

## 2021 Rocky Mountain Masonic Conference A Positive Message for Our Future

Jim Baker DGM Grand Lodge of Arizona

What does Masonry do well and how can it be marketed?

MWGM Randy and Brethren,

I addressed you as Brethren not out of disrespect but as a sign of my respect for you as good men that are so taken and accepted by all brothers and fellows. I feel this is important as we are meeting on the level to discuss ways to improve the quality of Freemasonry in our jurisdictions for ourselves and the men, we desire to join us as Masons. We are all here to serve the craft first and foremost. We are all brothers, I believe that was made evident in the Entered Apprentice degree when you were addressed as "My Brother" and presented with the distinguished badge of a Mason, a White leathern apron and informed no honor more distinguished could be bestowed upon you in Freemasonry. We all share the right or privilege of being called brother and wearing a white apron it's what our fraternity is built on.

What does masonry do well?

Jim Collins, author of the much-respected book on business success, "Good to Great" states that "Any great and enduring human institution must stay true to its underpinning of core values and a sense of timeless purpose that should never change." I believe we have done that as a fraternity.

We have maintained the traditions and core values of modern Speculative Masonry throughout the world for over 300 years. I've looked at the Websites of the member Grand Lodges of the RMMC and several others in the USA and some overseas. The consistency of the message conveyed concerning our core values is remarkable and speaks well of our beloved Fraternity of Freemasonry. The practice of unity and mutual recognition in Freemasonry worldwide without a central governing body is evidence our core values are universal to all good men. These values are as vital to humanity today as they were since time immemorial.

Traditions:

- Membership qualifications
- Men only membership
- Men of good morals and ethics
- Belief in a Supreme Being
- The ability to support yourself and family. Requirement of petition fees and membership dues, financial obligation
- Our form of instruction through ritual, Initiation process of degrees, obligations and proficiency requirements
- Consistency of message from our lodges, grand lodges and throughout the world.

- The ability and desire to adapt to change, societal changes in social activities, interests, advancements in technology and communication. We must keep up with the times.

Core values:

- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Loyalty
- ✓ Honesty, plain dealings
- ✓ Compassion, relief, charity
- ✓ Tolerance and acceptance
- ✓ Equality-meet on the level
- ✓ Desire for knowledge and understanding
- ✓ Desire for self-improvement

How can it be marketed?

- Non-Mason marketing or to potential candidates
- I view marketing as a process from attracting new members to membership retention and participation.
- I believe the goal of marketing freemasonry is to attract good men who become lifelong active Masons.
- One of our dearly departed brothers of my lodge was famous for addressing the candidate after a degree under "Good of the Order" and inform him that he had just taken another step in a lifelong journey in Freemasonry.

The most effective means of reaching out to the general public in today's world is digital marketing especially social media. We have an excellent marketing tool available from the NMJ of Scottish Rite, "Not just a Man a Mason", that offers traditional print and digital resources for web/social media outreach etc. Some of the previous presentations have covered this area, especially GL of Nevada's presentation.

I would however, like to share an example of a successful marketing campaign implemented by one of our newer lodges in Arizona.

I spoke with a PM and DDGM about what their lodge used to attract new members and one of the successful approaches was using Facebook and Instagram with an added boost for their targeted area. A key strategy they used was starting this

marketing campaign early to allow time for the eventual signers or recommenders to get to know the potential candidates for the minimum time period of six months before petitioning the lodge. This lodge was primarily made up of men in their 30's to 50's eager to bring their brand of masonry to a geographic area previously untapped. It had only been chartered for a couple years and the incoming Master was preparing to receive men interested in masonry and be ready for degree work and mentoring, planning ahead and anticipating the responsibilities and time commitment needed to ensure quality degree work and a rewarding experience for the candidates. Part of the marketing process, planning and implementation.

The messaging is also very important being able to relate to your targeted audience. I was surprised that they used the campaign slogan of 2B1ASK1. I have always felt this was dated and also appealed more to Masons than non-masons considering it appears to be a cipher known to masons and created by masons to appear as not to be solicitation. It certainly didn't appeal to me the first time I saw it displayed on the local Masonic lodge parade float and I thought, why don't they just come out and say it, interested in becoming a Mason? Ask a Mason. Surprisingly, at least to me, that after 22 years in the Fraternity my opinion has not changed. The 2B1ASK1 campaign was accompanied with the message "Interested in Freemasonry? Join us to learn what our founding fathers knew. Learn how to use the oldest tools of antiquity in today's modern age."

