

Some Masonic Best Practices by Raymond Rideout Award Winners *Compiled by RW Bro. Tim Martel email: timbev70@comcast.net*

ACCEPTED CANDIDATE

- Recognize that candidate education begins as soon as the man petitions the Lodge for the degrees.
- The Master appoints members of the Committee of Inquiry who are knowledgeable about Freemasonry and who are good role models for the fraternity.
- The Lodge recognizes that informing the petitioner as much about Masonry as possible alleviates fears, uncertainties, and myths about the Fraternity.
- The petitioner, and his family when possible, are interviewed by the Committee of Inquiry. The committee uses this opportunity as a two-way investigation or inquiry by allowing the petitioner and his family to ask questions and gain comfort in having the process of the degrees explained to them.
- The Committee sees these meetings as opportunities to discover a petitioner's talents and interests. The video, *What It Means To Be A Mason*, is shared with the petitioner and his family along with the many pamphlets and guides about Freemasonry. Not only do these provide in depth information but they show the petitioner and his family that the Lodge is serious about the business this man is about to undertake, should he be accepted: professionalism, if you will.
- After the petitioner has been accepted, he is assigned a "Candidate Coach"/Elder Brother/Mentor who will assist the candidate with his Masonic Education journey. Never does one Mason of the Lodge coach more than one candidate at a time. This is to ensure special attention is given by one Mason to one candidate.
- Use this period between the ballot and the first degree to maintain the candidate's interests and to further explain the first degree. The accepted candidate is now revisited in his home where congratulatory remarks are made by the team coach and an invitation is extended to the candidate and his family to join the members of the Lodge and the public for their weekly Saturday morning breakfasts. The family will eat while the candidate helps in the kitchen. This is by no means a way to intimidate the candidate, but it allows a bonding process to begin with the members of the Lodge. The candidate gets to know the names and faces of the members and realizes the true spirit of in-house cooperation among Masons. I have never heard a candidate complain about being asked to work in the kitchen. Most have remarked that because of it, they felt as though they were already a member of the Lodge. Thus the orientation process of the Lodge has begun.

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- The candidate is scheduled for an orientation of the Lodge room and is introduced to the regalia of the Entered Apprentice Degree. The Lodge room is set up as it would be in the Entered Apprentice Degree and the candidate's tour begins in the preparation room. He is shown the clothing he will wear and told that he will be wearing a blindfold and a cable tow. The candidate's Coach explains that the purpose of the candidate attire is not to humiliate him or degrade him in any way and that this is something that every Mason has done.
- He is then given a tour of the Lodge room. The several stations and places of the officers are pointed out to him and he is told that a prayer will be offered on his behalf while pointing out the altar. He is told that no harm will come to him either physically or mentally. The candidate is usually relaxed at this point and feels as though he has been given special attention not only to be made welcome, but that the Lodge cares about his well-being. All doors of the Lodge are opened and the candidate is encouraged to inspect every room including the restrooms. A tour of the grounds is also conducted, weather and season permitting. The Accepted Candidate eagerly awaits his initiation night.
- The appropriate Pollard Plan video is shown to the candidate prior to each degree. Some lodges loan the appropriate video to the candidate to view at home at his own convenience.

ENTERED APPRENTICE

- Some lodges invite the candidate, his wife and/or significant others to join the brethren for supper the night of each of the degrees.
- A Lodge and/or a District 4th Night Program is done at least once a year.
- Following the first degree, the candidate's coach or elder brother schedules a "post-initiatory session" with the Entered Apprentice Mason. This is done at the Lodge under direction of the candidate coach and several officers and members.
 - The Entered Apprentice is given another walk through the first degree but informally this time.
 - All symbols and implements are explained to him once again but in plainer English thus eliminating the need for formality. This really enables the Entered Apprentice to say, "Oh, OK!" and "Now I see....".
 - The Entered Apprentice is shown once more how to wear his apron as an EA and why he wears it that way.
 - He is shown the due guard and sign and how to properly enter and retire from an opened Lodge of Entered Apprentices.
 - He is given a "once more" of the working tools (the common gavel and twenty-four inch gauge and told why) and the importance of being placed in the North East corner of the Lodge while they were administered.

