

MEMBERS' GUIDE BOOK




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MEMBERS' GUIDE BOOK

A decorative flourish consisting of a single, elegant, curved line.

**COMPILED FOR INFORMATION OF
OFFICERS AND MEMBERS TO FOSTER
BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND BETTER
DECORUM IN LODGES**

A decorative flourish consisting of a single, elegant, curved line.

While the material contained herein must of necessity be of an esoteric nature, it is not intended for it to be secret, yet it should be treated with the same confidence as your Masonic Manual

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FOREWORD

Success or failure of any important undertaking depends largely upon the type of relationships we have with our associates. This is true because personal power of sufficient proportions to enable us to attain outstanding success can be acquired only by the coordination of our efforts with those of others.

What we shall write in this booklet is no new story. It is as old as Masonry in Alabama. The aim is to present it for the guidance of Brethren, for Wardens who may be called upon to preside, and for newly-elected Masters who may feel that from a lack of experience or a certain degree of timidity they are unequal to the task.

In our Masonic circles we hear a great deal about lack of leadership, absence of proper procedure and improper decorum in Lodges. We sometimes also hear severe criticism of the conduct of some member outside the Lodge, especially after he has taken other degrees. We should never forget that the future of our organization depends, as it has from the beginning, upon what other people think of it, and the world's opinion of us will always be influenced by the behavior of individual members.

We should also remember that small matters sometimes shape great events—a Brother's misconduct can do more damage to our prestige in 15 minutes than years can overcome.

If these general hints are helpful to any Brother or to any Lodge, we are amply repaid for the time and effort made to compile them. Certainly they are not made with any thought of trying to be smart or of knowing all there is to be known.

INTRODUCTION

Conventions are the rules which society has laid down for itself, without the force of law, by which its members live together with the least friction. If these rules were suddenly lost it would be necessary for some gentlemen to reinvent such a code immediately in order to prevent the world from degrading into a state of stagnation, or a state of chaos.

It is not a sin for a man to eat with his knife or to keep his hat on while in the house, but these practices are not "good form." Neither are they "good manners."

Freemasonry has developed its own conventions by which its members conduct themselves in the lodge and in the anteroom. Not to proceed according to them is not necessarily a Masonic offense. More often it is a mere lack of Masonic manners.

In the course of your degrees you were carefully taught some of the essential things a man must know in order to be a Mason. Unless you had an extraordinary teacher, however, it is doubtful if you were told much about the little niceties of Lodge conduct. These you are supposed to absorb by observation as you attend Lodge.

But all men are not observing, and it is much more difficult to note the absence of an act than to take cognizance of something done wrong.

THE APRON

Brethren who respect the formalities of their Lodge will not enter it without the proper dress—that is, without their apron. Neither should they enter while putting their apron on. It certainly is not a pretty sight to see a brother walking up to the altar tying the strings and adjusting his apron while the Master waits for his salute.

If a man entered church putting on his shirt or his collar and tie he would hardly be arrested, but he surely would come in for some unfavorable comment. So it is in the Lodge.

The strangeness of the badge of a Mason and unfamiliarity with its meaning cause many to forget that it is as important to the Mason in Lodge as clean linen, properly adjusted, is to the man in the street.

Also, if you would always be justly proper, the apron should be worn outside the coat.

SALUTE TO THE MASTER

The Worshipful Master in the East occupies the most exalted position within the gift of the Lodge. A Lodge that does not honor its Master for the honor given him rather than for who or what he himself may be, is lacking in Masonic courtesy.

It is therefore to the Master and not to John Henry Jones who happens to be the Master that you offer a salute when you enter or retire from the Lodge. And, like any other salute, it can be made courteously as if you meant it, or it can be done in a perfunctory manner as if you didn't care.

