

April - June 2002



# A NEW MASON ASKS



The Committee on Masonic Education  
The Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M.  
of  
North Carolina

**P** Lodge Night  
**PROGRAM**

APRIL -  
JUNE 2002

**A New Mason  
Asks...**

CONTENTS

Second Quarter 2002

**APRIL**

1<sup>st</sup> Stated Communication . . . 3

2<sup>nd</sup> Stated Communication . . . 5

**May**

1<sup>st</sup> Stated Communication . . . 6

2<sup>nd</sup> Stated Communication . . . 7

**June**

1<sup>st</sup> Stated Communication . . . 9

2<sup>nd</sup> Stated Communication . . 10

**1<sup>st</sup> Stated Communication in April 2002**

## A New Mason Asks

**To My Mentor and Friend,**

**Okay, tonight I became a Master Mason. I am so proud it's hard to contain myself, but have questions... a lot of questions. Most of them I hesitate to ask because I should probably already know the answers. But I don't.**

There was much information in the lectures. There was a lot in the Catechisms, but I still have many questions. Will you answer them?

Q. Now can I stay for the whole meeting?

A. Yes, now you are welcome to stay for the whole meeting. I know you were beginning to wonder if we were ever going to ask you to stay, but let me try to explain why we didn't.

Our meetings aren't all the same. Meetings are "opened" in what we call "lodges" depending on the business, or "work" we need to transact. For instance a "lodge on the first degree", "a lodge on the second degree" and so forth.

When I say "opened" it refers to the ritual used to begin the session. Most of our meetings are opened on the Third Degree and only Master Masons may attend. Lodge business, discussion, reports and programs are all done in the Third Degree or "Master Mason's Lodge." But, if we have someone receiving a degree that night things change.

For instance, the night you were initiated the meeting was probably opened in the Master Mason's degree for a short business session. As soon as this was over, all "work", or activity, stopped and the Master Mason's Lodge was "closed" using another ritual.

Then another form of ritual was used to "open" a lodge on the First Degree or "Entered Apprentice Lodge". Shortly after this lodge was opened you knocked on the door and your initiation began.

When you received your Second Degree a “fellowcraft’s Lodge” was opened for the degree and the lodge was already opened in the “Master Mason’s Degree” for you to receive your third degree.

Almost all European lodges and a few North American lodges are opened on the First Degree. Though there is some discussion of changing the opening, for now only Master Masons may remain for the entire meeting.

- Q. I noticed the Master was wearing a hat. Is there any special significance to this?
- A. Much of Masonic lore is based on symbolism taken from King Solomon and his temple. It is supposed that Solomon wore a crown to distinguish himself and to make him recognizable to his subjects. In the symbolic lodge the Master’s hat symbolizes King Solomon’s crown. The lodge is the Master’s domain and we are his subjects.
- Q. I noticed that instead of walking directly from one place to another the man who led me through the degrees would go straight then sharply turn. He did this many times. Why?
- A. It is called “walking on the square” and is done by all participants in lodge business. The 90 degree turns reminds everyone watching to “act on the square” always being upright and honest.
- Q. I really thought there would be more laughing and tom-foolery in the lodge. Why isn’t it like other the other clubs I’m familiar with?
- A. Masonry isn’t a club. It is a fraternity. A club is usually intended primarily for the entertainment and enjoyment of the members. A club is a place to have fun. A fraternity’s purpose is for the betterment of its members. Much of what is done in a Masonic lodge is considered serious. Although we do have fun, it is not the purpose of attending a lodge meeting. Our fun is found more in fellowship with our brothers.