Not only did this marketing campaign bring in several men interested in the fraternity it also attracted masons new to the area and masons unaware of a Masonic lodge close to them which had the added benefit of increasing attendance and resulted in an affiliation or two. The main reason the general public and many Masons were unaware of a lodge in the area was due to the lodge meeting in a Charter School at the time, hence no signage was allowed. The invitation to learn about masonry was backed up by a friend-to-friend program led by knowledgeable masons with people skills who are good communicators. Choosing the right man for the task.

Through the friend-to-friend phase of learning about the fraternity and getting to know each other as masons and potential candidates I want to stress the importance of honesty, outlining what is expected of the candidate concerning time commitment, monetary obligation, proficiency requirements and so forth. We also need to let them know what they should expect from us in the way of our time commitment to them, support and guidance. It's not in the best interest of the lodge or the candidate to wait until after his 1st degree and learn he feels blindsided by the ceremony or proficiency requirements. I'm not implying we divulge the content of the degree just its basic procedure and our expectations of them.

I would like to tell my story of petitioning the lodge for membership which I believe reinforces the importance of honesty and plain dealings. First, I knew several of the members of the lodge, some of them were customers of my automotive repair business. Through business dealings and casual conversation while repairing their vehicle I gained a lot of respect for these men and because of that I stuck with it and am glad I did. I believe I submitted my petition in February of 1998 and finally read May of 1998 and not voted on until November 11, 1998. I was not informed of my election until a couple days before my EA degree and notified to be at the lodge on Saturday, Jan 23, 1999. I was starting to worry during this long process that maybe the lodge didn't want me or consider me unworthy of being a member of the masons.

When I arrived at the lodge there were several men in the parking lot I didn't know, all wearing suits and one of them asked me if I was Tom. I later learned Tom was originally scheduled to receive his EA degree on this date. The Marshal's interrogation was totally foreign to me and somewhat odd, especially when I was asked to take off my clothes and put on the candidate clothing. Then the blindfold came and the conferral of the first section of the degree. I was not prepared for any of these strange requests. What kept me going was my respect for these men and my limited knowledge of the fraternity and that my father had told me my grandfather was a member of this lodge. That, and recalling the reassuring words "For the present, it is sufficient to say that you will not be asked to submit to anything that has not been required of all who have preceded you." I was however

very impressed by the ritual performance and especially the brother that gave me the Entered Apprentice lecture. He was a man of my father's generation and his presence and his conduct was that of men I admired and looked up to as a child and into adulthood. Overall, I left with a very favorable opinion of the fraternity.

For other men not having the same advantages or circumstances as myself their experience was likely much different. I've seen several brothers never return after their EA degree due to not having any idea what they were entering in to. Whether it was the degree itself or the proficiency requirements sometimes we never know. Let's not waist their time or ours when a little open and honest conversation could be the difference between of a man not petitioning and still having a good impression of the fraternity or a man walking away after receiving the Entered Apprentice degree feeling dissatisfied with a negative opinion of the fraternity.

I referred earlier to the requirement of the recommenders to be personally acquainted with the petitioner for a minimum of six months. I once thought that requirement was unnecessary but in learning and observing the failures associated with wanting to make masons quickly has not met with the desired goal of increased membership for the long term. Most of you that have been around me know that one of my favorite lessons of the 3rd degree is that of time, patience and perseverance will accomplish all things. Teaching the potential candidate, the value of patience is invaluable and prepares him for the process of becoming a mason. That of getting to know the brothers, understanding the procedure of making good men better and how we teach or present it through the conferral of degrees and proficiency requirements. Masonry is not an institution that you submit an application, pay the required fees and you are instantly made a member. You have to earn it and I believe the pride you have on completing a proficiency (or a least the personal pride I felt on fulfilling the challenge) and the acceptance you receive from the lodge brethren creates a sense of belonging and a greater bond.

