

MENTORING PROGRAM A WORKING TOOL FOR MEMBERSHIP RETENTION

David Flight is a Past Master of Cauvenzeur Lodge #500, Cauverneur, New York. The program described in this STB has proven very helpful to those Lodges who have put it to use! As always we ask you to check with your Grand Lodge for permission to use this program. Editor

INTRODUCTION

I'M THE GUY

"I'm the guy sitting by himself on the side. I asked to join, I paid my dues, and I promised to be faithful and loyal.

I've come to the meetings but hardly anyone pays attention to me. I've tried to be part of the group, but everyone seems to talk to and sit with their own buddies.

I want to get involved, but I'm just not sure how to do it. The same guys always seem to do the work. but they don't seem interested in having anyone new join them.

I missed a few meetings after joining, and no one asked me at the next meeting where I had been. Everyone says, "Hi," but no one really seems interested in me.

I want to get involved, I want to know more, I want to be part of the group, but right now I'm thinking about the game I'm missing on TV. "

If the brother in "I'm the guy" sounds familiar, we urge you to read this STB! Something good can be done.

MENTORING

This Short Talk Bulletin is not intended to serve as a guide but as an introduction. The Mentoring Program when used in association with a Masonic education program, such as "Tried and Proven", available from MSA, creates a compound stronger than cement, uniting us into one common mass of educated, active Masons. This system takes in every candidate; it becomes the labor of the Craft under the supervision of the Master: a uniform, acknowledged, and renewing education process.

In order to maintain and strengthen Freemasonry, Lodges need to educate their members in all aspects of the fraternity. We have a responsibility to provide each member with opportunities to meet and interact with others, to help him do his share, and to give him knowledge about the

Fraternity. The Mentoring Program is based on consideration, respect, and cooperation. It is a team program aimed at developing each Brother to his fullest potential.

What happens in the majority of Lodges between the Brother Bring A Friend Night (12-90 STB) and the First Degree? The scenario goes something like this: The Lodge receives a petition which is read and turned over to an investigation committee; the investigation committee does their job and returns their report; the petition is read again; the Lodge ballots on the petition; and, if accepted the petitioner is informed of the date of the First Degree.

Is there something missing here? How about a Mentoring or Mentor Program and a Masonic Education Program? We ask ourselves time and time again why new members do not stay active in the Lodge after the Third Degree. The answer is because they often do not have a stimulant to keep them active. Frequently they do not even understand the Fraternity they have just joined. A continuing program of support through Mentor Counseling, Fraternal Lodge Visitations, and Lodge Participation is encouraged for the New Brothers in their First Year as Master Masons.

The Mentoring Program consists of assigning each candidate a well educated Brother to act as his mentor, educator, and companion for a year, thereby, creating an active, educated and working Brother.

A Mentoring Program together with a system of Masonic Education provides the necessary methodology to guarantee that every new Brother is properly instructed in the fundamentals and workings of the Craft.

THE PURPOSE

(Taken in part from "Tried and Proven")

Every candidate is a stranger to Freemasonry and Freemasonry is a stranger to him. It is not merely a Lodge that he joins, but a great fraternity with a history stretching back over many centuries. It has an intricate system of laws, a large number of purposes, ideals and Obligations, a set of rights, privileges and duties, and a set of landmarks to be preserved. The fraternity as a whole carries on a program of activities of great variety.

It is too much to expect of any man that without guidance he can make himself at home in such a society, or that unaided he can take his own proper place in the Lodge's work with credit to himself and honor to the fraternity. He has every right to expect that the Lodge itself shall give him much of the information he needs. So many Brethren never receive this information and are permitted to come--and perhaps go--undirected and uninstructed. They either cease attending Lodge at all, or, sometimes, for lack of knowledge, blunder into humiliation to themselves and damage to the Lodge.

There is nothing new in these statements. For years responsible Craft leaders have been only too aware of these problems. This failure to properly prepare the candidate for his new duties and privileges is both a failure on the part of the Craft to discharge its just obligations to him and a weakness in the fundamental system of Initiation. These failures incur the danger of weakening

the whole structure by attempting to build enduring walls with rough ashlar and untempered mortar. Moreover it is not solely a matter of teaching the new member the ceremonies he is to go through. It is necessary that he become imbued with the spirit of Freemasonry and to believe in, as well as to understand, its purposes and ideals. Our Fraternity does not rest on compulsion or military rule; if its own members are at odds with its aims it becomes a house divided against itself. In many cases when Masons cause dissension in a Lodge, it is not out of malice or a desire to make mischief, but because they do not understand the rules and laws.

