

A Patchwork of Strengths

Presented April 21, 2016 at Dufferin Lodge No. 291

Brethren, one of the most enjoyable aspects of this year has been the discussions in the car while travelling to and from various Masonic events around our Grand Jurisdiction. These discussions take many forms but they always allow for serious contemplation about subjects and a true sharing of ideas in a separate environment from the Lodge and Banquet rooms.

Last night I shared a ride with two brethren who are here this evening as we travelled to Port Elgin for the homecoming of their DDGM in Bruce District. On the way home, the discussion in the car centred on the great harmony that was displayed within the Lodge room last night. It occurred to me that carpooling among their members helps a great deal with forging relationships and contributes to contemplation and sharing of ideas, which then further cements these relationships as each man's thoughts are fully considered.

As I reflected upon what I would speak about, for this, my homecoming to Dufferin Lodge - I couldn't help but think about when I first affiliated here. At the time, the Lodge had been recycling Past Masters for some time, and had very few new members joining the ranks. But what struck me within this Lodge was the camaraderie among the membership. On my first visit here, I walked down into the banquet hall only to be greeted immediately by 4 different brethren who shook my hand and introduced themselves with genuine interest. The mood in the Lodge was light despite those tough years, and the Lodge was even undergoing upgrades to the building itself. In fact, what really caught my eye, happened after the Lodge meeting, when we returned down into the banquet room. The members were all sitting at the individual tables, however, inside jokes and quick remarks were flying back and forth across the room. All members in the banquet hall were all part of one big discussion despite which table they were sitting at. The harmony was incredible, and living just down the road, it was an easy decision to affiliate here.

Some Lodges are currently experiencing tremendous growth here in Ontario. In fact, one Lodge that I am aware of in Stratford currently has 14 entered apprentices on their tracing board awaiting their second degree. While Dufferin Lodge can't boast such a high rate of new initiates, it can boast a very friendly and welcoming atmosphere as we've seen here this evening, as well as one more thing – it's willingness to adopt new ideas.

In just the few years that I have been a member here, we have seen tremendous change within our Lodge, all driven by the individual members. Repointing of the brick work, painting within the Lodge, installation of a new roof, a new furnace, and parging of the foundation, were all projects that were underway shortly after I first joined; though the upgrades didn't stop there.

Landscaping on weekends by the members came soon after, followed by the first Dufferin Warplane Gala. We then worked together to renovate our kitchen and banquet room, along with tile work, the bathrooms, and the upgrades to the lighting within the Lodge, and the candles at the Lesser Lights. A monthly pancake breakfast was started and ran for a while, and most recently, the painting of the banquet hall downstairs. Today, the building of new space as you can see upon our balcony is also now underway.

Each and every one of these initiatives was started by one of our members coming up with an idea at our executive meetings, followed by the full support of our executive. When I think back to just a handful of years ago, this Lodge was far different than it is today, and yet at its core it has the same values that it stands by. The Lodge has innovated and evolved with the changing membership, though the executive has continued to support these ideas because it is these ideas that allow us to grow. Not

all of these ideas were successes, though I like to think that our new members feel as though they are heard, and supported, when they speak at those meetings.

Brethren, I recently had a note come across my desk that struck my attention as it simply said:

“I’m really not in favour of forming another committee...not even a sub one! I believe that this question should be addressed at the grass roots level. I also feel that it’s not the old farts like us that should be correcting the situation ... but instead it should be directed at our younger members.”

Now, I won’t go into details about the topic of discussion, but I think that these remarks can be applied to so many discussions that are conducted in our Craft. So often, the answers are found among our newest members, and we need only ask the question to be enlightened upon their very different perspective to the challenge at hand.

Dufferin Lodge has always excelled in this open dialogue and I’m very proud to be a member here. As I look around the room this evening, I’ve had the opportunity to learn from virtually everyone here in attendance in some form or another. As I’ve travelled this year, I feel as though I’ve grown a great deal from the interactions that I’ve had with each of you. I feel as though we’ve accomplished some great progress as a District. We haven’t all agreed on everything, though as a District, and as a Fraternity, we are ever stronger from the mosaic of personalities, and patchwork of strengths, that comprise our ranks. In the words of our Grand Master, I am proud of who we are, I am proud of what we’ve done, and I’m proud to be a member of this District.

Thank you,

R.W. Bro. Devin Tuinstra
District Deputy Grand Master
Hamilton District C