

Brother Bring a Friend Night

A Program Worth Trying

by W. Richard C. Friedman

W. Bro Richard Friedman is a Past Master of Ancient Craft Lodge #943 Rochester NY and currently is Assistant Grand Lecturer of the First Masonic District (New York). He brings to us a program of how to present the Lodge and its purposes to the public! And the program works! If you consider presenting such a program, please check with the Grand Secretary of your Grand Lodge for approval. – Editor

Background

Brother Bring a Friend Night was a vehicle which was employed by Ancient Craft Lodge #943, Rochester, NY, in its desperate days when the Lodge faced the real choice of survival or death. The program is now utilized annually because it is fun and provides a constant potential source of new candidates.

The purpose of the evening is to expose qualified men to our gentle Craft. On that night, if the program runs well, these men will be exposed to Masonic History, a Masons Commitment to his Community through Masonic Charity and Community Service, Masonic Literature, The Degree System and Masonic Costumes, the uplifting symbolism of the Working Tools and last but perhaps most important: Masonic Fellowship and Fun.

What follows is a SUGGESTED PLAN of action for your Lodge should you want to pursue the program. Please feel free to be CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE SO AS TO IMPROVE ON THE PLAN!

Steps to Arranging Brother Bring a Friend Night

Brother Bring a Friend Night consists of a dinner and a series of 3 five minute presentations presented to your guests. The following is a guideline for organization:

1. An Action Team is appointed with three or four Brothers responsible for the following:
 - a) Invitations,

- b) Reservations and Phone Committee,
 - c) Dinner,
 - d) Arranging for Speakers and Audio Visuals,
 - e) Display Tables,
 - f) Supplies eg: Petitions, Q&A's, Concordant Body Brochures and the like,
 - g) Program Agendas.
2. The brothers must commit to bringing guests and should submit names and addresses to the committee so that guests may be invited in plenty of time and you will have a somewhat accurate count.
3. Let's break down each action team:
- a) Invitations: Can be plain or fancy, but should contain an explanation of the event and relevant information such as dress, times etc.
 - b) Phone Committee: should reach out to members and get a count of those who will attend, also encourage participation.
 - c) Dinner: We have had good luck with a buffet prepared by the Brothers but other Lodges have had the meal catered or put on by Star Chapters, with excellent results.
 - d) Speakers and Audio Visuals: **EXTREMELY IMPORTANT**: Enlist Brothers who can speak well and impress the guests. As an alternative, several good films and slide shows are available such as "Brotherhood and Service", "The Quiet Fraternity" and "Symbol of Pride" should the Lodge desire. We have done it both ways with equal success.
 - e) The Display Table consists of several sections to be described later. The tables are set up in the Lodge.
 - f) Supplies: We found that the Q&A (Masonic Information Brochure), and the concordant body brochures were most informative and our supply was almost depleted. Petitions should be at the end of each table and offered to viewers. All guests should leave with one!
 - g) Agendas: Having a typed agenda can be snappy and classy. It also provides for a tight structure.

The Program

The suggested program could go as follows:

- Receive guests and dinner

- (Dining Room) 7 pm-8pm
- Program (In Lodge Room) consisting of the following:
 - Welcome by the Master of Ceremonies
 - Speaker 1: Masonic History and some Famous Figures
 - Speaker 2: Community Service: In your Lodge Masonry as a Whole 5 min.
 - Speaker 3: What Masonry offers you and why should you join this Lodge? How to join, degree system, how to fill out petitions.
- Last Word by Master/MC who then leads the procession to Display Tables. INVITE QUESTIONS! The viewing of tables with Brothers behind them to invite and answer questions gets the candidates talking Masonry Have a brother give a Q&A along with a petition to each man.
- Back to Dining Room for Dessert and FELLOWSHIP!

Suggested Outline for Speakers

Speaker 1: Masonic History and Famous Figures: This speaker touches on Origins, Influence on America, What we stand for: eg. Friendship, Morality, Brotherly Love. Note some famous figures from Q&A.

