

Official Visit to Dufferin Lodge No 291
April 17th, 2014

“A Chicken, Dill Pickle and a Grasshopper; One more reason to Visit”

How many of you have come here this evening out of some feeling of duty or obligation? And then again, how many have come, simply because you chose to do so? Along with the officers and members of Dufferin Lodge, I would hope the majority have been motivated by the latter.

I would like to think you made a conscious decision to visit and enjoy the company of other brethren. But what influenced your choice? You could have been home watching TV, engaging in a hobby or enjoying the company of other friends in a casual atmosphere. But instead, you chose to ‘warsh’ up, as my great-grandmother would say; put on your formal attire and drive out to a quaint country Lodge Hall and occupy the hours of your evening enjoying Masonic Ritual.

The degree work aside, some of you might say they came to hear me speak. I thank you if that is the case. Others might be a tad more honest and say they came for the Pie. Regardless of the motives, it is interesting to note that if limited to these options alone, they are reasons outside of the normal lodge agenda. They are something different.

Let me ask you this. Generally speaking, why do we like to travel; whether it is across town, across the country or to the other side of the world?

I think its because by nature we are explorers and adventurers. We crave the variety that comes from visiting other people and places.

I am not proposing variety of a drastic measure, but perhaps we desire subtle changes of stimuli to heighten the senses and expand the mind. We are after all stimulated and perhaps motivated by our senses; the sense of touch, smell, sight and hearing. We seek out those things, and in this example, destinations that appeal to our senses, probably more so of sight and hearing.

Consider some of the travel slogans designed to stimulate your interest and desire for adventure.

- Ontario: “Yours to Discover”
- Georgia: “For the best moments of your life”
- Poland: “Move your imagination – come and find your story”
- Egypt: “Where it all begins”
- Abu Dhabi: “And you think you’ve done it all?”

Each destination is offering a unique experience. You are enticed by the promise of variety and something new.

This is all very interesting I am sure, but how does this apply to our lodges? Well tonight is a perfect example of the variety of which I am speaking.

'Pie Night' is different; it offers variety and frankly.....is delicious. The mere mention has the seasoned Mason salivating and the newer brother inquiring about this decadent affair. Lodges should consider implementing ideas that offer variety to their members and serve as enticements to potential visitors.

There are a lot of things out there that are competing for our attention and I don't see why a lodge is any exception. Granted, our Ritual should be inducement enough, but sadly, sometimes it is not. Each lodge in our district has a unique character. It is the challenge of each lodge to capitalize on its uniqueness to re-vitalize members and attract visitors.

If a lodge is a destination worth visiting, should it not also consider a slogan? For fun, lets consider the following examples:

- Dufferin Lodge: A Pie is just the beginning.
- Seymour Lodge: Come Often...See more.
- The Electric Lodge: Get Plugged In.
- Temple Lodge: Happiness Under One Roof.
- Valley Lodge: What happens in the Valley, stays in the Valley.

I am having fun of course....but when put in the right context; I hope you get the idea of what I am driving at. Identify, revitalize and attract.

When I was a young boy, my parents sometimes dragged my sister and myself to what they referred to as 'Command Performances'. These were events that you did not necessarily want to attend, but you were under a certain command to make an appearance. It was the right thing to do, so you went. You never want your lodge meeting to be a command performance. Do you? You want to attend your lodge meeting because of the interest and variety, and least of all because you are summoned. Your visitors should feel the same. Don't you agree?

Is anyone asking himself at this point how a grasshopper has anything to do with visiting? I referred to it in the title of tonight's address.

I was fortunate to have had a grandfather who was interesting and above all, had a great sense of humour. If there was a leg to be pulled...you could be sure he was tugging with both hands. He always had these funny little sayings or songs that were never in short supply. They were extremely entertaining actually.

I loved to visit my grandparent's home and they always gave me reason to come again. No need for a command performance here. I wanted to visit, again and again. The house really never changed, the smell was the same, the people were the same, but the occasion of the visit no matter how repetitive always had some small aspect that was varied, entertaining or engaging. On one particular occasion, my grandfather posed the following question? It was more of a riddle to keep things interesting.

He said, "If a chicken and a half can lay an egg and a half in a day and a half, then how long would it take a grasshopper with a wooden leg to kick the seeds off a dill pickle?" To this day I think that is one of the funniest riddles I have ever heard.

If you have the answer, I am dying to know.

As much as our time together followed pretty much the same pattern from one occasion to the other, similar to that of a lodge meeting, there was always something a little different that kept it fresh. I think the same can be achieved in our lodges...not silly riddles necessarily, but variety.

Visiting is most definitely a two-way street; attracting visitors to your own lodge and visiting the lodges of others. We must look beyond the narrow limits of our own lodge and experience what is happening throughout the district and perhaps within this Grand Jurisdiction.

By regularly extending ourselves beyond the walls of our own lodge, we individually profit by acquiring rich friendships. I strongly believe as you give your support to other lodges, so shall it be returned in kind. Visiting will also expose you to the many creative initiatives that are being engaged by other lodges which just might be of benefit 'back at your own lodge'. Remember, in the absence of an entirely original idea, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. I might also suggest there are other benefits when you travel. You are likely to experience Ritual Work performed at varying degrees of proficiency. These observations will of course give you a good idea of where you sit on the bell curve as compared to other lodges.

As I have said before; "We are all in this together". There is no such thing a bad idea, just people with no idea.

As an example of variety, I visited Ashlar Lodge No. 610 in London this past fall and observed the Master asking of the brethren after opening "Has every member introduced themselves to our Visitors?". Indeed they had, as each and every member had made a point of meeting me before I entered the lodge room. This was memorable and would certainly entice me to visit with them again.

At Oakville Lodge No. 400 it was customary for the Chaplain to offer a short story of inspiration prior to the commencement of the work.

It was many years ago, but I had visited with a lodge in Toronto that had a unique tradition. During the degree when the candidate was being prepared, at the appropriate time, the Master would give the brethren 'Freedom of the Lodge' and instruct one of the Stewards to pass a bowl amongst the brethren and offer mints. Perhaps a little quirky, but fresh breath was assured.

There are so many great examples of how lodges have injected variety into their meetings and banquets. Any brother who travels, knows this to be true, and you don't have to travel far to prove it to yourself.

If you have traditions and offer variety you are proud of, don't keep them to yourselves. Visit and spread the word. Visiting is a reciprocal arrangement and to illustrate the point, I offer you the following.....*true story!*

A brother from Dufferin Lodge was visiting Scotland and became hopelessly lost in the Highlands and wandered about for nearly a week. Finally, on the seventh day he met a kilted inhabitant. "Thank heaven I've met someone," he cried. "I've been lost for the last week." "*Is there a reward out for you?*" asked the Scotsman. "No," said the Brother. "*Then I'm afraid you're still lost.*"

Finally brethren, a chicken, a grasshopper and a dill pickle really have very little to do with visiting, but I think they caught your attention and offered a little variety to this visit.

Thank you for your kind attention.

R.W. Bro. Geoffrey S. Allan
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