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- He is told that he can avouch for other Entered Apprentices so long as he has sat in open Lodge with them and how to perform the avouching process.
 - He is also told that he can now attend Lodge Stated Business meetings.
 - During this same evening, he is shown the Pollard Plan video for the Entered Apprentice, the Pollard Plan Instructional Booklet is reviewed and then he is instructed in his first ritual lesson.
- The “Candidate Progress Checklist”, which is in the DER’s Toolbox is obtained and utilized to monitor each candidate’s progress in his Masonic degree journey.
 - Show and discuss the Entered apprentice video

FELLOWCRAFT

- Following the second degree, the same instructional forum and points as demonstrated following the Entered Apprentice Degree are administered to the candidate. The due guard and sign, entering and retiring from a Lodge of FC, avouching, the working tools of a FC are all reviewed again. He is reminded how to wear his apron, and told that he may now attend both Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft meetings. He is given his Pollard Plan Instructional Booklet and ritual lesson and shown the Pollard Plan video for the FC degree.

MASTER MASON

- The candidate is no longer a candidate but a Master Mason and member of the Lodge. The same individual instruction is administered at the Lodge following the MM Degree with the lessons and recapitulation of the working tools, apron, avouching, entering and retiring, due guard and sign and ritual instruction and Pollard Plan Lesson Booklet review. In addition, the Committee on By-Laws attends this instructional class and reviews the Lodge’s By-laws with the new member. The Maine Masonic textbook is given to him and reviewed by his coach/Elder Brother/Mentor. Some lodges present him with a framed diploma.

4th NIGHT PROGRAM

- Some lodges schedule a 4th Night Program education night as soon as possible following the raising of a new Mason. They schedule this at a Special Communication with supper and invite Masons from other Lodges in the District to attend.
 - The newly raised Master Mason(s) and seasoned Masons get a thorough review of Lodge protocol standards such as setting the lights of each degree, due guards and signs of each degree, avouching, being examined (working one’s way into a Lodge as a visitor), entering and retiring from an open Lodge, balloting, basic parliamentary procedure to include how to make motions, how to address the Master, proper address and titles of

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officers and Brethren, and proper conduct and attitude in the Lodge to name a few.

- They continue to utilize the DER and the MEALS Toolbox and the DRI and his ritual book for much of the above.
- The Maine Masonic Textbook is also used for reference.
- What is further interesting is that the chairmen of the various committees of the Lodge speak about what their committee is, what it is all about and what its purpose and intents are. For example, the Charity Committee chairman will talk to the Brethren about Charity and the functions of the lodge's charity fund and committee. He explains the history of it and how it is executed. This really gives the newly raised Mason a clearer picture of the mechanics or workings of his Lodge. The building corporation chairman also speaks on the variety of tasks his committee has and the responsibility of caring for the building. The Care and Share committee and the Widows or Ladies committee is also included. The new Master Mason gets to know some of his Lodge's inner workings and realizes that there is more life to a Lodge than meets the eye.

The Lodge uses the Elder Brother Program

- Every newly raised Brother is assigned an Elder Brother/"continuing education mentor". (Some lodges assign two Elder Brothers to each candidate.) Also, some lodges require that the 1st line signer of the candidate's petition serve as the candidate's Elder Brother. The Elder Brother is assigned to the new Master Mason for at least one year. It is the responsibility of the Elder Brother to ensure that the new Brother does not get bored with the Craft.
 - He encourages the new Master Mason to attend meetings of his and other Lodges by talking with him regularly.
 - He also encourages him to participate in Lodge activities such as the suppers, breakfasts, work parties, committee meetings and participate in care and share programs.
 - The Elder Brother is also responsible for introducing the new Master Mason to all other members and visitors.
 - He encourages the new Mason to accompany him while visiting other lodges. Simply put, he keeps a watchful and caring eye on his new brother and encourages him to get involved with Masonic activities.
 - One lodge imposes the restriction that they will not be asked to assume a chair until they have been a Mason for at least one year. If the brother requests to take a chair, then his request is considered and approved if possible.
- The current thinking is that the term, Elder Brother, should be replaced by the term, mentor. A mentor is someone who takes a genuine interest in the candidate/fellow Mason and assumes responsibility for ensuring that his new friend experiences Freemasonry in a positive way, i.e. Masonic Education, Lodge Involvement, etc.

