

SECTION 4: RETAIN - RETENTION OF ACTIVE MEMBERS LESS THAN 1 YEAR

4.1 PURPOSE

First impressions are extremely important. First impressions are established early in our new members Masonic Life. We have planted the seed. This section discusses existing available programs, defines the role played by the Sponsor, the Mentor, and emphasizes the importance of early visitation and social programs involving family and friends.

4.2 THE CANDIDATE *

Your Lodge can discuss and apply these programs where applicable. The benefits will lead to the retention of new members making them life long active Masons.

Always stress these points regarding a candidate:

- The candidate is the most important person in our organization - He is not a hindrance!
- The candidate is not an interruption in our work - He is the purpose of it.
- The candidate is part of our organization - He is not an outsider.
- The candidate is not a cold statistic - He is a human being with feelings and emotions.
- The candidate is not a face or a number - He is an individual.
- The candidate is a person who brings us his wants - It is our job to fill those wants.
- The candidate is the lifeblood of this organization.

4.3 A POEM FOR ALL MASONS: "I'M THE GUY"

The following poem captures a very important theme and creates in our hearts a sense of emotion. It reminds us that sometimes the obvious is often the most misunderstood. If all brethren were to remember this passage whenever they go to a lodge, it would help

I'm the Guy

I'm the guy who joined our organization.

I'm the guy who paid dues to join.

I'm the guy who stood up in front of all of you and promised to be faithful and loyal.

I'm the guy who came to your meetings and no one paid any attention to.

I tried several times to be friendly to some of the fellows,

but they all had their own buddies to sit next to.

I sat down several times but no one paid any attention to me.

*I hoped very much, that somebody would have asked me to take part in something
but nobody noticed when I volunteered.*

I missed a few meetings after joining because I was sick and couldn't be there.

No one asked me, at the next meeting, where I'd been. I guess it didn't matter.

It didn't matter very much to others whether I was there or not.

The next meeting I decided to stay at home and watch television.

*The following meeting I attended but no one asked, where I was when the last
meeting was held.*

*You might say I'm a good guy, a good family man who holds a responsible job,
who loves his community and his country.*

You know who else I am? I'm the guy who never came back.

*It amuses one, when I think back, on how the officers and members were discussing
why they were losing members. It amuses me to think that they spent so much time
looking for new members when I was there all the time.*

All they needed to do, was to make me feel needed, and wanted, and welcome!!!

Brethren - Just reflect on these words !!!

in strengthening our fraternity.

4.4 THE NEW APPLICANT - THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

Importance and Purpose

After the reception of a petition, the single most important event in the life of a Masonic Lodge is the function performed by the Committee of Inquiry. It is impossible for every member of a lodge to personally know all of the potential petitioners to the lodge. In these days of declining membership, the Brothers who sign the petition of a prospective member may be blinded by friendship, a concern for the shrinking membership of their lodge or, very simply, they may not have sufficient concern for their lodge to see beyond the surface of the potential initiate whose petition they are signing.

It is the duty of this committee to be unbiased by improper solicitations and uninfluenced by mercenary motives of Brothers, well meaning friends, and relatives of the prospect. The committee must seek the truth about the depth of the character of whom they investigate. Just as importantly, they must consider the financial circumstances of the petitioner, the organizations he is already involved in, the kind of company he keeps, the reputation he has in the community, in his work place, and with the general public he comes in contact with every day.

As per Section: 318 of the Book of Constitution the purpose of this committee reads as follows:

“Each application, having been read in open lodge, shall be referred forthwith to a committee of inquiry of 3 or more Master Masons appointed by the Master, none of whom shall have proposed or seconded the application. The committee shall inquire into the character and qualifications of the applicant and shall report in writing thereon to the lodge at its next regular meeting held after the lapse of not less than four weeks, or as soon as possible thereafter.”

The following six words may be of assistance in conducting the interview:

WHO	Who is he?, Who does he know?, Who does he associate with?
WHAT	What are his reasons for petitioning?, What is his attitude toward God? What is his profession? What is his general reputation at work? What is his standing in the community?
WHEN District?	When did he become interested in Masonry?, When did he come to this District?
WHERE	Where does he spend his leisure time?, Where did he previously reside?
WHY	Why is he seeking membership?, Why is he petitioning your lodge?
HOW himself?	How does intend to serve Freemasonry?, How does he intend to conduct himself? How has he lived in the past?

