



## from the grand secretary

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### What Does the Future Hold for Freemasonry in the New Millennium?

Let me start the discussion with the statement, the loss of membership the past four decades, coupled with infrastructures that were built for large numbers of members, together with the pressures from related organizations for members has caused great changes in our beloved institution. Freemasonry has focused on Charity in order to attract members, but in doing so our time-honored institution has lost the original intent of its founders when they established our Fraternity with the premise, **“We Take Care of Our Own”**.

We have tried to become an organization we were not intended to be. We have watered down our rituals, made instant members, done away with everything that made us viable and strong in order to satisfy those who wish to put us out of business. We have gone from making Masons connected by the sacred ties of brotherhood to a mediocre organization, where large induction of members are more important than the original intent our forefathers had for our beloved Fraternity.

In order for our Fraternity to grow and prosper, we must return to our roots and cultivate “Basic Freemasonry”, we must get back to being a Fraternity that takes care of its own and stop trying to satisfy our critics.

Now that I have my opening statement out of the way, let us discuss my proposals for a more committed and stronger Freemasonry.

In my humble opinion, we need a two-pronged approach for Freemasonry to grow and prosper, Fraternal and Social.

Fraternally, the first item on the agenda should be the abolition of negativism. There is nothing more aggravating and disheartening to me, hearing the infamous statement, “We Have Never Done it That Way Before”. Another irritant that ranks high on my list is the continual quoting of past membership numbers, creating an atmosphere that has every member losing their will to continue the

battle to develop our membership. If we continue to say we are going to die every time we speak, we will surely die. Whenever we speak about Freemasonry, positive comments should be used. Do away with negativism.

American Masonry has been spoiled by the large numbers of members we have had in the past. We have built an infrastructures and organizations to accommodate the large numbers. These organizations and infrastructures are not relevant with the situation we are in today. In the real world, we cannot maintain what has been built. The time has come to downsize and begin a re-building process. I seriously doubt we will have the numbers of members we had in the past in the future, but we can surely build a smaller, more committed Fraternity based on the original intent of our founders. **“Taking Care of Our Own”**. I urge you to travel to other jurisdictions in the world and view Masonry at its best, where Grand Lodges with members committed to the Fraternity and its teachings are prospering.

This downsizing must also be included in our charitable efforts. Freemasonry was not designed to be a Charity to the world. We have evolved into that position with a ridiculous thought; everyone will accept and like us if we hand out tons of money. That myth is just a myth. You cannot buy acceptance you have to earn it.

Lodges in this century need to be smaller, with an emphasis on Masonic Education. Candidates for membership must be carefully selected, slowly brought through the degrees to make sure they will be a good fit for our beloved Fraternity. Not everyone who applies for membership should be selected, only those who really want to be a part of our brotherhood by exhibiting their willingness to learn about the organization, together with the examination of the inner not the external part of the candidate taking precedence in the selection process.

Raising the standards of membership

make the statement, Masonry will only invite the best to be part of our very special Fraternity. Opening our membership roles to men of quality from all races and religions will enhance our image and strengthen our Fraternity.

In my opinion, we have opened up our Fraternity for public consumption a bit too much. Yes, I agree that we had to let the public view our Fraternity and make ourselves better known, but I believe we went a little far. We have lost the mystique that had men clamoring for membership. Perhaps we need to put some secrecy back in to our ritual and every day operations. An atmosphere has to be created that will entice men who are looking for a private place to sit with their friends and discuss matters of mutual interest and benefit with one another, without the world being informed of what was being discussed.

Grand Lodges should work closely with sister Grand Lodges in order to learn from one another. There are many successful programs being instituted from which we could learn and successfully implement in our individual Grand Lodges.

Working with the Scottish Rite, Shrine, York Rite and other related organizations as Brothers rather than competitors is a must in this millennium. In my opinion, the symbolic Lodges growth and membership strength takes precedence over all other Masonic organizations. Without a strong symbolic Lodge, all other bodies will suffer. The us versus them syndrome has been a significant culprit in the membership losses of our Fraternity.

