

The Mason In Your Home

Unknown

This Short Talk Bulletin has been adapted from the script of the Masonic Service Association motion picture film of the same title. It was presented by the late Worshipful Brother John D. Cunningham, former Executive Secretary of the Masonic Service Association. It is particularly suited for presentation to mixed audiences.

Ladies, why does your Mason so frequently leave the home you strive to make comfortable and appealing, and journey down to a stuffy lodge room to spend several hours consorting with other equally unappreciative and far too mysterious males? What is this attraction that draws men together to the exclusion of their families?

Several explanations can be found, but, reducing all of them to basic essentials, we find this simple answer: Freemasonry has a universal appeal to men of good faith, of good will, and of good conscience.

Nights out to attend Lodge and far too much secrecy often cause misunderstanding in the home. But if you, my Brother Mason, will take just a little more time to explain to your family why you go to Lodge and what Freemasonry means to you, Mother and the kids, instead of resenting your absence, will rejoice in the knowledge that the Mason in their home is one of a brotherhood that for more generations than any other society on the face of the earth, has attracted to its sacred altar the greatest humanitarians, the greatest leaders this world has ever known.

Freemasonry is a charitable, benevolent, a religious society. Its only secrets are its method of recognition and a ridiculously small part of its symbolic instruction. Every individual in this room carries in his or her bosom harmless secrets scores of times in excess of those imposed upon a Freemason. But a Mason's reluctance to talk about his ideals is often misunderstood, especially at home. And conversely, a long dissertation about the mysteries of Freemasonry, its esoteric work, etc., would be so boring to his family that even greater harm would result. But he will, I am sure, captivate your interest if he tells you about its charities, if he tells you of its glorious history; if he tells you about some of his Lodge Brothers, Lodge Brothers of the present, and Lodge Brothers of long bygone days.

Mrs. Mason, do you know, and is that hero-worshipping youngster of yours aware, that the Mason in your home could dispense with formality and address fifteen former Presidents of the United States as Brothers? The same privilege is his when he sits in Lodge with the Chief Justice of the United States and with four of his Associate Supreme Justices, or when he sits in Lodge with the majority of the United States Senators, a large proportion of the United States Representatives, and over half of the Governors.[*] In England and in countries all over the earth, Kings, Princes, and nobles of all ranks would probably return your Mason's salutation, Brother.

[] At the time this film was made, this was true. An up-to-date listing of "Masons in Government" is published biennially by the Masonic Service Association .*

It will be easy for that youngster of yours to visualize Great, Great, Great Grandfather admitting Brother George Washington into his Lodge, accompanied by Brothers John Hancock, Benjamin Franklin, General Lafayette, Paul Revere, and the many of Washington's general staff, along with many signers of the Declaration of Independence. Oh, and let's not forget Brother Lord Charles Cornwallis who surrendered to Brother Washington. He can picture Great, Great, Great Grandpappy standing on the storm-tossed decks of a Man-of-War, side by side with Brothers John Paul Jones or Admiral Dewey, or striding the battlefields of Europe with Brothers Frederick the Great, or Napoleon, or exploring our great Northwest with Brothers Lewis and Clark, and blazing trails with Brothers Kit Carson and Sam Houston. Ah, there is much of which that youngster can boast in the history of his Dad's Lodge, if Dad will only take the time to tell him.

Insist that he tell you of Masonry's interest in education because that interest is not confined solely to memorizing ritual or learning more about our Ancient Craft. Far from it. Ladies, you are probably unaware, and I suspect that many of the men present are almost as completely unaware, of the size of Freemasonry's financial stake in educating and training the youth of our land, in stocking our reservoir of leadership, if you please.

For example, some years ago the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for the Southern Jurisdiction gave to George Washington University in the District of Columbia, a million dollar endowment to establish a department for the training of leadership in government service. This endowment is augmented annually by additional contributions, and many career diplomats are the product of this school. Several Grand Lodges throughout the United States have established scholarships in their local universities.

The Northern Jurisdiction, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite, encourages young people interested in journalism and in public relations by making available to them scholarships in the Boston University School of Journalism and Communication Arts. And then there is a fund of approximately five million dollars administered by the Grand Commanderies of Knights Templar to provide scholarship loans so deserving students can complete their last two years of college. Hundreds are assisted annually by the Knights Templar. And, oh, how I hope that

sometime, some group will make it easier for youngsters to enter college. Quite often the beginners need the most encouragement. The soundest investment we can make is an investment in the youth of our land, for they are the leaders of the future. From their ranks will come the statesmen, your educators, your politicians, your ministers, your scientists; yes, and from their ranks will come the future Presidents of this great country; and Freemasonry must make quite sure that it provides a generous proportion of that leadership. For if we fail, if we permit others to capture the minds and loyalties of our young people, we have only ourselves to blame. There can be no excuse.