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Describe what the Lodge uses for Candidate Education resources and how used.

- The Educational Videos are used after each degree and the Pollard Plan booklets are fully explained. Usually the several mentors meet with candidate at the lodge hall to go over the planned lesson. During these “study sessions” (after breakfast) the mentors eagerly explain the symbolic meanings of the lesson and the degree. There is also a “group” of traveling brethren who visit other lodges in the #1 District. They always invite the new brother to attend any of the other lodges, (when they know beforehand what degree a lodge will be opened in) so that the new brother can sit and watch the degree he has just completed. They feel the new brother benefits greatly from this experience and learns more from watching than he may have absorbed during his own degree. He also gets the feeling of acceptance and importance to these friends and makes many new friends. All of which reinforces the experience and lessons he is being taught.
- Some lodges provide the petitioner with one of M.W. Bro. Wayne Adams’ “White Envelope” that contains several Masonic brochures and pamphlets for the candidate and his family to read. (Available via the Secretary thru Grand Lodge.)
- Some lodges loan the petitioner commercial videos, CD’s, etc. that explain what Freemasonry is and is not.

Presentations Used for General Membership Education & Service

- Utilize community resources such as speakers who lecture on community events, happenings, interests and concerns. Fire and Police Departments, Boating Safety, City Councilors to speak about public affairs.
- Utilize the District Education Representative and the resources of the MEALS DER Toolbox.
- Entertain the Brethren with short stories, proper candidate care preparation, trivia and Masonic quizzes.
- Play the Masonic Jeopardy game.
- Annual “Masonic Awareness Night” This is an outstanding program designed to bring the current membership up to date on the happenings of the Lodge including its accomplishments, and it seeks to present the goals of the Lodge. This is an interest “sparker” because the emphasis is kept positive. This program also serves to invite non-Masons who are getting a first-hand introduction to a Masonic Lodge and its activity. It gives prospective Masons an idea of “Who are the Masons and what do they do”. This is a semi-public event with a full course

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meal and program that follows. More than 90 Masons and guests usually attend this event.

- The Lodge continues to remain open every Wednesday even when they are not formally meeting. This provides the candidates and Brethren, not only of their own Lodge but from other Lodges, to have an evening of fellowship, play games and cards, utilize the one or more coaches for instruction, and just to have a place where a Mason can get a cup of coffee and chat with other Masons without the formality: a Masonic “drop-in” center so to speak.
- One lodge schedules a family event “carnival” on their grounds and invites their residential neighbors to attend! Rainbow and DeMolay help out, breakfast is served in the dining hall in the morning, a large barbeque is arranged in the afternoon with a pig roast in the evening. This event also included fried dough and cotton candy! A youth martial arts group performed their drill on mats in the backyard. What a spectacular sight it is to see the community and Masonry working together in harmony
- Schedule an annual event to honor the ladies. Some lodges schedule a luncheon for the widows while others schedule a recognition dinner for all of the Masonic ladies.
- Many lodges are now actively involved with the CHIPS Program. This program provides a valuable service to the community at no cost to them and it shows that Freemasons care.
- Another new program that is really taking off is Bikes for Books.
- Some lodges always have a short educational program following each Stated Meeting. Some of the programs are about Freemasonry and others are on topics of general interest. In some cases, these presentations can be opened to the public, depending upon the subject matter.

Brotherly Love

When a known brother or “stranger” enters the lodge building, especially a first time visitor – each visitor is greeted at the door by several of the officers and members – **absolutely no one** enters without a proper greeting and introduction to the brethren of the lodge