REMINDER!

DON'T
reform

- look at a man and think he is all right

- think that he will necessarily

- be guided by his own reports

- be afraid to ask questions

- report until you are satisfied

- leave investigation until the

last minute

- leave the real work to the other two members

- forget that he may be the Master of the lodge someday

See Section 8 Form B, for an example of a New Applicant Survey Form. See also Form K for an instructional handout to be given to the Committee of Inquiry.

4.5 SPONSORSHIP OF CANDIDATES: THE ROLE OF THE SPONSOR

The Sponsors are the potential Candidate's bridge from darkness to the first light of Masonry. It is the Sponsors who likely created the favourable image of the Craft that has whetted the Candidate's desire to join Masonry. It is important to ensure that the matching of the man with the Craft is for the mutual benefit of both.

4.5.1 The Role of the Sponsor

Take an inventory in your own mind and answer the following questions before you undertake sponsorship of a potential candidate.

- What do you know about the man? His job? His family? His interests? His abilities? If you do not have the answers, you need to get to know him better before agreeing to sponsor him.
- Is your lodge the right one for him? In districts where lodges have concurrent jurisdiction, groups of professional or trades people often congregate in certain lodges. A man may not be happy in lodge if he is not a part of that group.
- Is the man right for the Craft? Why is he considering becoming a Freemason? How does his family feel about the fraternity? Has he been successful in other organizations? How does he conduct himself in the community? Will the brethren look to him with pride? Remember, each candidate is a potential Master of your Lodge.
- Am I the right Sponsor? Do I have the time, skills and inclination to invest in his training and nurturing? There will be a need to assist him with the memory work and floor work, to advise him on the meanings of the various terms, accompany him to lodge and introduce him to his new network - his brethren. Am I prepared to invest the time and energy to see that this is done well?

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, except what you feel in your heart.

4.5.2 The Applicant

Should you agree to act as a Sponsor, deliver the Application form with the second Sponsor and sit down with the applicant in a relaxed atmosphere. Review its contents and fill it out together. The applicant should know the manner in which his petition will be handled, this includes having it read out in lodge, a Committee of Inquiry appointed to inquire into his character and qualifications by interviewing him, his family and his references, a report on their findings and, pending a favourable report, a ballot on his application in lodge. Both Sponsors should be present in lodge at the time of the report and the ballot.

4.5.3 Initiation Night

The night of the Candidate's Initiation should require the attendance of both Sponsors, who should transport him to lodge wearing proper dress and ensure that he is made at ease before the ceremony by introducing him to the members. Following the meeting, they should ensure that he meets as many of the brethren present as possible, so that he feels welcome and wanted and most important of all, a part of the entire scenario.

4.5.4 Progressing Through the Degrees

The coaching and preparation of the Candidate for his subsequent degrees is imperative and a duty of the Sponsors, or a member assigned by the Worshipful Master, who should work in close co-operation with the Lodge Mentor Chairman, to ensure the necessary co-ordination. One is not a substitute for the other, they play different, but complementary roles. The sponsors assist the Candidate in advance for what is upcoming, to apply for membership and to prepare for each Degree. The Mentor enters the picture after each step to explain and consolidate what the Candidate has just experienced, to assist him in understanding its historical background, its symbolism's and its activities.

When properly applied, this segregation of responsibilities between sponsors and the Mentor becomes integrated. What emerges is various lodge members working together to make the new member feel appreciated in his new surroundings.

Maintaining an active interest in the Candidate's progress and keeping in touch is an essential aspect of being a sponsor, even after the Candidate has received all of his degrees. The young Master Mason continues to need advice and support and the sponsor should take new members to a variety of Masonic events.

4.6 THE MENTOR PROGRAMME

4.6.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Mentor Programme is to ensure that every Candidate accepted is properly instructed in the fundamental Principles of the Craft.

4.6.2 What is the Mentor Programme?

In identifying what the Programme is all about, it is necessary to start by stating what it is not. It is not a substitute for the Candidate's Sponsors. The purpose of a lodge Mentor is to complement the activities of the Sponsors--not to use up their responsibilities. If there is to be a segregation of responsibilities, they should be viewed as follows:

The Sponsors prepare the Candidate in advance for what is upcoming. The Mentor enters the picture after a particular step, to explain and consolidate what the Candidate has experienced and to answer his questions.