The opportunity is there, and if you don't want to take advantage of it, it is your fault. As the proud grandfather of two splendid grandsons who unfortunately reside in a community which does not have a Chapter of DeMolay, I must confess an almost uncontrollable impatience with my Brother Masons who either stubbornly refuse, or just will not recognize the great potential for good in this organization. Membership in this world-wide brotherhood is denied my boys. The DeMolay door to opportunity is closed to them; a door through which have passed many of the outstanding Masons of today. DeMolay boys have become Grand Masters; many of them, leaders of the Scottish Rite, leaders of the York Rite, leaders of the Mystic Shrine of North America. We find members of the DeMolay in every honorable avenue of life, in the arts, in the sciences, in the clergy, in the armed forces, in commerce – you name it: those boys are there; and I'm quite sure that the Order of Rainbow and the Job's Daughters, girls' organizations, can equal or surpass the accomplishments of the DeMolay.

Every Lodge everywhere has a history of raising sums of money for the relief of a distressed Brother, his widow and orphans, and for other purposes. For example, sometime ago it was announced in a little Lodge with scarcely one hundred in attendance, that a Brother had suffered a serious injury and needed help immediately. The Master had a receptacle placed near the altar and when Lodge was closed, the committee had the pleasure of taking nearly five hundred dollars to their injured and much worried Brother. Think of it! Then you multiply this one example by the more than 16,000 Lodges in the United States, and you will have some idea of this one phase of Masonic compassion. Yes, I said, compassion. I will not call that charity.

More than thirty Grand Lodges in the United States maintain homes and hospitals for the aged. These are not institutions. They are homes and hospitals, second to none, where our elderly Brothers and their families find a haven where they can spend their twilight years in comfort, in peace, and in dignity.

But Masonic compassion really starts outside the tiled doors of the Lodge. For example, sometime ago the University of Minnesota sought the assistance of the Grand Lodge in building a million dollar hospital for cancer research. They said that if the Grand Lodge could possibly raise \$500,000, they would endeavor to obtain the rest. Freemasonry in Minnesota rose to the challenge. Within a comparatively short time their goal of \$500,000 was achieved, and then the great heart of Minnesota Freemasonry really spoke, – no indeed, IT SHOUTED: "Let's build the

entire hospital ourselves!" The University of Minnesota now has its million dollar plus cancer research hospital, and Freemasonry in that section of the country is viewed in a different light by those who knew us not. And who knows but that next year, next month, from that Temple of Mercy with the Masonic name emblazoned over its entrance, may come the miracle for which we all so earnestly pray: a cure for the dread disease, cancer. Then there is a sequel to this story. The hospital will soon be more than doubled in size and capacity and the Masons of Minnesota are raising one and one-quarter million dollars to achieve that goal. Doesn't it make you proud to be a Mason? Have you ever heard about the Eye Foundation of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar? Look up the statistics of this great fight to wipe out diseases of the eye and blindness, for anyone in need of such treatment, regardless of race or creed. How many of you know about the phenomenal contributions made for the study and treatment of mental disease by the Scottish Rite Masons of the Northern Jurisdiction? And then, of course, every Scottish Rite body has an almoner who distributes funds to needy cases which come to his attention, but they are never made a matter of record. They are just between the almoner and the individual. The Scottish Rite of the Southern Jurisdiction maintains a splendid hospital for the treatment of crippled children; and the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine of North America have erected a hospital for the treatment and rehabilitation of badly burned youngsters, and of course you have all heard of the seventeen Shriners' Crippled Children's Hospitals. This great humanitarian project is supported by men who are first of all Master Masons – your husbands, your sons, your fathers; and it is supported to the tune of millions of dollars annually. If you could just see the stalwart young athletes who annually play in the Shrine East-West All-Star football game – if you could see them as they visit crippled children of their own faith, of their own color, – if you could see them as they hold those children tenderly in their arms, – oh, you would be proud of the Mason in your Home. And if you could just see your Masonic Service Association Hospital visitors at work in approximately eighty Army, [*] Navy and Veterans Hospitals, your hearts would be gladdened. How I wish I had the time to tell you some of the stories I have heard, some of the things I have seen!

