

## Creating a Mason

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Y A N S I T N E C O T L, Y F F T R A O A O S, Y B E A T R H O T W M I T E, A I A P T S T Y T S A A J A U  
M.

What have we done? Made a Mason? Well...legally ...administratively – yes, we have. But have we transitioned a good man into a Freemason – I theorize that we have not.

Now, I'm fully aware that the word "Alchemy" can potentially strike fear into the hearts of many Masons. It holds mystery – like Freemasonry. It's hermetical – like Freemasonry. Yet, it is also the transformation of matter from one state of being to another. Is that, my Brethren, not also like Freemasonry? In attempting to create a Mason, are we not truly attempting to take a man from one state of being to another? If not, we should be.

Masonry, as it has been said by far more learned men than me, is not for everyone. It was never meant to be. And it's not easy – nor was it ever meant to be. But we, as Masons, cannot go out into the world, tell people that we are the greatest Fraternity in the history of the world, and then carry out a design that applies to us, beyond that of "joining" or "belonging". We must, as Masons, transform. We cannot settle for being good men with aprons. It takes no special man to practice friendship, morality, brotherly love, relief, truth and charity. It takes only a decent human being. We claim to be more – we must be more. Oh...it's as good a way as any to explain to a non-Mason, who we are and what we do, if you prefer short explanations. But it puts us in a corner from which we have to struggle to extricate ourselves.

I'd like to present one more example of Ritual that points directly at misleading our new masons: Y H N R A T I T P T O N C, A H A B R G T T S O A C M. What?! Really?!? All the instruction?!?! (Southern epithet).

Let's go back to the theory of Alchemy. Transformation. As we abide here today in this Lodge – this "Traditional Observant Lodge", let's examine the transformative process in taking a man from profane world to Freemason. We won't debate the premise of taking "good men", although much can and should be written and debated concerning whether we truly put any effort into ascertaining the quality of an individual before we "put the arm" on him. At the recent Conference of Grand Masters & Grand Secretaries of North America, the Grand Secretary of California presented a very interesting talk on membership. I won't go into everything he did, for obvious reasons, but one particular piece of research he did, and which he presented in graphic form, was a chart of membership for the last 100 years. (war years) Today, we still try to convince ourselves that the number we reached ONE TIME, after WWII, is where our membership number should be. It was an anomaly!! We must stop believing the fallacy that more Masons will make Masonry stronger. Indeed, in our rush for membership, I



believe we are, and have been, for the last 150 years, in the second Anti-Masonic period. The first, well-documented, lasted for a few decades in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and fizzled out in the 1850's. Since then, we have (in N.A), been so paranoid about being "accepted", that we willfully changed the nature of the practice of Masonry to accommodate public opinion. So, we went from an anti-Masonic period perpetrated by non-Masons, to one which, in my opinion, is far more harmful, because it has been perpetrated AND perpetuated from within the Fraternity. For the purpose of this rambling topic, we have thusly, lowered our expectations of what Masonry is and what Masons should be.

Quality: An easy way to think about it....we don't need more members in Masonry, we need more Masonry in our members! And so....our work is such defined.

Whether or not we solicit men we know to be good and true with the promise of a higher calling in Masonry, or let them come to us, is a secondary concern. How can we, in good conscience, bring a man into Masonry, after promising him so much, and sit there with him at that dreaded 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, and think that we've helped him, or our Fraternity? What to do...?

Let's first admit that there is room in Masonry for good men of many different opinions of how time should be spent observing the Craft. Whether your particular interest is in further light by study, discussion and spreading information concerning the principles, morals, dogma and history of the Craft, or whether we prefer community projects, or meeting for coffee and donuts, there is room. I do not believe, and will not presume that there is no room in Masonry for the many good men with whom we share our Lodges. But, BUT, the time has come when we MUST consider the rhetoric (one of the 7 liberal arts and sciences) we use to explain our Craft to a Petitioner. For too many years, we have promised people that they only have to put as much time in as they want. We've all done it...."Just get through your Degrees, and then you can come and go. Sure, we'd love to have to become an officer, but don't worry about that! Etc., etc." We must stop the clock AND the calendar when we make new Masons. What is our hurry? Invite the man to several dinners at the Lodge. Get to know him, and let him get to know us. Find a reading list. (groan). Yes...a reading list. If a man wants to become a Mason, we have to adhere to the missing comma (Explain). If a man is unwilling to study, how much improvement do you expect? Let's look honestly, and without hypocrisy at our Degree process. Memorizing must be for a purpose, not to show off memory skills. Committing lessons to memory should be done because those lessons are IMPORTANT. So...how can that happen? If we were to require each Candidate to present his interpretation of his most recent lesson (and proficiency) before he moves on, we, at the very least, have caused him to have to consider the words and meaning of the lesson and not solely the Ritual. There is a never-ending stream of knowledge in the EA Degree alone. Memorizing it in 28 days practically, and fundamentally prevents a candidate from learning the lesson, and instead forces him only to memorize.

