

Succession Planning

Presented February 8, 2016 at Valley Lodge No. 100

Brethren, in the last few weeks I have unfortunately attended several funerals and Masonic Memorial Services. Throughout this Masonic Year I have raised the question of succession planning on several occasions, though these last several weeks have prompted me to look at succession planning in a new light, and with a new sense of urgency. We are continually losing some great lights within our Craft and within our District.

Last weekend, M.W. Bro. Mumby delivered a very intimate account of the highly esteemed and respected, late Past Grand Master, M.W. Bro. Raymond S.J. Daniels. During the eulogy, M.W. Bro. Mumby noted that M.W. Bro. Daniels had a Socratic approach to teaching. He always had a knack for identifying what each person brought to the table, no matter their external appearance. He would then encourage those people to develop and nurture those skills. I was fortunate enough to experience these same types of encounters with M.W. Bro. Daniels on several occasions over the last few years and the knowing look in his eye when he delivered such suggestions, will no doubt stay with me.

Earlier this year I spoke about development of our new members, developing hardwood within the lodge and noting that hardwood grows slowly, and also acknowledging that with leadership in our Lodges comes certain levels of expectation. I don't want to beleaguer those points brethren, so today I would like to focus on what these new members bring to the table and our development of those traits.

Maria Montessori is quoted as saying that "within the child grows the fate of our future", and I propose that the same can be applied for our newest members. As I have travelled around our District this year, I can firmly say that the overwhelming commonality amongst our strongest Lodges is the willingness of the Past Masters to encourage and nurture the ideas of our newest members.

Now, as the English say, I am not suggesting that we throw the baby out with the bath water. Our traditions within our Lodges form a rich history born from generations of men just like you and I working to better our Lodges. These traditions must be safeguarded. I am however saying that rather than waiting to speak, that we truly listen to the ideas of our newest members with open minds.

At Dufferin Lodge, down the road, the upgrades to the brickwork of our building were completed by our Past Masters. However, the renovation of the kitchen, the tile work, the painting of the banquet room, the landscaping outdoors, the planned renovations to our balcony, the warplane galas, the lighting by candlelight, and the recent addition of a musical start to our meetings were all new initiatives suggested at General Purpose Meetings by our newest members. I can clearly recall when each of these new initiatives were brought up at the various meetings and knowing the members around the table I could clearly tell that many of them thought that these were weak ideas. But rather than voice their concerns, these men provided nothing but encouragement. If they hadn't I don't think that Dufferin Lodge would be here today, because many of those men who made those supportive remarks are no longer with us today.

Here at Valley Lodge we saw a similar trend in recent years. As new members came in, their fresh energy was directed towards constructive means rather than just simply rushing them through the chairs. The Past Masters took the time to carefully train each new member and encourage them to become active contributors within the Lodge in their own way. As a result, the Golf Tournament, the Valley Lodge Hele Spiel, and the restoration of their banquet room have been great successes.

Many prolific leaders have spoken about leadership in the light of succession planning. Steven Spielberg once said that "The delicate balance of mentoring someone, is not creating them in your own image, but

giving them the opportunity to create themselves.” Freemasonry itself provides this opportunity to our new members when we choose to allow for such an environment to exist.

As these new members develop, and grow into vibrant and thriving Masons, and they take up positions in the line, these same rules apply.

Steve Jobs is famous for his mantra with Apple leadership training. Now let me be clear, that I’m not by any means an Apple guy, but once in a while he came up with a good idea. He said “why would I hire smart people and then tell them what to do? We hire smart people for them to tell us what to do.”

There exists some great ideas and energy within these new members. They need only to be provided with the confidence and the audience to be heard.

Now many in the room have likely been listening to what I’m saying and thinking, yes, we do this in our Lodge. To those people, I say that is excellent, because you have accomplished the first objective within the self-contained environment of your own individual Lodge.

A second objective, however, which I feel as a district we are still quite far from achieving, is the intercommunication of these new active members outside of their own Lodge. Lodges must as we know, communicate with members of other Lodges in order to thrive and stay current, lest years past as we submit to increased local custom and isolation.

At the start of this year I had the WMs of each Lodge go to a casual event after our District meeting to encourage relationship building and communication between them. The wardens, and other line officers however are generally not travelling as our members have in the past. The saving grace is that our Past Masters and Past DDGMs are travelling a great deal so this is quite an easy problem to solve, we need only for these travelling members to encourage our newer members to carpool with them as shared experiences. By travelling together, we can also easily introduce these newer members to others within the District and forge new relationships.

The future of our Order, brethren, rests upon OUR ability to sow and nurture seeds that we will never ourselves, live long enough, to see their full potential.

Thank you,

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