Ritual, one of the main traditions of our fraternity and how we convey the lessons for a well spent life. How we market our teaching method of ritual is by doing the

very best we are capable of and being the living example of those teachings. Memorized ritual has been and is topic of much debate. Those for and against memorized ritual, both make valid points to be considered and no doubt the controversy will continue. Since my raising in 1999, masonry in Arizona has attempted to find a balance in the delivery of our ritual degrees. I came in to the fraternity in the era of the "One Day Class" and am thankful the mentor assigned to me insisted the lodge confer my degrees in the conventional or traditional manner. Whether I would have become as active in masonry after going through the one-day class as I am now will never be known but doing my proficiencies in lodge and having the personal attention given to me by the lodge members defiantly inspired me to get involved.

As you can surmise, I am defending the practice of individual degrees conferred by memorized ritual. This is one of the most important traditions of our fraternity that has been maintained for centuries and sets us apart from most other fraternities and organizations. The particular book of "Holy Writings or Volume of Sacred Law" is specific to the individual but the Ritual is the universal guide or text book we all share in common. Our ritual is designed to be presented in the form of a play or ceremony. We certainly have the capability within our fraternity to modify the degree lessons to be taught or presented in a different form but I think we would lose a great deal of identity and the special bond we share. A brother that has accepted the challenge to do something he would never have dreamed of or thought capable of doing and accomplishing that task can only feel more connected to the men who have accepted the same challenge. I certainly would never have believed I was capable of accomplishing such a task. "Stepping out of your comfort zone and challenging yourself."

Yes, I've seen bad ritual and continual prompting of officers who can't remember their lines but also, I've witnessed terrible ritual by brothers reading their lines. Did I just say that ritual is being read? You know I'm only referring to the charges that in our jurisdiction should be memorized but can be read. Most ritual that is read in my opinion and through my observation, the officer or brother filling the

chair has not made the effort to practice nor familiarize themselves with the work. Some of the language used in the ritual is foreign or unfamiliar to us and not what we use to converse in our everyday lives. In order to deliver good ritual, it requires us to make the effort to learn how to pronounce the words unfamiliar to us and with that learn their meanings. In doing so you reap the benefits of learning more about the lessons we are trying convey. Our whole system of teaching is based on the Ritual and its delivery. Before the transition from operative to speculative masonry, the method of instruction was all from memory since only the ruling class or clergy was privileged to have access to or knowledge of written words. Also, what is memorized cannot be stolen or misplaced easily. That's one of the early lessons in the obligations we take in the Entered Apprentice Degree not to divulge the secrets of freemasonry, or in operative masonry and the craft guilds, proprietary information "Trade secrets".

In the "G" lecture this concept is reinforced after talking about the destruction of great works of creation built by celebrated artists. "Freemasonry, notwithstanding, has still survived. The attentive ear receives the sound from the instructive tongue, and the mysteries of Masonry are safely lodged in the repository of faithful breasts. Tools and implements most expressive are selected by the fraternity to imprint on the memory wise and serious truths and thus through a succession of ages are transmitted unimpaired the most excellent tenets of our institution." I know you didn't come here to listen to me recite ritual but this is how we pass on the lessons of freemasonry from generation to generation and have so for generations.

Another form of marketing that I feel is extremely important and essential is our conduct and behavior as good men and masons in and out of the lodge. We can't just talk about being a good man and a mason, we need to act like good men and masons. I've listed some examples of activities that the Grand Lodge, lodge and/or members can do in the community that are opportunities to showcase our conduct and behavior as good men and masons.

The Grand Lodge of Illinois has created an event celebrating their 2021 Masonic Membership Visibility and Pride Day. The email sent to all the lodges reads in part, we created this annual Masonic membership recognition day to provide an opportunity for our brethren to visibly display their association with our fraternity and pride for being Freemasons - encompassing both "Who We Are" as good men and "What We Do" for one another and the communities throughout the state. On this day, the ultimate goal is to have thousands of Freemasons including Prince Hall Masons around the state adorn our Masonic Square and Compasses insignia on a hat, shirt or other clothing to "Let Our Light Shine" as they go about their various activities. We want to inspire and display the personal connection that we feel and have for our ancient and honorable fraternity. Through this experience together, we can make a positive impact on Membership Retention and Attraction results for our lodges and grand jurisdiction.