The man who puts one finger to his hat-brim when he speaks to a lady on the street compares very poorly with his well-bred neighbor who doffs his hat. Touching the hat-brim is merely a half-hearted salute. Similarly, your salute to the Master can be made just as slightly—but it should be most courteous, because it is your renewed pledge of fealty and service, your public recognition before all men of your obligation. It is performed at the altar to show the Master your respect and your veneration for his authority. To offer it as if you were in a hurry, too lazy to properly make it, or bored by its offering, is very rude, to say the least.

SITTING IN THE EAST

Well-informed Brethren do not take seats in the East beside the Master without invitation. It is true that all within the tiled door of the Lodge are equal, but Masonry exacts long and faithful service from its officers. Pastmasters have worked diligently for the title they bear. The Master therefore recog-

nizes their loyalty and devotion with a special word of welcome and an invitation for them to occupy a seat with him where they once sat. From his fine old custom originally developed the invitation to a "Seat in the East" to any distinguished visitor, to Past Masters, especially those who are not regular attendants at stated meetings, or to any Brother the Master wishes especially to honor.

If everyone in the Lodge helped themselves at random to seats in the East there would be no opportunity for the Master to offer that fine old courtesy.

PASSING ALTAR

A courteous Brother does not pass between the Altar and the East when the Lodge is at labor and the Master in his station. There is no penalty for infraction of the rule. The custom is really a courtesy to the Master. It is rooted in the theory that as the Great Lights and the Charter of the Lodge are essential to the regularity of the meeting, as they are the particular care of the Master.

In Alabama work we have deviated somewhat from the age-old custom. We do permit the candidate and certain members of the degree team to pass between the Altar and the East, but that is for specific purposes. And we do not keep our charters on the Altar, but according to the oldest rituals, that is where they should be kept.

OBEY GAVEL

Failure to obey the gavel at once is a grave Masonic discourtesy. The Master is all-powerful in the Lodge. He can put or refuse to put any motion. He can rule any Brother out of order on any subject at any time. He can say what he will permit and what he will not permit to be discussed in the Lodge. If Brethren think him unfair, unjust, arbitrary or acting in an illegal manner, they have recourse. The Grand Master can be appealed to.

But in the Lodge the gavel, emblem of authority, is

supreme. If and when a Brother is rapped down he should obey immediately and without further discussion. It is very bad manners to do otherwise indeed it is very close to the line between bad manners and a Masonic offense.

ADVISE MASTER OF INTENTIONS

It is a courtesy to the Master to advise him beforehand that you intend to offer such and such a motion, or wish to bring up such and such a matter for discussion. You have the right to do it without apprising him in advance, just as he has the right to rule you out of order, but the Master may have plans of his own for the meeting into which your proposed motion or discourse does not fit. It is therefore a courtesy to ask him privately if you may be recognized for your purpose, and by doing so you may spare him the disagreeable necessity of seeming arbitrary in a public refusal.

LODGE OFFICERS ARE SERVANTS

Lodge officers are servants of the Brethren. Any man in the Lodge is the servant of his Brethren if he engages in any Lodge activity. Servants stand in the presence of their superiors. Therefore, no Mason sits while speaking, whether he addresses the Master or speaks to another Brother. Incidentally, he should not address another Brother without permission of the Master. This does not apply to conversations on the sidelines during the period of refreshment, but to discussions on the floor during business meetings.

There is a special Lodge courtesy to be observed in all debates to any motion. One speaks to the Master. The Master is the Lodge. One does not turn his back on the Master without permission. The spectacle of two Brethren on their feet at the same time arguing over a motion, facing each other and ignoring the Master is one that no Master should permit. Also it is one that no Master should have to prevent!

Customs vary in different Grand Jurisdictions, some requiring that a Brother rise with the proper salute before being re-recognized. Alabama Masonic law does not require it.

TAKING PART IN WORK

A courteous Brother does not refuse a request made in the name of the Lodge. Every Lodge at some time has a knock upon its door from a visiting Brother. This requires the services of at least two members of the Lodge on the examining committee. Someone has to do that work. To decline it on any grounds whatever is discourteous to the Master.