**Discuss the answers given to the Brother’s questions. Give your impressions and thoughts.**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Stated Communication in April 2002**

## **A New Mason Asks**

**Dear Brother Mentor,**

**Thank you for answering my first questions, but like I said, I have more.**

- Q. The man who gave the lectures impressed me. He knows so much about Masonry, but some of what he said still isn't quite clear. Where can I get a copy of his lecture.
- A. You might be able to find it somewhere, but I wouldn't know where to look. Every word of what you heard was memorized. We call that man and others who have memorized the lectures a "Lecturer." Most of the Lecturers are "Certified Lecturers" which means they pass a regular examination of the accuracy of their presentations.
- Q. I was told never to walk between the Master and the altar unless it was during degree work. If this is true what is the symbolism to this?
- A. This is very symbolic and would be referred to as "breaking the lights." The Master is never to lose sight of the Volume of Sacred Law, in most cases the Bible, which rests upon the altar. Therefore, no one is to walk between the Master and the open Bible.
- Q. If I am late for lodge can I still get in?
- A. Of course, simply have the tyler announce you are here and after you enter the lodge approach the altar, give the due guard, inform the Master why you are late, and he will ask you to sit with the brothers.
- Q. Seems like a lot to go through. Why can't I just slip in unannounced?
- A. Much is done in Masonry as a matter of courtesy. This is one of those things. Another is giving the due guard before speaking. Again, a simple matter of courtesy.

- Q. I was also told that whenever I speak it must be directed to the Master. What if it is none of the Master's concern.
- A. Quite simply, then it has no place in the Master's lodge. A reminder from the last session. We are a fraternity, not a social club. The lodge is not a place for casual chat between the brothers and disrespect for the Master.

**Discuss the answers given to the Brother's questions. Give your impressions and thoughts**

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Stated Communication in May 2002</b>
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**This month we continue some of the questions the newly made Mason is asking his Mentor and brother.**

- Q. I was told there was Catechism for the Third Degree but it was up to me whether I learned it or not. Why should I go through the trouble?
- A. It really depends on what you want from Masonry. If you chose not to learn and return your Third Degree Catechism you will meet many good brothers that you might not have met if it weren't for the fraternity, you can enjoy countless hours of fellowship with people who hold similar values, and avail yourself of some wonderful learning opportunities.

But, if you decide to return your Third Degree Catechism you can experience all of the above plus open the door to learning experiences not open to those who have not returned their Third Degree Catechism, realize more depth in your Masonic life, understand much more from your Masonic work, and, if you chose to do so, have the opportunity to serve your brothers as an officer in the progressive line of your lodge.

If you will ask most men who have attained proficiency in their Third Degree Catechism you will certainly find that they feel the rewards far outweigh the effort.

- Q. What do you mean by “Progressive Line” of officers?
- A. All the officers except the Treasurer, Secretary, Tyler and Chaplain are considered to be in the Progressive Line. In most circumstances each of these officers advance one step, or “chair” up each year until they become Worshipful Master.
- Q. If I return the Third Degree Catechism do I have to become an officer?
- A. Certainly not. The decision to become proficient should be first based on a desire to learn more about Masonry, not a desire to become an officer. Many excellent Masons have become proficient, yet have no desire to hold lodge office.

**Discuss the answers given to the Brother’s questions. Give your impressions and thoughts.**

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Stated Communication in May 2002</b>
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### **A New Mason Asks (Cont.)**

- Q. I was also told that the highest degree a Mason can reach is the Third Degree, then almost immediately someone is talking about the “Higher Degrees” in Masonry. What are the “Higher Degrees”?
- A. You are 100% correct that the highest level a Mason can reach is to become a Master Mason or Third Degree Mason. The purpose of the so called “higher degrees” available in the Scottish and York Rites is to draw upon and expand our knowledge of the lessons learned in the Third Degree.

A good example is that everyone in a class graduating from medical school is called “doctor”. Every member of that class is qualified to be called “doctor”. He has earned it. He can wear it with pride. Yet, some of the graduates will go on to learn more about their craft. They will become skilled at portions of medicine and patient care that other members of their graduating class will know little or nothing about

and they will continue to be called “Doctor”

The same can be said of Masons. Every man who goes through the degrees and is Raised is entitled to the name Master Mason. Yet, some of his brothers will desire to explore the mysteries of Masonry and humanity more deeply. And as they progress through the Rites and the bodies within those Rites they are entitled to “wear” the name of that degree or body. It is their reward for their effort. When we refer to someone as a York Rite Mason or 32<sup>nd</sup> Degree Scottish Rite Mason it does not alter the fact they are first, and last, Master Masons and called “Brother”.