[] In 1979, the M.S.A. Hospital Visitation Program reaches more than 100 V.A. and Military Hospitals.*

For example, one of your Hospital Visitors, these soldiers of Freemasonry, was involved in this story. He frequently visited the sightless ward where he had provided Braille playing cards for those who had lost their vision. Often as he entered the hospital, he would hear the sweet tenor voice of a boy he knew only as Danny. When he first heard Danny sing, he asked the ward attendant about him, but all he could offer was, "Swell Guy, Danny. Doesn't talk much, but he keeps the others cheered up with his old Irish songs and Negro spirituals. Why, he seems to sense when someone on the ward needs a lift."

Information about Danny was difficult to obtain. He received little mail, no telephone calls, no letters. But your Hospital Visitors are not easily discouraged. Records of Danny's service were

carefully studied and it was learned that before the War Danny had lived with his mother whom he was now trying to shield.

Danny's social life ended in a shell crater in Korea, where he and three of his buddies had taken refuge from a heavy barrage of shell fire. As they were crouched at the bottom of the crater, a rifle grenade landed on the lip of the crater and started rolling toward the bottom. Danny ran and picked it up to throw it out of the crater. But almost as it left his hand it exploded, and Danny's face and shoulders caught the full force of the blast. His companions were saved, but Danny's face and the upper part of his body were a grisly mess. His right arm and shoulder were mangled. In fact, his companions thought he was dead. Well, there followed months, stretching into years, of hospitalization, medical care second to none, operation after operation, and so many skin grafts that everyone lost track. Danny's arm and shoulder were almost completely restored, and plastic surgery made of his face far less the hideous caricature that he imagined it to be; but empty eye sockets can be filled only with useless glass.

He soon learned to identify people by running his fingers over their faces and never one word of complaint crossed his lips. Everyone loved him; everyone wanted to do something for him, especially our Brother, for he knew that despite the fact that Danny brought cheer to others, he was shriveling up and dying inside. He had no desire to leave the hospital. The mother, who was not aware of the extent of her son's injuries, must be brought to the hospital. But how to accomplish this? Don't ask me how it was done. Resources were pooled and the mother was sent a ticket. Of course she had to be met at the station, and of course that responsibility fell to your Hospital Visitor. He met her at the station and endeavored to brief her – to prepare her – for the shock of the first sight of her son while they were driving to the hospital. The ward attendant had told Danny he was having a visitor, but he did not say who. Our Brother escorted the mother to the door of the room, and he felt her stiffen momentarily as she saw the boy. But then she approached him in silence. (I suspect she just couldn't trust her voice.) Danny stretched forth his hand and touched her cheek, and almost immediately he said in a sobbing voice, "Mama! Oh, Mama!" Instantly they were in each other's arms. Silently our Brother left the room, eyes so blinded by tears he could scarcely see, so filled with emotion he could scarcely walk, but thankful to Almighty God that he was instrumental in bringing Danny back to reality.

Finally the time came for the mother to return home, and our Brother understood when she remained silent all the way to the station. But just before she boarded the train, she turned to him and looking into his face she said: "My boy is still beautiful to me and the doctors tell me I shall soon have him home with me to care for and cherish, and they also told me what you have done. Thank you, Mr. Mason, thank you for giving Danny the courage to face the world again. May God bless the Masons who made it possible!"

Ladies, and my Brothers, that grateful mother's blessings were meant for each and every Mason who year after year digs down in his pocket to keep the Hospital Visitation Program going. What does it cost? Some give fifty cents; some a dollar; some five dollars or more. No one

gives more than he can afford. Perhaps we should. There are many Dannys in service hospitals and, God help them, they will continue to come, because in no place on this earth is there peace. Let's face up to that. There is no peace. But, ladies, when they arrive broken and maimed in the hospital, your Mason will see that they are not forgotten.

Dear neglected ones, I hope I have given you a more favorable picture of this mysterious organization to which the Mason in your home belongs, an organization that spends daily on what others boast of as charity, between \$75,000 and \$100,000 dollars! [*] Think of it. Please believe me, I have merely scratched the surface in an endeavor to bring to your attention some of the things which make Freemasonry strong, some of the ideals which have brought together the finest men every generation, and for many generations. Now that you know a little bit more about us, you should be so proud of that Mason in Your Home that you will shout it from the housetops.

[] In 1978, it has been conservatively estimated that more than \$1,400,000 per day was expended in Masonic benevolences.*

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