Mentors: Every Lodge must be able to provide a Mentor for each candidate. Not someone to teach him the Ritual, but someone to teach him his LESSONS. (NM). Let him actually BE an Apprentice before moving on to FC. Let him actually practice the Craft before moving on to MM. A MASTER Mason, by definition of the word MASTER, must be someone who has acquired



a new body of knowledge, putting him on a higher level of activity than others. But....how can a man aspire to something without knowing what comes next?

Improvement: We must instill in every candidate for Masonry, the belief in our first Ritual....that we come here to improve ourselves. And, we must then be CONVINCED, that he believes that is his purpose in coming to the Craft. (old marriages). If we actually, do that, then it stands to reason that we must then allow him to understand how he has improved from lesson to lesson. Not by tests, but by work. Masons work, it is the very premise of the Trestleboard. Allow (or require) him to show us his work, as he defines it. Then allow his Brethren, Mentor and Lodge Leaders, to discuss and counsel with him the results of that work. Only then, should he move on.

Acceptance: Every person (Maslow's theory) needs to feel that he is accepted by the people with whom he has chosen to associate. Let's not then, prevent our new Brethren from feeling certain of acceptance. Allow EA's to be accepted by EA's. If we open in an EA Lodge, it must be for a higher reason than to just have more people there or to allow a man to think he's more than he truly is. Let that meeting truly be instructive in the myriad of topics engendered by the EA Degree. Do the same for FC's. Create a true Lodge of Fellow Crafts. If you, or someone in your Lodge doesn't know what that entails, that's ok....learning is what we do! In allowing a Candidate to be a part of a Lodge of EA's, or a Lodge of FC's, he is then truly a part of something larger than he has known before. He is in fact, "Taken and Accepted"!

MM Lodge: What is a Lodge of Master Masons? Oh, I don't expect an answer, nor do I look for discussion here and now. But we must, within our Lodges, have a belief and understanding of expectations of the time we will spend in a Lodge of MM's. We won't take the time here to discuss the context of a meeting. Suffice it to say, it MUST be more than bills, business and buildings. It MUST be lessons! It MUST be IMPROVEMENT! It MUST contain open discussion. (Explain).

Obviously, this topic is one that can and should fill books, and not one that can or should be easily explained in 15-20 minutes. But there is a summary (comment). If we truly believe that we are the greatest Fraternity in the history of the world (and I do!), then we must raise both the level of expectations of what a Mason is, and the level of expectations in our Mason of how he can be improved by Masonry. And we can....a very few simple examples have been given here. I know you can create more.

So what about the gift.....

Bear with me here as I attempt to take you on a bit of a journey. Please, let your memory cast back to when you were a child. Remember a Christmas morning. Perhaps you received a long sought-after gift, and let's say, for the sake of this exercise, that it was a baseball glove. It's fantastic, remember it, the feel of it on your hand, the smell of the new leather, the sound as you smacked your fist into it. And one of the first things you do with it, is show it off – especially to your friends. They do the same...they try it on, sense the feel of it. But...in the end, you take

it back, because it's yours. Now I'd like you to use the same tactic to take you back to when you became a Mason. Remember the feeling, the sensation, the sense of accomplishment. And what's the first thing you want to do with it? You want to show it off...but you don't know exactly how. After all, you've been sworn to secrecy. But the one great thing we have all learned is that Masonry is the one gift we can share that actually grows greater for ourselves in the sharing. The more of it we share, the more of it we have for ourselves. (Love).

So, my Brethren.....Share the gift.