Speaker 2: Community Service: This speaker highlights I million a Day for Charity, Charities of your Grand Lodge, Shrine Hospitals and other Concordant Body efforts, Local Masonic endeavors with a focus on your Lodges participation.

Speaker 3: What Masonry offers and why should you join this Lodge? This speaker focuses on: Fellowship, Friendships all over the country and the world, Service to humanity, the chance for self improvement, Petitioning and the degree process, and Time commitment.

Display Tables

The Display Table is one of the most important parts of the evening. We have found that guests, escorted by the Brothers who invited them, are much more apt to ask questions and seek answers. We usually set up the Display in an L shape. Each exhibit should have a written explanation attached to it. Here are the exhibits we recommend using.

The Degree System in Freemasonry and its Costumes. This exhibit should include a full candidates costume including slipper, hoodwink and cabletow.

The Entered Apprentice Apron. We usually have a Past Master's and Purple Apron on display as well, with a corresponding write up. This usually spurs questions about the differences.

Masonic Literature. This display should have a wide range of old and new Masonic Books of all kinds, the Local Masonic News, Grand Lodge Publications, Philalethes, Royal Arch, Scottish Rite, and anything else you may think of. This display is meant to show the guest the richness of our heritage and the extent of our doings.

Your Lodge's Working Tools and Volume of Sacred Law. A short explanation of the working tools should be highlighted. The Volume of Sacred Law is self-explanatory, however, someone should be prepared to answer questions about its importance to Masonry. Note: Picture books of the Lodge in action, news clippings and most importantly the Q&As and petitions should be available.

Each station is manned by a Brother and there should be plenty of interchange as the guests go through the exhibits.

Fellowship

The fellowship following the formal part of the evening is our opportunity to reveal in our own lives the lessons of friendship which we espouse. Make sure the guests are attended to and are not left standing alone. Many people do not join organizations because they fear the initial period of getting to know everyone or are tense in strange social situations. Your brotherhood and sincerity can turn the internal key for a man to really want to be a part of your lodge and allows him to feel that it is really possible to do so!

Conclusion

All Lodges need new membership for various reasons, not the least of which is that each new class of candidates gives us all an opportunity to once again be exposed to the wonderful lessons within our Masonic Teachings. This program is offered as an easy way to stimulate interest and has been proven to be successful in garnering candidates. We have found that the unintended benefit of the evening is that the level of pride stirred in Masons talking to guests about their beloved Craft turns THEIR intensity level up a notch and the Lodge is the recipient of a renewed and more vigorous Brother. Not convinced? Our Brother Bring a Friend Night held in June 1990 brought 23 potential candidates to our Lodge. At our first meeting in September 1990 SEVEN men made the commitment to seek light in Masonry. We also received one petition for dual membership! Trying this program is certainly a no lose proposition. Apply the following paraphrased ancient wisdom of the great Rabbi Hillel to your lodges situation: If I am not for me who will be? If I am not for others what am I? If not now when? The WHEN for Masonry my Brothers is clearly NOW !

~~00~~

The Short Talk Bulletin Begun in 1923 as an experiment in Masonic education, not even its proponents envisioned the speakers' library into which it would develop, or prophesied the enthusiastic reception of these monthly pamphlets.

Not intended to be complete expositions of the various subjects – how cover "The Holy Bible," for instance, in a dozen small pages? – the Bulletins are popular interpretations of their topics. Written for the average Mason, the Short Talk Bulletin has made its place in Masonic education. Lodges have them read, memorized, and spoken, abstracted. Speakers here find addresses on more than 660 subjects ready for use. Libraries use them to answer inquiries, writers consult them for subject matter, educational committees use them in instructing new brethren. The Masonic press continually reprints them for the enlightenment of readers.

All back issues are in stock. They are reprinted often, as calls for them are many, and a subscription list is maintained for those who wish to receive them.

The Short Talk Bulletin is sent every month to all lodges in member Grand Jurisdictions, mailed either to Masters, Secretaries, or Lodge Education Officers, whichever the Grand Lodge prefers. (Carl Claudy 1933)

(Now carried in data format on HIRAM'S OASIS, The Masonic BBS. 703-938-4990)

STB - December 1990