In working together it must be understood by all that the Constitutions of the Grand Lodge in a particular jurisdictions are the rule and guide for all Freemasons in that jurisdiction. You cannot have separate rules that apply to individual organizations if they are in conflict with the constitutions of the jurisdiction in which they are operating.

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# Masonic Home An Intimate Picture...

continued

The vocational studies at the Home include metalworking, tile setting, carpentering, printing and electricity. Thomas wishes he could spend a little more time studying electricity and he is already planning to go away to college where he will most certainly earn his degree in electrical engineering.

It is evident that Thomas has had a busy day, from 6:30 in the morning until 10 o'clock at night when he goes to bed. Every hour - almost every minute - has been full. But that is only one day in the life of Thomas. On Saturday he will practice the coronet, and he will play outdoors or in the gym and probably devote a great amount of thought to his electrical problems. He may study a little bit. Sundays he will attend Sunday school and church in the Chapel. In the afternoon he may read a good book, have long discussions with his pals, daydream and think about his future.

All through the long fall, then winter and spring Thomas is thinking about the summer vacation at the Masonic Camp at Round Lake. (That is another story to come in the next issue when Tommy goes to camp.)

The Masonic Home has sent one after another groups of children under their care out into the world with the full equipment to play the game, and with the will to play it hard and fair. The Home provided elementary training for those who wished no higher education - college for those who did - nearly six hundred boys and girls in all went out from the home (from 1890 to 1933). Each has been given the highest type of moral, mental and physical training that skill can provide, so that each could in his or her own way earn a living. Each one of them left the Home with a substantial savings account in the bank, in full possession of all the attributes of industry and thrift - manly men and womanly women - fully armed for the battle of life.

Today (1933) there are in the Home 168 young men and women of a happy family, receiving this magnificent opportunity from the Masonic Fraternity of the State of New York.

The Masonic Home was there for you then - You may not need us now, but when you do The Masonic Care Community of New York will be there for you!

# From The Grand Secretary continued

The second prong of my suggested approach is the Social and Family aspect of our Fraternity.

It seems to me that since the Morgan Affair in the nineteenth century, Freemasons have been afraid to get into public arenas and state their opinions on social matters.

I see nothing wrong with Masons stating publicly, we support education policies that will help to educate all children, regardless of race, religion or ethnic background and that we also support the ongoing efforts to stop the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol among our youth. These are only two of many social programs that we as Freemasons can publicly support and get involved in.

We must have a progressive attitude developing programs that will inform our members what we can do publicly without getting political. Our involvement in social programs are an excellent way to portray that Freemasons care and in doing so we will gain the confidence of the public at large, which in turn will motivate them to be a part of our program. After all my Brothers, if it were not for the courage of our forefathers and stating their opinions publicly on social issues, we would not have the opportunity to live as free men and Freemasons.

The involvement of our families in the social aspects of our Fraternity is also a must for this millennium. Most women of today work and share the load of supporting the family. They will not accept their husband going out to meetings alone without some involvement on their part. Therefore, it is essential to involve our ladies in various aspects of our programs in order to gain their acceptance of our social and fraternal involvement.

My Brothers, Freemasonry as we know it is in a battle for survival. How we direct our energies and programs will determine the future of our beloved institution. The direction we are going and have gone for the past four decades without success cannot continue. A new and bold initiative to downsize and get back to basic Freemasonry is the only way we will strengthen our Fraternity.

The time to stop the petty bickering between the various Masonic entities is now. We don't have to be concerned with outsiders attacking us, we have met the enemy and they are us. The time is now to wake up and smell the roses, work together to strengthen the symbolic Lodges, getting back to the original intent of the founders. **"We Must Take Care of Our Own"**.



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Grand Secretary