

Grand Lecturer's Report

June 13, 2008

VWB Charles C. Compton

MWB Wayne I. Smith:

It has been a pleasure and a very high honor to serve as your Grand Lecturer this year. To travel the far bounds of this Grand Jurisdiction wearing the beautifully adorned Norm Watts Ceremonial Grand Lecturer's apron is a memory I will cherish for the rest of my life. One of the first things I learned after being installed as Grand Lecture was the meaning and the symbolism of the apron and Jewel. The Six Pointed Star represents the Wisdom of Solomon and the Closed Eye All Masonic Knowledge. So the Grand Lecturer is supposed to possess the Wisdom of Solomon and be the Custodian of all Masonic Knowledge. I now stand humbly before you and must confess that I neither possess all Wisdom or All Knowledge. My journey is still in progress over the rough and rugged road of life. And this year has been one of the most educational and rewarding years of my life. I thank you Grand Master for the opportunity to serve as Grand Lecturer for this Dynamic and Progressive Grand Jurisdiction.

Another thing I learned is that the Term Standard Work is a misnomer. The Standard work in this Vast Grand Jurisdiction varies from region to region and lodge to lodge. The Work is similar but not standard. The Standard Work and Freemason's Guide published last year is widely available but rarely used. The much preferred small ciphers are the preferred reference material because they can be used without bringing attention to officer reading the work from them in lodge. While there are lodges and officers who do an outstanding job with the Ritual, Fewer and fewer members are investing the time and effort to learn the work. The degree teams consist of the same six to eight members who do everything. While some of the newer members are taking an active part in degrees this are the exception and not the norm. I have read many of the reports of the Grand Lecturer and this has been a problem for years.

Why is this? Are we all too busy and do not have the time to devote to the study of the ritual. Is the Ritual obsolete and meaningless and unimportant? Is the Ritual some kind of foreign language we must learn that serves no purpose?

The answer to all these questions is no not at all. The ritual is not just a new language to learn but a road map to assist us navigate all the trials that rough and rugged road of life place in our way. Its beautiful symbolism is our plan for a successful and profitable life. When I was young we were taught that to memorize something was to learn it by Heart. When we memorize the wonderful Masonic ritual we are filling our Hearts with all the information and guide lines we will need in life. The ritual will not just stay in our head but should also reside in our Hearts. All that Masonic knowledge will be the material of what VWB Tom Dangelo calls the Heart Filter. When we are tested by life's many trials we should not shoot from the lip and react but take time to let the Heart Filter do its work.

Then we will have time to think and act in the best and most Masonic Way. We will show our light to the world.

The Ritual knowledge can be a Mental Tattoo of that most important philosophy of life we all Love and enjoy.

EMI Excellent Masonic Inspiration.

The Ritual Knowledge can be the Masonic Garmin that will help direct our lives in the most Masonic and positive way. And I am sure that it will now freeze at an important moment and say RECALCATING!

I have served as Lodge secretary for almost 10 years and I always took the time to write a personal note to the members of the lodge I had not seen in awhile when I sent dues cards each year. Many times they would write back.

The Kitsap county Sheriff is Br, Steve Boyer and he wrote one year that he always thought about the Masonic teachings when he met people who were headed down the wrong way on the road of life. He felt his job was to try to help the person see the better way and change their behavior before it was too late.

A 60 year member of Steadfast Lodge wrote once that he always remembered the lessons he learned at the lodge when he took the degrees of Masonry during World War II. I haven't had time to attend lodge much all these years but I know the lessons taught me have helped me to enjoy a wonderful 55 year marriage, raise a loving family and achieve a successful Naval Career and retirement.

I recently started a new job as General Manager at one of the Largest Carwashes in the Seattle Area. This has been quite a challenge to say the least. This was a Work Place at war. You are probably familiar with the motivational terms the Carrot or the Whip. This was the entire Whip and that was the Cat of Nine Tales. After awhile the whip does not work and more and more whip is needed. It took me some time to gain the confidence of the men and begin to motivate them in a more positive way. I drew upon my Masonic Teachings to help restore order and encourage cooperation through out the crew. The business has been transformed and it is a much more productive, profitable and enjoyable place to work.

So where do we go from here?

There is a Senator in the news who is promising Change. It is time for a change. Change is good. It is time to Change many things.

We in the Fraternity have also embraced Change. Several years ago we had TTWWADI Pins. That is the way we have always done it/ not. We changed the way we coached new candidates. We started the Alternative Proficiency program, The New Candidate Education Program. That would make it easier for the new members to learn. We gave

the Deputies a copy of the Standard Work in plain English to help encourage study throughout the lodges. And now we have the Standard work and Freemasons Guide all in one book. What has been the result? Has there been any noticeable change for the good? Are the Lodge officers more proficient?

The Grand Lecture recently held the Lodge Officers Ritual Proficiency Program the old Senior Wardens Competition. Only Two Deputies participated VWB Alden D. Sarmiento from District 6 and VWB Thomas R. Dangelo from District 12. Two lodges were selected. The overall response was ho hum. Not interested. But one District summed it up. The Deputy responded that the lodges were not interested in participating in the program because in its present format there was no way they could win. The point of the competition was to encourage Ritual Proficiency and any one who participated and practiced were the winners. It was a win win situation from the start. I remember one of the first questions asked me as an Entered Apprentice Mason was "What came you here to do?" My answer was "To Learn, To subdue my passions and To improve myself in Masonry." To improve myself in masonry. Not to Win. Not to be perfect. Just to try improve myself. That is what we all are trying to do.

There are men in this room who have a Passion for The Past. There are things we used to do that in the past that worked. We used to teach the ritual to each other mouth to ear and it worked. We used to meet weekly and or daily and go over the parts until we had it down. There is a table and two chairs down in the boiler room of Steadfast Lodge where the candidates were taught masonry man to man, brother to brother. And we learned a lot more than Masonry too. You don't practice until you get it right. You practiced until you could not get it wrong. We don't just give them a book and say go read it and let me know if you have any questions. So how do we do learn the ritual. This is a very big job. Well one of the Past Masters of Steadfast Lodge favorite saying is "Yard by Yard it is hard, Inch my Inch it is a cinch. Try to learn one small part at a time. First you can work on the prayers and Charges. Then you can do a part of the lecture. It would be great if each officer learned the installation part for their office each year. Not only would they learn the ritual but they would also be learning their own job description.

In some cases change does not work. IT causes more problems. We have tried change and have not obtained what we have sought. Maybe it is time for us to retry some of the things that have worked in the past. The Grand Worthy Advisor ask up yesterday "How is your PMA and we had to respond. Now it is time for us to ask how is your EMI. It may be a time for a Passion for the Past. It may be the time for us to go Back to the Future.

This is my report Most Worshipful Grand Master,
So Help Me God and Keep Me Steadfast.