

Our Special Ladies

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This Short Talk Bulletin has been prepared as a result of suggestions from several lodges throughout the United States. It provides information that could conceivably assist lodges in their existing programs or in implementing new ones.

How it began?

In 1977 the Masters and Wardens Association of the 19th Masonic District of the Grand Lodge of Maine initiated a program whereby a note of sympathy was mailed to the widow of a recently deceased Master Mason, particularly a sojourning Mason. The results of this simple handwritten message was immediate and heartwarming.

Few people, to this day however, know that the wording, guideline- and format of this readily understood and direct message was solicited of a letter received from the late Mrs. Millwee W. Pollard, wife of our Honorary Past Grand Master Ralph J. Pollard. (See Short Talk Bulletin, September 1967). In her answering letter, one sentence revealed in startling clarity, a condition which was simply hard to understand, but immediately recognized. She wrote "I don't know why a Lodge neglects to keep in touch with Masonic Widows, possibly they are too "DIFFIDENT." Webster defines "diffident" as hesitant in acting or speaking through lack of self confidence. Thus it is altogether fitting and proper that this special Lady should be recognized as the catalyst that brought the Maine Masonic Widows Program into being. May she be recognized as such forever.

What is it?

It is a planned program, structured and organized to manage and effectively utilize the knowledge and expertise in this Grand Jurisdiction. It was developed to:

To provide a vehicle for each member to participate in a visible expression of concern for our Masonic Widows. One that would demonstrate his fidelity to the obligation he took upon himself to aid and assist our widows and orphans.

Enable each Lodge to be of greater service to its members.

Extend the hand of fellowship, guidance and assistance to the widow. Thus to let her know that she is remembered, not forgotten and that she still belongs to our Masonic Family.

Provide the Lodge with the working tools needed to perform greater service to its membership. (Continuation of which throughout successive years could conceivably perpetuate a bond which will serve to establish an image of which the brethren can be rightfully proud.)

It is endorsed but not regulated by the Grand Lodge and adopted by local lodges to fit its own needs. Adoption and implementation remain a lodge's special privilege. (When it was suggested, to our Grand Master at that time, to make the program mandatory, he wisely stated "What possible word or edict from me could be more binding than the oath all of us took at that altar?"

What are its services?

- a) Personal record - From no record at all we now have the names, addresses and many birthdays of over 8500 widows.
- b) Grand Lodge recognition (Grand Chaplain personal letter of condolence)
- c) Certificate of remembrance
- d) Broken column lapel pin
- e) Annual Widows' Night (Dinner and evening of entertainment)
- f) Invitation to all Lodge social events
- g) Transportation to doctors, dentists, hospital, grocers, etc.
- h) Personal visits and attention.
- i) Handyman services.
- j) Professional advice in all fields when requested.
- k) Personal notes as well as correspondence -birthdays, holidays, specials, etc. (a lodge has 105 members writing to an individual counterpart who may be shut in, out of state, etc.)
- l) Cancer treatments, kidney etc.
- m) Telephone - security assurance program.
- n) Lodge communications.
- o) Additional services unlimited.

Summary: At its inception the proposed organized program for the reactivation and or revitalization of the concerns for our special Ladies appeared to be questionable. The scope and implementation created doubts in the minds of many dedicated Masons. Today our Special

Ladies comprise an integral part of our Masonic Family. We have several thousand "reborn" advocates of our Masonic principles, and certainly an improvement of our public image in this area of concern.

Our Grand Chaplains Corps have collectively written hundreds of letters of hope, comfort and condolence to our widows. We are sure that these Ladies realize the concerns and joys of this fraternity which they shared with their husband continues to be reflected in our concern for THEIR remaining years.

Our Special Ladies Nights and the Broken Column lapel pins presentations are flourishing throughout the state. Over 5000 pins have been distributed. However the program is not a once a year dinner and evening of entertainment. It is one of every day concern, which is greatly appreciated, as evidenced by this sampling of expressions:

"I like being considered a part of the Masonic Family

"It sure is nice to be remembered."

"Please express my sincere thanks to your organization for their thoughtfulness in remembering my husband through your gesture of friendship to me, which I shall treasure always."

"Again many thanks for all the kindness and thoughtfulness extended to me since he's been gone."

"I never dreamed that Masons did all this."

The letters keep coming. Unsolicited, brief, direct, heartwarming and unmistakably sincere. Our special Ladies say it very clearly.

From California & the Philippines - "If a fallen brother rose from his grave, his first words would be, "Thank you, my brethren for remembering my widow." While the program is not meant to solicit appreciation but rather to translate into fulfillment one of our avowed obligations to another, it will nevertheless be such a delightful demonstration of Masonic Brotherhood to behold, to emulate.

"To soothe the unhappy, to sympathize with their misfortune, to compassionate their miseries and to restore peace to their troubled minds, is the great aim we have in view, be it in Maine, California or Philippines." (Credit: Grand Lodge of California.)

Editor's note: While jurisdictions have programs honoring the "Special Ladies," it is recognized that the program developed by the Lodge Service Committee of the Grand Lodge of Maine and described above is one which can be readily adapted by any lodge. Below, is the text of the card which accompanies the Widow's pin presentation in the Grand Lodge of Washington.

"This pin was created as an emblem to symbolize our continued concern and honor for the widows of a Brother Master Mason, a Brother whose name added luster to the Craft as he

labored with us in The Quarry. Now that his name has been entered upon the Roll of the Celestial Lodge, we cannot forget those things which he loved so deeply, nor can we be unmindful of our duty to him. It is my distinct privilege to present this emblem to you that you may wear it with great pride. It is our desire that it be to you a reminder of your ties to us; a relationship wherein you will find friends who will assist you in times of need, join with you in times of gladness, and welcome you to a continued association with us as we continue our labors of Friendship, Brotherly Love and Truth.

You are not alone. When moments may cause you to doubt, Look at this emblem and be assured that we are there and we care.

This Masonic Widow's Pin was created with the hope that it would be worn by the widow of a Master Mason on all appropriate occasions, especially when traveling, so that she may be recognized, greeted, and assisted when necessary, by Masonic friends throughout the world. It is an emblem of honor and should be worn separately, not in conjunction with other jewelry.

May she who wears this emblem find that she is not alone.

We are there and we care."

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