With each carrying out his special responsibilities, Masonry will be the stronger through the development of a more knowledgeable, more interested Mason, someone upon whom the Craft can rely to sustain and advance Masonry into the future.

4.6.3 The Role of the Mentor

Congratulations! The Master of the Lodge has appointed you, a member who is interested in the future of Masonry and who is willing to contribute your time and talent for the benefit of new members, to act as a Lodge Mentor. Mentors are brethren who are active workers, who are willing to familiarize themselves with the goals of the Mentor Programme and who are willing to act as a tutor, confidant and companion to a new member during the first year (and, hopefully, beyond) of his membership in the Craft. The Lodge Mentor forms a key element in the overall composition of the Grand Lodge Mentor Programme.

This is a challenging, hands-on responsibility. You have been entrusted with the crucial tasks of instructing the Candidate as he progresses through the Degrees, of stimulating and solidifying his interest in Masonry, and of nurturing his desire to be an active participant in our Craft throughout his Masonic career. No other lodge assignment carries with it such responsibility, because, without the continued interest of our newer members, what would the future hold for Masonry?

Note however, that the Lodge Mentor is not a substitute for the Candidate's sponsors. The sponsors and the Mentor play different, but complementary roles. The sponsors assist the Candidate in advance for what is upcoming to apply for membership and to prepare for each Degree. The Mentor enters the picture after each step to explain and consolidate what the Candidate has just experienced, to assist him in understanding its historical background, its symbolism's and its activities. When properly applied, this segregation of responsibilities becomes integrated, and what emerges is various lodge members working together to make the new member feel welcome in his new surroundings.

4.6.4 Why a Mentor Programme?

If we are to pass on our beloved Craft to our Children's Children, we must take action to train and maintain our new Masons. We must produce Masons not only proficient in our Ritual, but also educated in our heritage and knowledgeable in the aims and purposes of the Fraternity. The printed information and booklets provided for the lodge Mentor is also suitable material for a Lodge Education Program to provide a philosophical outlook not previously extended to older Members.

4.6.5 Mechanics

The Master will appoint a lodge Mentor Chairman, a Member who is interested in the future of Masonry and is willing to contribute his time and talent for the benefit of new members. The Chairman will form a Committee with brethren who are active workers, who are willing to familiarize themselves with the Goals of the Programme and who are willing to act as a tutor, confident and companion to a new member during his first year (and hopefully beyond) of his membership in the Craft. The Lodge Chairman will work directly with the Master to ensure that Mentor Lectures are completed at an appropriate time. It is recommended that a Candidate should not be advanced prior to receipt of the appropriate Mentor Lecture.

4.6.6 Method

The Mentor will meet with the Candidate on a minimum of four occasions. First following a successful Ballot for Initiation, then after he has received each of the three degrees. The prepared Lectures are presented as published, as well as information related to Lodge Protocol, Lodge Administration and other areas of interest or concern. The Mentor is also available on request to assist with Floor Work and Ritual training.

4.6.7 The Mentor Lectures

The first meeting with the Applicant in his home is extremely important as it is the first direct communication between the Lodge and the applicant with his family. By this time the applicant should have read Booklet Zero, For the information of the man who has expressed an interest in Masonry and the Pamphlet What is Freemasonry?. Open informal discussion is encouraged and all questions must be fully answered. Often it is found that the wife will ask many questions beyond those necessary to satisfy her husband. At this time, or after the First Degree, the wife should be presented with a copy of the Pamphlet For the Freemason's Family.

The next three Lectures should be scheduled closely following the Three Degrees and should include a review of appropriate Booklets and Pamphlets. Each of these explanation sessions is designed not only to give further meaning to the instructive lessons of the Degrees, but also to make the candidate feel comfortable in his new Surroundings especially with respect to Lodge Room Etiquette. Demonstrations of the various signs and motions to be given during the opening and closing ceremonies should be rehearsed with the Candidate.

