THINGS I WISH I HAD BEEN TOLD

This paper deals with some of the things I wish I had been told both before and after my initiation... information, I am sure, that would be of interest and benefit to any new or almost new Mason. These are only a few of the things I have found lacking in my own experience; they could probably be multiplied many times throughout our membership.

To begin with, I should have been told that upon my entrance into the lodge I would find that I was entering upon a solemn and dignified ceremony; that this ceremony was to be performed for MY benefit; that there would be no horseplay, no hilarity or other such actions. I wish I had been told that my being blindfolded was of very important significance the reason being explained to me before the ceremony was completed; and that I had no reason to be fearful, but rather that I should try to relax and concentrate on all that I should hear. This is most important if a new candidate is to be properly impressed with his first introduction to our fraternity.

Consider the destructive approach instilled in the mind of the candidate who is told he will "ride the 'Goat" as a portrayal of evil. The mythical Pan was half goat to signify that nature was half evil. Does irresponsible reference to such a symbol have any proper place in the introduction of a candidate to our fraternity? I think not. Furthermore, such untrue threats to the comfort of the candidate can hardly be expected to place him at ease that he might benefit fully from our ceremonies.

I wish I had been told that before I became a full fledged Mason in the ordinary sense of the word, that I would have to pass through three similar ceremonies, and that I would have to do a certain amount of memory work; also that this memory work should not worry me beforehand as all Masons before me had handled it satisfactorily and that any man or normal mentality would have no trouble with it... in fact most Masons had quite enjoyed it.

I wish I had been told that I would not gain any direct material benefits by joining the "Masons" - that Masonry is a way of life, the building of a new and better character, a new and better outlook on life, a new and better association with my fellowman, the numerous benefits of which would ultimately far outweigh any immediate material benefits which I might at the moment have erroneously hoped to gain.

I wish I had been told that Masonry was of a religious nature, that its ceremonies and teachings were based on the Sacred Volume, but that it neither was nor is intended to take the place of any actual religion. That the Holy Bible lying open upon our altar should be an incentive to take a more active part in the religion of our choice.

I wish I had been told the meanings of all the things that were told to me during the Lectures that were given. These lectures have far too much masonic teaching in them to be absorbed and understood by an initiate on only one evening and at only one presentation. The whole story of Masonry is outlined in these lectures, and the enlargement and study of them is the
very aim of "Masonic Education." It is certainly not enough to tell a new Mason that attendance at lodge is the best way to gain further knowledge of these teachings . . . especially in many of the smaller country lodges where new candidates may come along once every two to three years. The newly made Mason may have wandered off long before this, because of lack of interest on the part of the lodge. I am sure that any time spent by the lodge and its members in explanation and instruction after the degree ceremonies would do much toward making another good Mason.

I wish that I had had proper "in lodge" conduct explained to me early. I wish I had been informed of the importance of training myself to lay aside any ill feelings I might have had within me prior to entering lodge, of training myself in the art of entering into the discussion of problems without losing my temper, my composure, my dignity. An understanding of the rules of lodge procedure, lodge etiquette and lodge conduct in general are very necessary to the brother who would like to make an effective contribution to the workings of his lodge. Moreover, it would build his confidence and help him to improve his abilities in performing ritual duties imposed upon him. Many worthwhile suggestions and opinions have probably gone to waste, many excellent ritualistic performers have probably gone undiscovered only for want of a little bit of instruction and a little bit of assistance in "public speaking."

I wish that I had been told more than "ask one of the older members for the answers." I wish I had been referred to some of the thousands of volumes of Masonic literature available on every conceivable subject. Such a reference to specific books and publications would help to keep my curiosity whetted.

One thing I wish I had NOT been told is that smutty story at refreshment period. Nothing could ever be more out of place, in fact more contrary and in direct violation of our by-laws. To advise a candidate that he is attending a solemn and dignified ceremony; to perform that ceremony as promised; then within the hour to subject him to a profane and indecent story supposedly in the name of humor, is unwarranted, untimely, unwanted, unnecessary and extremely Un-Masonic.

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