It is not only the candidate that profits by a Mentoring and Education Program. The Lodge itself is strengthened from having new members who from the beginning are able to take part in its activities; who are likely to become regular attendants; and who can quickly grasp the aim and purpose of the Lodges' endeavors. They come in already prepared for work!

Ask yourself these four key questions;

- 1) Are we allowing newly raised Brothers to pass through the three degrees uninformed and uninstructed?
- 2) Do we fail to encourage special meetings to educate the regular attending Brethren and re-educate Brethren who have drifted from regular Lodge attendance?
- 3) Is my Lodge allowing the line officers to advance to the East unprepared for the task, thus resulting in SELF-DESTRUCTION '?
- 4) Have we failed to recognize that leadership qualifications are unobtainable if we continue to ignore the vital need to become masonically educated"?

If you answered YES, your Lodge needs a Mentoring Program.

The mechanics of a Mentoring Program are as follows:

FUNCTION:

To ensure that every Candidate is properly instructed in the fundamentals of the Craft.

MECHANICS:

Option A: Upon receipt of a petition, the Master appoints an investigating committee consisting of one current officer, one new brother, one Past Master, and one experienced brother. Either the Past Master or experienced brother will continue as the Mentor. The investigating committee meets with the candidate and his family at the candidate's home and answers any questions they may have regarding Masonry. Consider the following in discussions with the candidate.

- Does the petitioner believe in God?
- Are his moral and mental standards satisfactory"?

- Will his acceptance create financial or domestic problems?
- What are his motives for petitioning?

The Candidate and his family will get their first impression of the Craft from the Investigation Committee.

Option B: Upon election of a petitioner for the degrees of Freemasonry, the Master appoints the Lodge Mentor for a ONE YEAR term to serve as part of a Lodge Masonic Education Team. In the event a Lodge does not have an education team, the Mentor may work alone to enact the program. The Lodge sends the Candidate a congratulatory letter. Include a copy of Short Talk Bulletin No. 854, "Tell the Applicant," available from the Masonic Service Association.

Assign a Mentor to the candidate. Preferably a seasoned member who is knowledgeable about the Craft. The Mentor will serve as one of four members of the Lodge Masonic Education Team or he may work alone.

METHOD

The Lodge Mentor will contact the candidate and advise him of the tentative Degree schedule and invite the candidate and his lady to any open Lodge functions. The Mentor will maintain contact during the candidate's progress through the Degrees and will assist him in preparing for each Degree. The Mentor will find out if the candidate has any particular Masonic friends or associates who would like to be invited to attend or assist in the conferral of the Degrees (particularly the Third Degree). Above all, the Mentor will make the new Brother a part of the Masonic Family.

The Candidate meets with the Mentor a minimum of FIVE times. A recommended time limit for all the sessions is one hour, not to exceed one and one-half hours including discussion. They meet: 1) prior to the First Degree, 2) following the First Degree, prior to the Second Degree, 3) following the Second Degree, prior to the Third Degree, 4) following the Third Degree, 5) one month after the fourth session for a continuing Education Program as designed by the Lodge.

It is a misfortune that so many new Brothers are permitted to drop from sight after they receive the Third Degree. Often they are left to their own devices and to fend for themselves. If the Lodge can retain their interest during this most critical period of their Masonic careers and give them guidance and encouragement until they have had time to form habits of interest and activity for themselves, they will develop into working, active Masons. Otherwise they are likely to stop attending after a few meetings and either lapse into chronic indifference, or find their way to some other more attractive activity.

The new Mason needs to know and understand his duties as a Master Mason and what his rights and privileges are. He should be taught how to visit other Lodges. He needs information about the traditions and work of the Craft as a WHOLE.

It must be stressed that the duties of a Mentor are for ONE YEAR. Do not leave the newly-made Mason alone to fend for himself after the Third Degree !

A personal note:

Some Lodges may already use a formal Mentoring Program, many do not. When I became a Mason, my Lodge did not have a Mentoring Program. Thanks to two Brothers, one who taught me the ritual and the other who answered all my questions (and I had a lot of them), I received an extensive Masonic Education. I can tell you first hand that mentoring works.

For far too long, new candidates have been brought into the Craft enthusiastic and eager to become active members, only to be neglected by the Lodge they join. A properly educated, oriented, and invested new Mason is an ACTIVE member of his Lodge. The Mentoring Program is the first step to membership retention and expansion.

The Mentoring Program combined with either the Tried and Proven Booklet available from the Masonic Service Association or your present Masonic Education Program provides one coherent system of Masonic Education and Membership Retention.

Also available from the M.S.A. are the following digests and Short Talk Bulletins, that will assist your own Program.

DIGESTS Tried and Proven Leadership Masonic Lifeline One Hundred One Questions About Freemasonry What is Freemasonry?