4.6.8 Summary

This does not complete the member's guidance. he should not be cut adrift to fend for himself, just because he has received all of his Degrees. It is crucial to the retention of the candidate as an active member of the Craft to stimulate his interest and keep it stimulated. This requires the Sponsor and the Mentor to work together, especially during his first year, to stress the need for participation in Lodge Committees, Lodge and District functions and lodge visitations. Not by pointing him in the direction, but by accompanying him during all of his new exposures. The Lodge Mentor should also point out the wealth of information in our Grand Lodge publications and that we have a Grand Lodge Library with books and videos available on loan. The new Mason should then be directed towards participation in our Correspondence Program. Showing the new member enthusiasm, support and assistance will assure his continued interest and participation - and that is what the Mentor Programme is all about.

4.7 DEVELOPING SOCIAL PROGRAMS FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The twenty-four inch gauge divides the day into workable segments, giving a guide for a rich and balanced life. A similar division is essential in planning a successful lodge program.

The three segments of a lodge meeting are

- 1) Business or administration
- 2) The Ritual or "The Work"
- 3) The social period that closes the meeting

All are equally important.

The formality or structure of the first two segments discourages casual conversation or easy fellowship within the lodge room. The social program that follows the meeting is like the dessert after the meal. It should be imaginative, a delight, and something that the family members and guests anticipate with pleasure. People who linger to chat or socialize are a compliment to such planning.

This topic gives suggestions for planning a program that should truly make the brethren "sorry to part" and really eager to "meet again".

4.7.1 Definition

"Social", according to the Concise Oxford Dictionary, means "living in companies---gregarious---not fitted for or not practising solitary life".

No mention is made of amusement nor guest speakers. Our lodges' challenge is the creation of a friendly, gregarious atmosphere, the establishing of an interesting environment conducive to fellowship. In order to meet this challenge, the planner has to have direction. If the brethren want meat, potatoes will not satisfy them.

4.7.2 Research

Before undertaking to revive a social program, know your membership. Take an inventory of your members. Examine the demographics. Is the lodge top-heavy with octogenarians or bloated with Baby-Boomers? Are they identified with watch-fobs or multiple ear-rings? Having established this, determine the perils of a program that would exclude or alienate either extreme. The social program must be one of inclusion.

4.7.3 Consultation

What do your members want? Ask them.

As a base, first meet with your officers. Whatever the membership demands, those officers are the means of achieving it. The fact that they are elected does not mean they have all the answers, but they are charged with finding solutions to problems and giving the membership a direction.

The officers have to deal with the past, the present, and the future.

What has the lodge been doing? If the program has been one of "open-business-initiate/pass/raise-coffee-and-home," perhaps an improved social program could be considered. On the positive side, successful visitations, ladies' nights, Burns Dinners, and appreciation nights might be measured against attendance and enthusiasm. What programs have been dropped, such as Members' Nights, special dates such as St. Patrick's Day, picnics or potluck dinners? Would their revival be greeted with enthusiasm or a yawn?

What should we do now? This remains an unknown until the membership has input. Have the Worshipful Master dedicate a regular meeting to discussion and planning. In a think-tank, and that is what you will be leading, no question is improper. No suggestion is silly.

The lodge must know where it stands, so come prepared with knowledge from the past. The members must set the direction they wish to follow. The present is the bridge between beginnings and completions.

A good leader never goes into a meeting with empty hands. Go with ideas that can be modified or chewed up. Outrageous suggestions sometimes force discussion from which great plans emerge.

1. Get opinions. If no one has them, your lodge is dead anyway. Imposed programs do little to involve members. Involvement indicates life.
2. Expand on those opinions. Get the thoughts of others. Good men will enjoy the challenge of working together. (Leaders and program directors will be those evident at the meeting.)
3. Lead them to a consensus. If the ideas are those of the brethren, and if they have developed those seeds into a draft program, then they have already established ownership and have bought into the running or supporting of the social program.
4. Follow up the meeting with a written report to the brethren to be included with the summons. Highlight the issues raised and name the brethren who participated.
5. Announce the immediate beginning of some program or project that originated with the members' meeting. This acknowledges momentum.

4.7.4 Inside or Outside?

Every lodge is competing with the World Series, Stanley Cup, and increasing family responsibilities. A brother may be reluctant to leave his partner at home for a night out with the boys. In planning a social program, be aware that one night a month for regular meetings is a reasonable allotment for the average brother. Another night for emergent meetings is usually negotiable. Lots of visitations start adding a strain.

