

## Hardwood

Temple Lodge No. 324

November 10, 2015

Brethren, as you may know, my family and I recently moved into a new home this past summer, which is set back a bit from the road, and is surrounded by trees. The most prominent of these trees, is a series of Sugar Maples.

Sugar Maple trees figure prominently within our Canadian Culture, here in Ontario, particularly in the Winter months. Indeed, Quebec and Ontario are respectively the world's first, and third, largest sources of Maple Syrup.

In Canada we celebrate the Sugar Maple tree, and have adopted it, as part of our culture. In winter time, Maple Syrup festivals can be found across this region, even selling maple-leaf-shaped treats for kids. As we all know, this tree's leaf is also found prominently displayed at the centre of our National flag.

One thing that you may not know, however, is that the oldest Sugar Maple tree in the World currently grows in Peterborough, Ontario and is estimated at over 330 years of age. In old growth forests, this great tree, can grow to a height of 110 feet tall, and over 3 feet in diameter.

Brethren, reflecting upon this great symbol within our culture, brings several thoughts to mind.

The first that comes to mind, is the fragility of this tree. A new Sugar Maple sapling, relies heavily upon its surroundings, and environment. It requires water, and sunlight, to provide it sustenance and strength, in order to survive.

The second, is the speed at which this tree grows. A sugar maple tree only grows at a rate of up to 12 inches, in a good year, as it seeks the light, cast through the leaves of trees around it. Over-crowding by nearby trees, can quickly put an end to this young saplings life.

And finally, this great tree is **hard wood**, and **hard wood** grows **slowly**, but it grows **strong** – enabling it to weather our harsh winters where other trees **cannot** endure.

Brethren, these three paradigms can be easily applied to the new Mason, as he travels through his Masonic journey.

As we all know, many men join our gentle Craft, seeking Light, and full of spark, and energy. Over time however, if that Light begins to elude him, or the environment isn't conducive, to supporting him in his personal growth, his progress quickly begins to wane, then his interest, and slowly his attendance, until he may leave our Craft altogether.

On the other hand, the opposite feelings may occur, where we may expect far too much of our new members. Let's consider for a moment the Lodge, which pays a great deal of attention to its new members, provides Masonic Education, programs, events, and regular practices. These candidates cannot help, but be constantly engaged, enthused, and excited. But then another element creeps into the relationship – that element of expectation, in response to these efforts. Perhaps the Lodge has many Past Master's eager to pass the torch to these new thriving members. These are all very good things brethren, and it can certainly be said that a certain amount of expectation is needed, however we

cannot forget, that a man cannot be rushed along his Masonic journey. We all progress at our own pace, and that progression should be supported, and encouraged, though it should come to pass as the members themselves, seek for increased engagement, and responsibility.

Another element to consider, is that of providing room for this member to grow, within the Lodge. Room for his ideas to be heard, and his energy to be applied. When we worry for our future, we naturally as men begin to put policies and traditions in place, which at first, are meant to safeguard the quality and sanctity of our ceremonies. It is however, important that we not let tradition, and the way that we've always done things, stifle the growth and input, of these new members.

Brethren, it is important to remember that **hardwood grows slowly**. If we are to build **strong Lodges** that will **endure** through difficult times for generations to come, we must focus on growing hardwood within our Lodges. So quickly we can succumb to the temptation, to urge our new members to take on new roles, though in our guidance if prudence and patience prevail, that man will be far more the better for it.

Thank you,

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