

## **Let's Talk about FRATERNITY**

Brethren,

In my first presentation we began the discussion of the WHY for our Brethren to have as their “elevator speech” if someone asks them about the Craft, for our new Candidates to better appreciate and fully embrace the Craft as members, and particularly for new Candidates who are younger in order to speak to them in a mutually-engaging manner.

That discussion of WHY touched on WHAT is happening in our ceremonies, WHAT the SECRETS are, and the purpose of having them. Entwined in both are the precepts of LIBERTY, EQUALITY and FRATERNITY. My next presentation centred on the topic of EQUALITY, a timely subject given that virtually every democratic country grappled with its proper expression in tandem with the rise of the pandemic, ranging from civil disobedience and vandalism, to rioting, looting and acts of extreme violence. Tonight we will continue our journey over a series of nights of discussing the WHY Masons devote themselves to the promotion of LIBERTY, EQUALITY and FRATERNITY being fundamentally important to our lives, to our families and to common society who benefit from Masons carrying their practice from the Lodge room out into the world.

Fundamental to appreciate the concept of FRATERNITY is understand BENEVOLENCE. Benevolence is an act of kindness or an inclination to be kind. It's the quality of someone who volunteers in a soup kitchen, tutors children for free, or helps someone in difficulty cross the street. Note that no money is given or expected only simple human kindness. Let me share a Masonic story, and together we will come to the WHY of this presentation.

Our story begins in post-WWII Ontario, following the graduation of a young woman at the Peterborough Normal School, otherwise known as the Peterborough Teacher's College. Although the Province was booming for returning service members, prospects for women, including in the teaching profession were modest. But an opportunity arose in Swift Current Saskatchewan, for a position at a one-room schoolhouse. Travelling unaccompanied at that time for a young woman was rare, particularly to a destination without family waiting and accommodations to be found. Her father, a Mason, prepared and sealed a letter for her to take on her journey on the railway. Upon arrival, as instructed she sought out the Station Master and presented him with the letter. The quiet man, unknown to her (and seemingly her family) announced that she would stay with him and his family. His eldest son, recently married after returning from war had purchased a new home, and the eldest daughter was attending Queens University, so two rooms were available to choose from. She was welcome to stay until she felt settled and found suitable accommodations. No fee for room and board were required, the contents of the letter had settled that she was told. The woman helped with the children, enjoyed meals with the family and felt she was in a second home. For 5-years she had saved wages and eventually found suitable accommodations, but she never lost touch with the family, even when the Station Master was re-posted in later years. She never forgot their hospitality.

The next chapter begins in 1985, when a young man attending College in Toronto required a room to stay during the summer while school was out. He had found a job in Toronto, but had difficulty finding an apartment just for the summer months. Unknown to him, a letter had been sent. The letter was

received by the now retired teacher we met at the beginning of the story. The young man was given an address to travel to in West Toronto, where he was met by the retired teacher and her husband. Welcomed into the home the young man was asked about his course, his summer job, its wage, the amount of his course tuition and the expected costs for the upcoming year. When the young man enquired the amount required, the teacher and her husband conferred and ensured tuition and costs could be met, and a bit left over. The husband like the Station Master was a Mason.

Years later the young man married, and invited the retired teachers to his wedding, and seated them with his parents as a measure of the love and respect he felt for them. Prior to leaving for the honeymoon, the young man and his bride were presented with a cheque by the retired couple. The amount was sum of all the room and board the young man had paid during his stay with them. He was told he had been their honoured guest, just as the young teacher had been with his mother and grandparents decades before. The hospitality of one Brother, returned in-kind by another Brother.

The young teacher from Peterborough was born Isabel Ferrier, who married Bro. John Greenwood also a teacher who attended Rehoboth Lodge in Etobicoke. The Station Master Bro. Clement Zealand was a Life Member of Swift Current Lodge, who returned to Ontario on retirement so his daughters could attend LCVI, while he took over the family farm north of Lindsay. He attended Faithful Brethren Lodge regularly until his death in 1963. The young man in the story is now your DDGM.

Benevolence is an act of kindness, or an inclination to be kind. It's the quality of someone who helps someone in difficulty, and no money is given or expected, only simple human kindness. What sets we Masons apart from a common service club or country club is our bond of BROTHERHOOD that extends to our families, and our common concern for their well-being. Remembering the widows of departed Brethren in our events, or at Holiday time, an offered room on a Lodge night to a visitor to avoid a vicious storm, some groceries delivered for a Brother at risk during COVID. Simple human kindness not forgotten. That is the WHY for tonight's presentation.