Another example of community involvement in my home town and where my lodge is located is the Town of Florence "Make a Difference Day" which is part of the National Make a Difference Day that is celebrated each year on the fourth Saturday in October. This is an event sponsored by the town for residents and organizations to become involved in the community and do good deeds for those less fortunate or need assistance. Many of the activities are painting, yard clean up, donating to local food banks and helping distribute food boxes.

Cloth a Child is another opportunity to make a positive difference in your community and help those that would otherwise not have new clothes or more than one or two outfits to wear all year. The lodge can partner with the local schools to help identify children most in need and take them on a shopping trip. You set a limit on how much you can spend for each child based on how much the lodge can spend and how many children are signed up. As with any activity involving children you need parental permission. With a little advertising you just might get members of the community to participate and help with monetary donations and taking the children and their parents on a shopping spree.



These three examples of activities are opportunities to show the community we care about them and in doing so we conduct ourselves as good men and masons. We Care.

The marketing of freemasonry takes many forms and one area we need improvement in is the public perception of how we maintain our property. What is the condition of buildings and property inside as well as outside? Are they clean and orderly or in a state of disrepair, cluttered and unkept? What does the potential candidate entering our lodges see and observe and especially what is their initial impression? What does the general public see driving past the lodge building or a travelling Mason? The power of observation is a valuable tool used by everyone whether consciously or not. Once an initial impression is made or an opinion formed that is of a negative nature, the greater the effort required to make it positive. You can't undue what was already seen.

One of my pet peeves is the poor condition of one of our most esteemed emblems. The distinguished badge of a mason, the white leathern apron. How many times have we entered a lodge and seen the mangled mess of a pile of white aprons we proudly supply for our members and visiting brothers? We have just conferred the 1st degree of masonry on a man we now call brother and presented him with his distinguished badge of a mason and impressed upon him how honorable and revered this garment is only to observe the brothers leaving the lodge room and throwing their aprons in a heap on the table. A perfect example of this is recently I was attending a funeral for a brother and the white aprons and sprigs of acacia or evergreens were provided for all brothers to wear and show our respect and esteem for our brother. On the table was a stack of aprons that appeared to be piled up in a heap, defiantly not orderly and neat. "The distinguished badge of a Mason." To me these are lasting impressions that do not bode well for a fraternity that claims to be good men striving to improve themselves.

Getting back to the theme of the conference "A Positive Message for Our Future." I think our future is promising if we stay true to our core beliefs and follow our

traditions. It has served us well for over 300 years and I see a renewed interest in Freemasonry. We may have lost a generation or two through the years but much of that earlier boom in membership was governed by factors that no longer are in play and in some cases I hope never will be again. Today we see men coming to Masonry because of a different kind of favorable opinion of the fraternity, that of the merits of good men striving to be better men. I'm not saying that was not the case with the majority of good men years ago but I have no doubt that family influence and pressure (Your Dad would be very pleased if you join the masons) or just wanting to be part of something because it was the popular thing at the time to be a mason played a large role in increased membership years ago. Remember, we join of our own free will and accord by a favorable opinion of the fraternity.

We as leaders of our Grand Lodges and lodges need to practice what we preach and act accordingly. And, hopefully through our words and actions we will inspire other good men to join us in promoting happiness and well-being among the craft.

We profess to be good men becoming better men. At the end of the Master Mason degree the WM welcomes you and says "The eyes of the fraternity are upon you. Be faithful. Be true. Be just. And convince the whole world that on becoming a Master Mason, you have become a better man."

I believe a true measurement of a good man becoming a better man is this. If you or someone else asked your wife, children, parents, friends, co-workers or brothers if you are a better man or version of yourself now than before you joined the masons, what would their answer be? Has masonry changed him for the better? Does he display the core values of the fraternity? I sincerely hope the answer is, Yes, he is.

"Not just a Man, A Mason."

In closing I want to share a bit of wisdom from our Brother George Washington.

First from "The Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation."

Rule 110: Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience."

Next is a quote I believe to be attributed to George Washington.

"I hope I shall always possess firmness and virtue enough to maintain what I consider to be the most enviable of all titles, the character of an honest man."

Thank you, brothers, for your indulgence and patience.