Also a degree cannot be conferred without the services of a conductor and workers in the various stations and places. When you are assigned such a piece of work it is Masonically discourteous to refuse. If you are selected a member of the FC team in the MM degree the only excuse for not accepting it is that of physical disability.

Like other matters mentioned, refusal of one of these requests is not a Masonic offense. Neither is it a legal offense to seat yourself at a table before your hostess or drink from a fingerbowl, but the convention of good manners is what makes society pleasant, and good Masonic manners are what make Lodge meetings pleasant.

EXAMINING VISITOR

There are no set rules for examining a visitor, however, a few practices should be observed. If you are called on to conduct such an examination, the first thing to be done is have the visitor sign the register. Then you would ask for his dues card. While you are talking with him one member of the examining committee would check the signature on the card against the register.

Next would come the Tiler's test oath, and every member present in the examining room should participate. While you might be able to avouch for others who might be in the room, the visitor could not, and you are due him the courtesy of assurance that all are members.

From there you may proceed with the examination as you see fit, taking into consideration the visitor's ability and his knowledge of the work of his own Grand Jurisdiction.

CONFERENCES

EA and FC Masons should not be permitted to attend conferences, even when those degrees are being exemplified. Conferences are opened in the MM degree and that degree is not closed until the meeting is closed. Brethren are permitted to ask questions about any degree at any time during a conference, therefore EA and FC members should not be present.

EVERYONE SHOULD VOTE

Each petition for initiation or affiliation must be balloted on separately, and every member present must vote, and if he should persist in refusing to vote, charges should be preferred against him. However, the Worshipful Master may in his discretion excuse a blind brother from voting, or he may, on request, designate some brother to cast the ballot for him as directed. Edict No. 235.

LATE COMERS

Late comers to the Lodge should be admitted only after the Tiler has given an alarm, unless there is degree or other work going on and such alarm would disturb the proceedings. In the latter case it is permissible for the Tiler to ease them in with the least confusion, however, it is much more dignified to await an opportunity, go to the Altar and pay the proper respect to the Master, who we have said, is the Lodge.

And, too often do we see a member go to the Altar and give the wrong salute. This is inexcusable. It is partly the fault of the Tiler. Whenever he admits a late comer and sends him to the Altar he should always inform him as to the proper salute to give. Not all brethren approaching the Altar can recognize the degree being worked in by observing the Great Lights.

The Tiler's place in the lodge is most important, and his duties, while outside the door, reflect immediately upon the Lodge.

SERVE IN ALL STATIONS

This is primarily for officers of the Lodge. Each officer in line, from the Senior Warden down to the Stewards, is a potential Worshipful Master of the Lodge. A man should not be started in the line of officers unless he is capable of absorbing those fine qualities which will enable him to preside over the destinies of the Lodge with firmness, fairness, fervor and zeal.

In order to attain those qualities, a man should fill all the offices from the bottom to the top, because with a year's experience in each we will be better prepared to be the Worshipful Master when the time comes. It is an injustice to the Lodge and an injustice to the man himself if he is unprepared for that great honor and great service. And that preparation will come mostly through hard work and the experience of each office.

THE MASTER

The Master should always bear in mind that his Lodge will be what he, as presiding officer, makes it, and that its reputation will be judged accordingly.

Be the Worshipful Master of your Lodge!

Dispense your authority firmly but kindly; certainly not harshly.

Advise freely with your wardens.

Plan your programs in advance.

A wise Master will consult with his Secretary before each Lodge meeting and familiarize himself with the work to be done and the business matters that are to be disposed of. While it is impossible to foresee some of the things that are bound to come up, deal with them by the use of good common sense. It is a mistake to come to lodge expecting whatever situation arises to take care of itself.

LEARN RITUAL

One of the first and most essential tasks for an officer of

the Lodge is to learn the work. No ceremony is more beautiful than our Masonic degrees when done correctly and impressively. Slovenly ritual is abhorred. A ceremony rushed through, "jazzed" up, or done in a perfunctory manner is horrible.