Our Craft aims at excellence and excellence is expected. A boring night or one that did not meet its promise is a waste of time for the sometimes-come brother. He might not be back soon. It can even turn off regulars.

Inside Programs: As a building starts with a foundation, so does a social program.

- 1) Utilize the time within the lodge, using the lodge room.
- 2) Take advantage of the banquet hour. In fact, use it as an attraction to bring more people out for the entire evening.

Outside Programs: If your members have time and if they can afford the expense, try outside programs. One lodge in particular held a "Master's Night at the Opera." Not everyone likes opera but 30 brethren and their spouses attended the Magic Flute presented by the Hamilton Opera Company. It was preceded a month earlier by a lecture and musical demonstration on Mozart, Masonry and the Magic Flute at the Regular Meeting. Spouses and friends had been invited to that part of the evening and the banquet hour that followed. Baseball games, minor hockey, and nights out at the race track offer camaraderie away from the lodge and should involve spouses, extended families and friends.

4.7.5 Trickle or Flood?

Assume that the think tank was a success, that all sorts of ideas bloomed, and eight different programs have been endorsed. The temptation is to go ahead with the converted membership and lead them to the promised land.

Don't do it.

Pick the programs most likely to succeed. Assign them to brethren best suited to guide them to success. Go for one a month and limit it to an inside program. Once a year try for an outside program. As leadership in the lodge evolves, modest social programs will become entrenched and can become expanded. They will become part of the tradition of that particular lodge.

4.7.6 Linking Programs

The phrase words "social program" needs a flexible interpretation. At first glance, degree work has nothing to do with the social side of Masonry. But consider the opportunities.

One particular lodge was initiating a candidate from the Greek community. The lodge scoured lodges across the city and came up with a team from that community. The banquet hour had flat bread, dips, and other Hellenic delicacies.

Another candidate, skilled in Japanese martial arts, was received by an old friend at the door of the lodge. The candidates highly prized Samurai sword was smuggled from his house. Sushi was served at banquet hour. What has raw fish and Japanese armour to do with an initiation? They create interest and memories.

Consider ethnic background, occupations, and religion when planning any degree. Match the social program to them.

Police officers are honoured to see a fellow officer initiated. Their professional brotherhood crosses municipal, provincial, and federal lines. If the candidate is an avid fisherman, involve his fishing buddies if possible, and serve fish at the banquet hour. The candidate, the important person for the evening, is delighted to see brethren from his workplace, community, or church when he finally regains his sight. This joy, this social glow, is shared when the brethren socialize afterwards. It is an improvident social director who does not have such visitors participate either in the work or in the toasts following the meeting.

One lodge invites the spouses of officers to the installation. They go from labour to refreshment to permit their guests to take part in the presentations. Members of other lodges assist by hosting a wine and cheese reception while lodge is open. Spouses are encouraged to sit with their husbands at the banquet hour and not at a segregated table.

Consider families. Could sons and nephews attend banquet hours? Could wives, daughters, and neighbours? Could the social life of your lodge be improved by having friends and family included in the presentation of Grand Lodge Regalia, the marking of special anniversaries, or participation in education nights? Your lodge has your answer.

4.7.7 Resources

You have riches in resources you can't even imagine. When planning a guest speaker, find out what your members want to know. Go to your membership list. Go to your community at large. Ask, "Could you help us, please?" The question usually brings a positive response.

- Festivals: One lodge invited a founder of the Kitchener Waterloo Oktoberfest to talk to the lodge. "It took the imagination of three men to get that event rolling 25 years ago". He told us about community dynamics.
- Death: It has become impersonal, handled only by doctors and undertakers. What happens after someone dies? A brother who is an undertaker enlightened us.
- Public Safety: The police have new weapons. The media says the police are shooting a lot of people. One lodge invited a weapons training officer from a local police force to bring a selection of weapons, including a new automatic weapon. The members had an open discussion, and felt safer.
- Immigration: In one lodge members were puzzled by reported abuses of immigration laws and an influx of queue-jumpers. A lodge member who is an immigration lawyer, joined with a retired MP who worked on the Act and a member of the Immigration Appeals Board and answered everyone's questions.
- Defence: A major who was public affairs officer for the Canadian Forces in the former Yugoslavia.
- Music: Invite an expert in Mozart to prepare the lodge for an opera.
- Wine: Invite a guest with a purple thumb and a great wine cellar.

