

WORSHIPFUL MASTERS RETREAT DISCUSSION

Presented by RW Gus Harris, Jr. Senior Grand Warden

Serving your Lodge as Worshipful Master can be, and should be the high point in your Masonic career. Few other secular events in my life has meant as much to me as the privilege of serving twice as Worshipful Master of J. R. L. Conyers Lodge # 364.

Yet for many who have served as Worshipful Master, that year in the East was trying and a frustrating experience. "One crisis after another," The Lodge wouldn't respond to me, "I had to do everything myself, "I had good Ideas which the Lodge didn't listen to" --- and I am sure that there are many more.

We were ask to give you some ideas on how to use this time of no degree work with the hopes of re-gaining are maintaining your membership. I find that hard to do, because it always lead me back to "Preparing to be Worshipful Master". You can't wait until you are Master, you must start at least at the Junior Warden's station (example. I have held every position in the large with the exception of the Secretary. However, I will present to you a few things that I thought could or will help you.

AS WORSHIPFUL MASTER;

Give due respect to all Past Masters, take advantage of their experiences, but by no means let them run your lodge, you were elected not them.

Get To know, really know, all the members of the Lodge

Remember, many members working means much enthusiasm in the Lodge

During meetings be mindful of the time and do not let procrastination use up your time

Preserve the Dignity, Courtesy and Privilege of the East at all times. Let no matter of modesty affect those Ancient Rights and Prerogatives of the Chair in the East.

WHAT MAKES A WM'S YEAR GOOD, OR INDEIFFERENT?

Here are some general factors than can influence the answer to the above question:

The WM's ability and willingness to assess his own strengths and weaknesses candidly

The WM's ability to "play to his strengths

The WM's willingness to seek help to cover or minimize his weaknesses

The WM's ability to determine who to seek out for help

The WM's ability and willingness to set goals and determine what he wants to do during his year or years in the East

The WM's ability and willingness to craft a plan for his year in the East

The WM's ability and willingness to seek help from constructive Brothers and PMs to aid in the execution of that plan

The WM's ability and willingness to master the Degree Work and ritual work of the Lodge

The WM's ability to inspire the Brothers (Grand Lodge)

The WM's ability to lead by example (do as you say do)

The WM's ability to anticipate problems and events, and to plan ways to respond to them

The WM's ability to make decisions (on the spot)

The WM's ability to be flexible and accommodating

The WM's level of interest in the position

The WM's willingness to listen to suggestions and comments made by others

The WM's ability to separate the Wheat from the Chaff, in receiving advice and counsel

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE WORSHIPFUL MASTER?

The answer to that question and possibly others, are largely up to each Worshipful Master during his year or years in the East. Power in the hands of a fool can be dangerous! Remember you cannot lead if you have no membership.

Ask yourself these questions;

"Why are you here?" "Your craft want to know". "What can we expect from you: A year of zealous, inspired leadership? Twelve months of casual, half-hearted coasting? An apologetic year in which everyone governs the Lodge except you who was elected to do so? Or are we just giving you the opportunity to get your name on the list of Past Masters

THINGS TO CONSIDER DURING THIS DOWN TIME;

Find three good Past Master, include the Junior and Senior Wardens, divide the membership amongst those 5 and charge them with writing a letter to any brother that miss a meeting. They should call when two consecutive meetings are missed.

Use that same committee (Past Masters/Wardens) to make contact with members that has been out a year are more

You, (WM) should visit the sick and infirm

Demonstrate support for the youth programs that the Lodge or District sponsors with your presence and attendance

Develop a lodge Trestle Board, many more than members will eventually see it

In addition to the three Past Masters and Wardens, Establish a phone committee assign to call each member. Often time we only call to collect dues only.

Use common sense

Always communicate with your officers

Be organized and efficient at meetings

Be patient with Past Masters who think they know it all

Concentrate on what the Lodge needs, not just what interest you.

Direct and lead with the gavel, but avoid dictating with it

Listen to everyone even the jerks

If it is important, it needs to be done, now. You were elected to lead so lead.

When conflict arise, be prepared to deal with it quickly, before it becomes a problem for the lodge.

Don't try to turn a failed program into success. Admit the failure, learn from it.

Vow to love all the Brothers--- the good, the bad, and the ugly. As time goes this will get harder

Always be mindful of the Lodge's Widows

Avoid taking on too many responsibilities in other appendant bodies

Keep new members involve in each meeting, find a job for them

Always explain the Edicts, orders, and programs of the Grand Lodge/Grand Master in a positive manner. Your face tell the story.

“If you are good, be better.”