

## "What's Your Line?"

Unknown

*This Short Talk Bulletin was prepared by the headquarters staff of M.S.A., using information from a variety of Masonic publications and discussions with many Masonic leaders.*

In "meeting upon the level," we frequently lose sight of the fact that the Brother sitting next to us has a vocation, avocations, and special talents. We think of him only as a Mason--and accept him as such. This is particularly true in larger lodges, where our only contact with one another is in lodge. We have a tendency to deal in "small talk" or merely talk about the weather, the degree work or Masonic experiences. It's usually only after we have gotten to know the brother pretty well that we get around to asking, "What's your line of work?" And we're usually surprised that his "line" is different than we had imagined.

The man we have pegged as a lawyer may turn out to be a bus driver. And the man we thought might be an electrician could very possibly be a dentist.

We are usually surprised to learn of the vast amount of varied talent that congregates around our altars. Good men from every walk of life are truly attracted to the Ancient Greek.

It is a sad fact, however, that in our eagerness to gain members, we neglect them by not using their talents. During a candidate's progress through the three degrees, he is the most important person in the lodge. We heap all kinds of attention upon him as we provide him with the symbolic working tools. Then, once he has been raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason, we turn our attention to the next candidate.

The newly-raised Mason has become a statistic. He's still in the darkness. He's neglected. He has all of those shiny new working tools. He has his "union card." But, he is "unemployed." There aren't any designs upon the trestleboard for him to use. He becomes bored, frustrated, disinterested, a stranger in a strange place, bewildered. It's an easy thing for him to NOT come back to the lodge room. Then it's an easy thing for him NOT to pay dues to an organization that's not interested in him. And he can easily, in a year or so, show up as "dropped NPD."

There are some forward-looking lodges which are doing something about such situations by making an earnest effort to get all of their members involved, including the NEW Mason.

The first and foremost idea is to find out all they can about each member of the lodge. Then to match his skills, talents, abilities, and interests to the needs of the lodge, taking into account the physical limitations of each member.

To do this, involves a great deal of thought, organization and WORK. Basically, what is involved is: (a) developing a questionnaire which will provide NEEDED information; (b) devising a system to secure the information; © compiling the information; (d) USING the information; (c) maintaining and up-dating the information; (f) making the information available to the progressive line.

In developing the questionnaire, consideration must be given to what data is essential and needed. Too many questionnaires are cluttered up with questions that are useless. For instance, can you imagine the responses you would get if you had a blank to indicate "SEX"?

A basic form developed by the Masonic Service and Education Committee of the Grand Lodge of Michigan was used effectively by many lodges in that jurisdiction. It included these basic questions: name, address, business telephone number, home phone, occupation, special talents. Interested in participating as follows:

- as an officer;
- a member of the lecture team;
- organist;
- pianist;
- soloist;
- Glee Club;
- choir;
- Membership Committee;
- Education Committee;
- Intender;
- Trestleboard Editor;
- Staff member;
- other \_\_\_\_\_

A notation at the bottom of the form indicated:

"Your suggestions for the improvement of the lodge would be appreciated. A self-addressed envelope is enclosed--please send us your ideas. They will be given careful consideration and will be kept in strictest confidence. Send them anonymously if you wish. We are particularly interested in improving our lodge programs to benefit and interest you. If you have specific suggestions please describe them."

If you are planning to use the questionnaire to select committees, or to locate potential sources for repair or maintenance work, you would want to include questions regarding hobbies, skills and talents. There are so many Masons who have no interest or ability in ritual work but who

would delight in the opportunity to prepare and serve refreshments; do cabinet or electrical work; paint; or do landscaping and gardening. They would like to be involved. They want to do their part; to feel needed and appreciated.

Shut-in Brethren have been found to be a great source of energy in serving on "telephone committee" used to remind the other Brethren of lodge activities. In making the calls, they learn of Brethren who fall under the heading of "sickness and distress." They learn of widows in need of assistance. They serve as the eyes and ears of the lodge. Most of all, they find an opportunity to serve the lodge and their Brethren, and in doing it they are able to minimize their own problems and loneliness.

You have no doubt heard the ridiculous stories about the world-renowned Chef who ended up as a mechanic in the Army; and the electrical engineer who ended up as an Army cook. Putting round pegs into square holes may have bureaucratic advantages. However, experience shows that Masonic lodges function much better if the members' skills are used to fulfill lodge needs. It's an important function of lodge leadership to put the right peg in the right hole.

Following is a more elaborate Masonic Lodge Talent Record which covers a wide variety of talents. Armed with the information provided by such a form, a Worshipful Master or Warden can be better informed on who can be put to work where.

#### MASONIC LODGE TALENT RECORD

Date:

Name of Member

Home address      Phone:

Business address      Phone:

Occupation

Formal education

Masonic Birthday

Hobbies

Major interests

Physical limitations

Members of family with special skills, hobbies, and interests

INTERESTED in the FOLLOWING LODGE WORK

Posting of Candidates

Being an Intel/instructor

Degree Lecturer

Investigations

Sick Visitation

Attend Funeral Services

Exhibit hobby collection

Prepare Educational items

Give Book Reviews

Library Work

Masonic Research

Write for Lodge periodical

Present Masonic talks

Temple maintenance

carpentry

electrical

other

Committee work

Take part in plays

Visit other Lodges

Musical:

pianist

soloist

choir

organist

Glee Club

Audio/Visual Equipment

Liaison with other bodies

Telephone Committee

Youth Activities

Take photographs

Help with refreshments

Becoming an officer

Other work

LODGE WORK that INTERESTS MY FAMILY

Present music

Take part in plays

Assist in serving refreshments

Exhibit hobby collection

Take part in an entertainment

Take photographs

Other work

*(For more practical discussions of the Masonic "work ethic," be sure to read next month's Short Talk Bulletin, "WORK" by Brother Alphonse Cerza.)*

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