- Air Safety: Invite a PR director of an Airline Pilots Association.
- Remembrance Day: Urge members to wear their service medals and decorations (miniatures for those in formal wear). Promotes conversation at banquet hour.

Individuals are willing to help. Agencies, unions, and companies are eager to tell their stories. Both await only an invitation and a platform. Your obligation to receive them with courtesy and impartiality and to give them a reasonably-sized crowd to address.

4.7.8 Voice of Experience

Your lodge has to decide what works for it.

One particular lodge reports:

"Guest speakers present serious topics in the lodge room. (More casual talks are given in the banquet hall.) The VSL is closed on the altar and the working tools are away. The lodge has been closed but members wear their regalia and the lodge is otherwise clothed. Outside guests, including family members, are received and sit with the members. They see for themselves the link between Masonry and education, they can soak in the atmosphere of the lodge, and they can see the regalia. (This has resulted in requests for applications)".

4.7.9 Tips for a Successful Social Hour

- The lodge room is opened to outside guests after the social hour and skilled brethren are made available to answer questions.
- Guest speakers could engage in a question and answer period.
- Long banquet tables have been replaced by round tables seating six to eight people. It promotes group conversation.
- Eliminate the head table. Special guests are escorted by lodge members to specific seats when appropriate but free seating is more in keeping with egalitarian ideals.
- Grand Lodge Officers, past and present, are encouraged to sit at separate tables. Our members enjoy talking with them.
- Stand-up-and-circulate makes for better mixing than sit-down meals.
- Food does not have to be fancy nor expensive. A wheel of brie, a chunk of cheddar, and quartered tart apples makes for good sociable food. Do it yourself sandwiches with cold meats, cheese slices, mustard and bread are quite adequate. Variety is appreciated by the members. (Please, not pizza or doughnuts every meeting!)

- The traditional Ladies Night has been dropped. In its place we have a family potluck dinner to end the Masonic season, with either the men or the women cooking.
- Plan and co-ordinate so that the degree, the candidate, the speaker, the guests, and the food all have links.

4.8 THE IMPORTANCE, PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF LODGE VISITATIONS

4.8.1 Importance and Purpose

What wizardry lies in visitation? What will transform a traveller from a faceless person behind an auto wheel, into a man of specific merit and deserving of favour?

Masonic membership and the privilege of visitation is yours and mine. The Mason who travels often is no stranger to this privilege. Many depend upon visitation to relieve the boredom of ongoing activities within his mother lodge and in time to establish firm friendships in the lodges where he has visited. One of the most obvious ways to involve new Masons immediately is in the area of Lodge Visitation. Not much expertise is required and there is a fabulous opportunity for the Brother to gain valuable experience. Every Lodge reflects a vast range of ages and conditions among its members. Ages range from twenty-one in most Jurisdictions, to more than one hundred.

Any Mason in good standing may visit any recognized lodge in the district, province, country or abroad, subject at all times to regulations of his own and the visited jurisdiction. To the Visitor, the Masonic world has made available the facilities of lodges, the assistance, companionship, and hospitality of its members, all when he presents himself at the lodge portal. The cold exterior of a strange community and the indifferent manner of its citizens disappear upon his acceptance with the friendly and fraternal handshake.

The word "privilege" has been mentioned frequently. One might ask why visitation is not a "right", especially since some by-laws refer to it in this manner. It is a right only so far as each Mason has the same chance, meets the same requirements and is greeted as are all other Masons upon visiting another lodge. However, restrictions are placed upon the indiscriminate visitation of lodges in much the same manner as a man may regulate the traffic through his own home. Any member present in lodge at the time a visitor presents himself, may object to the Master, and our traveller must remain outside the tiled door. If already sitting in lodge, he must retire. The lodge is the member's fraternal home, so it is for him as well as any other member, to select those from other lodges to sit with him in his own.

The visiting Mason should avoid meetings at which election of officers and lodge audits are discussed, as well as when any topic of a strictly local and unpleasant nature is to be aired. He may not be present at Masonic trials unless he is on official business in connection with such trial. Only upon express invitation of the lodge should any visitor presume to appear for admission under these circumstances, otherwise he may encounter an embarrassing "impasse" leaving an unpleasant memory of his visit.

