

The Recommender

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RECOMMENDED BY BROTHER JOHN DOE,
A MEMBER OF THIS LODGE

What is in a name? It is the means, by which, we as individuals are identified. If it is used with concern and care, it will be respected. If it is overused and abused, it will be questioned – and often there will be debate as to its value. For example, who respects a person who has the reputation of passing bad checks? He develops the reputation of a person who cannot be depended on – so it is, my Brothers, in Masonry.

The name of a Master Mason can bring pleasure to himself, and profit to the Fraternity, if wisely used. It is an instrument to loose, as well as to make fast, the gates of the Fraternity.

When we recommend a person for the degrees of Masonry, do we realize the importance of this act? Does the prospective member possess the qualities and character necessary to become a good Mason? This is the first and most important safeguard of the Fraternity. Like the checks we give out, there must be sufficient funds to make the transaction good, or it will bounce and the reputation of the recommender and the petitioner will be jeopardized.

When we sign a petition, are we just practicing our penmanship and leaving our responsibility behind? In recent years, possibly this has been the situation with too many of our petitions.

The Persons admitted Members of a Lodge must be good and true Men, free-born, and of mature and discreet Age, no Bondsman, no Women, no immoral or scandalous Men, but of good Report. (Anderson's Constitutions of 1723).

The first responsibility, in regard to a petitioner, is to determine if he possesses the desire to become a Mason, and if so, has he been given some idea of what Freemasonry is and what it is not? Has he been informed that he will have to meet certain moral and financial obligations.

In some jurisdictions and in some of the lodges, the recommender is expected to stand up in open lodge and make a brief statement about the person he is recommending for membership.

The persons who sign a petition should always be in lodge when the petition is read, and by all means they should be present when it is balloted on. Failure to do so leaves a question among the Craft that the recommenders may not be completely sold on the individual. If they are convinced, they would display their conviction by being present. If you would – a credit reference for a good man. Isn't this practicing the teachings of our Fraternity, that of concern for our fellowman?

If the persons who have given this credit reference are concerned Masons, they can make a very important impression by being present at lodge every night when the candidate receives his degrees. Better yet, they should take him to lodge and introduce him to the membership. By so doing, they will be available to answer all the questions that he may have. This act will establish the first tie of Brotherhood; therefore causing the candidate to think, "Say, these fellows are serious. They are concerned with Masonry and with me."

We say that when the candidate has completed the necessary requirements of the three degrees of Masonry, he is a Master Mason and is thereby commended to the kind care and protection of Master Masons withersoever dispersed. My Brethren, he is just starting to become a Master Mason at this point. To this new Brother of the Craft, the recommenders should assume a greater responsibility than ever before. They are the two Masons who can whisper good counsel to the new Brother, take him to a neighboring lodge and let him be examined, assist him with the formalities of balloting in lodge, inform him on what honors are to be given at the proper time, what books are good for his further enlightenment, and can offer assistance to those questions that most members hesitate to ask when they are so new. By so doing, they are thereby developing a deep and lasting impression of Masonry. Therefore they would be enabling him to become a better Mason.

By their demonstration of interest and concern in the new Brother, they are demonstrating that there are sufficient funds to make the transaction good – to the petitioner they are demonstrating that he is important, and that they are willing to help him to a better way of life.

"Let George do it" is somewhat the way of our lives – passing the buck. Too much responsibility has been placed on the coach, and letting the brothers who recommended him go somewhat free of responsibility in laying this important foundation. If the coach does not do a good job, the candidate does not receive the start to which he is entitled. Whose responsibility is it to see that the new brother received good coaching, and that he understands the teachings of the Masonic Degrees? The recommenders, in signing the petition, have in effect, stated that the candidate is potentially a good Mason, and if they are serious about it, they will see that he receives the proper start in Masonry.

Possibly we should return to the practice of standing up in lodge and demonstrate our pride in the use of our names. This would require the recommender to express a deep belief in the character and reputation of the person proposed for membership and attest to his good character, as well as the recommenders willingness to follow through.

If there is a loss of Brother's interest and involvement in Masonry, and the discharging of his financial obligation begins to decrease to the point where he must be dropped from the rolls, then the recommenders and the other Brothers must assume their responsibility once more. Here again there has been too much of "letting George do it". The Lodge Secretary, should never have to do any of the soliciting of dues (other than in open lodge). It is the membership's responsibility, particularly the recommender, to demonstrate their concern in their fellowman and Brethren.

So, what is in a name? Has it some meaning? Is it as good as the individual it represents? In the roll of the recommender, we are the most important person in Masonry. What kind of a reference are we giving when we sign our names, and in the role we play after that?

Think back to the times you have used your name on petitions in the past. Is the Brother still a Mason, and how good a Mason is he? What did you do in this important act – in safeguarding and opening the gates to a better way of life?

There is an instrument, the Trowel, which spreads the cement of Masonry, and I quote in part – that cement which unites us into one sacred band, or society of friends and brothers, among whom no contention should ever exist, but that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who best can work and best agree. My Brothers, there is another working tool of Freemasonry, the pen. When it is used to sign a petition, it is writing the future of Freemasonry.

A Lodge is a place where Masons assemble and work; Hence that Assembly, or duly Organized Society of Masons, is call'd a Lodge, and every Brother ought to belong to one, and to be subject to its By-Laws and general Regulations. (Anderson's Constitutions of 1723).

All Preferment among Masons IS grounded upon real Worth and personal merit only; that, so the Lords may be well served, and the Brethren not be put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis'd, Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority but for his Merit. (Anderson's Constitutions of 1723).

The only punishment ever inflicted by Freemasons upon Freemasons are reprimand, suspension (definite or indefinite.), and expulsion from the Fraternity, The initiate who violates his obligation will feel the weight of no hand upon him. He will suffer no physical penalties whatsoever. The contempt and detestation of his brethren will be punishment enough.

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