Q. What do I have to do to become a lodge officer?

A. First, before you are installed you must return your Third Degree Catechism.

Then, be sure you want to be an officer. Becoming an officer entails a large responsibility. You are committing to be at the lodge every meeting night for as much as the next seven years. People are depending on you and whether you are aware of it or not, they are watching to see how you handle your responsibilities.

Q. What could I expect as a Lodge officer?

A. This depends almost entirely on the Master of the lodge, and may change from year to year. Some Masters can be quite demanding and expect 100% from each and every officer. Some are quite lax and do little more than open and close the lodge. The demands of most Masters lies somewhere between these two extremes. During this period, you will also need to decide what kind of Master you will be.

Q. If I decide not to become a lodge officer can I still be involved in my lodge?

A. Certainly. Being a “sideliner” doesn’t mean just sitting in a seat. You don’t have to be proficient for lots of tasks in the lodge. There are parts of the degrees that need to be learned. There are numerous duties in the lodge that need to be performed. There are meals to be cooked. Projects that need to be handled. Programs that need to be



given. There are brothers and widows who need help. In an active lodge there are untold numbers of duties. In other words, there is work that needs to be done.

**Discuss the answers given to the Brother's questions. Give your impressions and thoughts**

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Stated Communication in June 2002</b>
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### **A New Mason Asks (Cont.)**

**Our conversation between a new Mason and his Mentor continues this month. In the previous two months the Mentor has encouraged the new Mason to return his Third Degree Catechism, which he does. Yet, the new man's even broader understanding of Masonry creates even more questions.**

- Q. You know, the average man would probably find it hard to live up to every detail of the Third Degree obligation. Is it really expected.
- A. Definitely yes, but Masonry was never designed for the average man. Carl Fitje, Deputy Grand Master of Masons in New York once wrote:

“Not too many years ago when Masons marched in Communities for an occasion, regardless of what it was, schools and businesses closed to honor both the event and the men who marched. Some 12,000 Masonic Temples on the Main Streets of America served as meeting places for three (3) million men who were innovative and makers of America's history. The men who comprised this lofty Band of Masonic Brothers took considerable pride in being members of what was recognized as the oldest, most respected fraternity in the world. Were we a proud bunch? Yes! In fact, it was a matter of pride even to know a Mason.”

No one finds the average man special, that's why he's called "average". People once looked up to those old Masons with their codes of honesty and integrity. Their conscience was their judge. The lessons they found in the Third Degree and in the Bible was their *guideline*.

- Q. *Being honest, I didn't realize my Third Degree Obligation was as involved as it is. When I took the obligation it was a blur of words I tried to remember long enough to repeat, but now that I have committed it to memory it is rather extensive. For example, it appears I should know more about the Code than I do.*
- A. Unfortunately, most Masons in North Carolina know little about the *rules and regulations* they have promised to uphold. And, should you become a *lodge officer* others will depend on your knowledge of these matters. It is your duty as a Mason to be aware of what you have agreed to, after all it is adherence to these rules that makes Masons "special".

**Discuss the answers given to the Brother's questions. Give your impressions and thoughts**

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Stated Communication in June 2002</b>
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**The following questions are for those present tonight in your lodge. They have been discussed often. What is your opinion?**

- Q. If we cannot advertise or solicit members how does a man know about the Freemasons? How does he know we exist?
- Q. If a man specifically asks for details about Masonry what would you say? What do we stand for? How difficult is it to become a member? What do we do?

- Q. Some people become very uncomfortable when asked about Masonry and fear they may divulge some “secret.” What can you NOT discuss with the non-Mason who asks you about the fraternity?

**The final question, and probably most difficult:**

**“Why should I become a Mason?”**