4.8.2 How Do I Visit Another Lodge?

Many of us do not actually know the procedure of visiting another lodge. The method to gain admission is in most jurisdictions basically the same. **A member in good standing who has been personally vouched for by a brother in good standing or who has passed a satisfactory examination by a Board of Trial may visit a lodge at the discretion of their Worshipful Master.** Be certain you have something to identify yourself, a paid up dues card, a letter under seal from your lodge addressed to you, or any document issued under seal by it. Make certain the dues card is countersigned.

Many brethren have been careless of this in the past. A card may fall into unscrupulous hands, and might be used in an improper manner to beg money or other assistance, all in the name of the brother who forgot to sign and then lost his card.

If you are just “plain Johnny Mason”, one of the members who never studied the work and seldom attend meetings, it might be well to brush up on the principle grips and passwords with a member of your lodge. Now, fortified with all this, you are about to invade the precincts of the strange lodge.

4.8.3 How to Visit a Lodge? A Step by Step Answer.

(a) You have previously determined that the lodge is regular and recognized by our own Grand Lodge. You approach the Tyler and advise him of your desire to visit, introducing yourself. He will make the necessary arrangements while you remain with him.

(b) **A Board of Trial for a visitor shall be conducted by at least two Master Masons of the lodge, of whom one should be an Installed Master, appointed by the Master..** These brethren are entrusted with the task of satisfying themselves that you are a Mason in good standing. They may ask you to examine the register in the thought that a brother may be inside who could vouch for you and eliminate the examination.

(c) You know not a single brother present however, and are requested to exhibit the documentary evidence to which we have referred. If the lodge is out of Province, the committee will check the directory of lodges to ascertain the regularity of your own, unless they already know of it.

(d) Having satisfied themselves in that regard, the committee will retire with you to a convenient place from which any and all other persons are excluded while the examination is being conducted.

(e) The necessary questions will be asked to assure the committee, that you are in possession with the necessary signs, grips and tokens of the Degrees. If you are a Master Mason, you might be required to **subscribe to the Tyler’s oath in accordance with Form 3 in the Constitution, or repeat it** while holding the Volume of the Sacred Law.

(f) Following satisfactory examination, the visitor shall enter his name, his Masonic rank and the name of his lodge in which he claims or last claimed membership, in the attendance book kept by each lodge for the purpose.

(g) After the committee have reported their findings to the Master, you will be properly clothed and conducted into the lodge by the appropriate officer. Here you will be introduced to the members present and led to a convenient seat next to brethren, if possible, so that you may be made to feel at ease quickly.

(h) If you are a Grand Lodge officer or hold any title in the fraternity, the Master may, at his discretion, invite you to the East for introduction and accorded a seat beside him.

4.8.4 Conclusion

Now, suppose one day you find conditions reversed and you are appointed to be part of a Board of Trial committee. You will act as described above, exercising tact and diplomacy in your greeting and the way in which you make the various requests of the visiting brother. Some suggestions along this line may be timely at this point.

By ascertaining whether the visitor has ever held office or has been a Grand Lodge Officer, you may decide just to what extent you will examine him. You would not expect a visitor who is only occasionally present in his own lodge to recite a long lecture or conduct a degree for you in the examination. Remember to give the visitor, at all times, the benefit of courtesy and friendliness.

Above all, put the visitor at ease. He may never have undergone this ceremony before. If you perceive that he is becoming "out of his depth" in replying to your questions, suggest to him that he relate what transpired in the degrees in his own words. This will often bring out the desired information from a brother who finds himself unable to recite a word of ritual in the proper manner. Always keep in mind that true Masonry lies far beyond the mere ability to recite its ritual and ceremony, or the act of doing lip service to its teachings.

Visitation is a true privilege. It is a privilege in a greater sense as it enables a Mason to widen his scope of experience, his acquaintances, his fund of knowledge and his understanding of the complexities of human nature. We shall sometimes find a spiritual life and a renewal of our confidence in mankind's basic honesty and compassion. When men who were complete strangers only a short hour before, greet us with a warm and fraternal handshake, we realize that the fraternity is a collection of Grand Lodges which in turn are collections of constituent lodges. Again, these lodges are made up of the individual man with a common meeting point of the mind and heart. Here are the "grass-roots" of the Craft and with these qualities the newly initiated brother may well plan his Masonic beginnings.