave marker or guide you if your wish is cremation. Also, they will make suggestions on the type of service and what will be included in the service, such as visitation times, minister/spiritual leader, songs, casket bearers, Masonic emblem on the service folder. The funeral director should be instructed to remind the family that it is customary for the apron to remain in the casket.

The funeral director will counsel you on the financial aspects of your service and will help you to select a casket, burial site, etc., that is within your financial range. He will suggest options for paying for your pre-need, which can include CDs, insurance policies, etc. An advantage of prepaying is that the cost can be frozen to protect against inflation and save your family members these expenses when the service is needed.

The funeral director can give you a book that guides you in providing the information needed. You should complete this book carefully and completely. Be sure to include a copy of your obituary and a copy of the list of Masonic bodies you belong to as was suggested earlier in this pamphlet. If you are a veteran be sure to include pertinent information about your service record. This should include branch of service, rank held, medals awarded, date of entry, date of discharge, service serial number and a copy of your discharge papers.

You should visit your attorney and have him draw up a last will and testament. This will ensure your wishes are legal and binding, and will leave no doubt as to the disposition of your property. Such arrangements will raise a big burden from the shoulders of your survivors at a very traumatic time in their lives.

Therefore, Brethren, do it now, for as the Masonic funeral service says we, none of us, know when that time will come. Be prepared and be considerate of your loved ones and your brothers and, most of all, be prepared yourself, first in your heart and secondly in your affairs