District or division conferences are held periodically for the purpose of instructing those who want to learn. Lecturers are untiring and take pride in conducting them for the most beneficial results.

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

Practice the funeral service frequently during periods of instruction. The public funeral service is one of the few places where the world at large can view Masonry at its best, yet how often do we fail to make a lasting impression! Ignorance of what to do or say in this ceremony is inexcusable. Irreverence is unforgivable.

INTRODUCING VISITORS

All visitors coming to your Lodge for the first time should be conducted to the Altar and formally introduced.

Be courteous and tactful in welcoming a visitor or calling on him to speak. Make him feel you really welcome him and want to hear from him. Nothing can chill a meeting more than improper introduction, whether through ignorance or intent. To invite a visitor to speak by asking him to get something off his chest is as bad as first stabbing him with a knife.

RECEIVING GRAND LODGE OFFICERS

Receive Grand Lodge Officers with private grand honors, (unless they prefer not to be so received). The proper method should be practiced along with other work so you will not be caught napping in case one should slip in on you.

After the Grand honors, have them conducted to the East and present the gavel to the ranking one. (There may be

times or occasions when you will wish the Senior and Junior Grand Wardens or some of the appointed Grand Officers conducted to their respective stations or places).

If you do not know it, when you present the gavel to a Grand Officer, your Lodge is over so far as you are concerned, or until he gives you permission to proceed. That will be indicated by his return of the gavel to you. This applies also to Grand Officers of any other Grand Jurisdiction with whom we maintain Masonic relations. Receive them as you would our own. If we fail to recognize them with that same courtesy, we fail to maintain friendly relations.

If the Grand Master, Deputy Grand Master, Senior or Junior Grand Warden is present when a Brother rises to speak or to make a motion, such Grand Officers should always be addressed first. Remember, either of them ranks the Worshipful Master in any Blue Lodge in Alabama, whether he is presiding, or merely sitting as a spectator among the Brethren.

WRITING GRAND MASTER

Are you familiar with the proper method of addressing a letter to the Grand Master? Should you have occasion to write him, the letter should be started:

Hon. John Henry Jones,
Most Worshipful Grand Master
Most Worshipful Grand Lodge, F. & A. M., of Alabama,
(Postoffice box or street number),
(City of residence).

The salutation should be:
Most Worshipful Sir and Brother:

The envelope should be addressed merely:
Hon. John Henry Jones,
Grand Master, F. & A. M. of Alabama,
(P.O. Box or street number),
(City of residence).

A FEW "DO'S" AND "DON'T'S" FOR MASTER

Here are a few things for you to remember when you become Master of your Lodge:

First, familiarize yourself with the Constitution and Edicts of the Grand Lodge, at least in a general sense. Consult your manual when posing questions arise. Above all, do NOT write the Grand Master until you have exhausted all other sources of information and MUST have his advice. He is a busy man.

Arrange something away from the regular routine when you are not crowded with work. Spelling bees can be interesting, practice in the ritual is helpful, good speakers on Masonic subjects can be obtained, visiting degree teams may be invited. Competitive degree work with another Lodge is wholesome.

Don't talk into your lap when presiding. Lift your head and speak out to the Brethren. The same for the Secretary when reading.

FOR THE BRETHREN

It is illegal to enter or leave the Lodge during a ballot. It is discourteous to leave it during a speech or during the conferring of a degree, except at the several natural periods when it can be done with the least confusion.

Avoid trying to be funny while taking part in the work. Avoid roughing the candidate. Remember, he is a gentleman and should always be treated as such. Ham-acting by the three R's in making their declarations should be strictly taboo.

More men are a complete failure to Masonry from "kidding" prior to initiation than from any other cause. Trying to be funny in the anteroom is another contributing factor.

Speak distinctly, whether addressing the Lodge or taking part in the work. The candidate should hear every word spoken in the degrees.

MAKING AND SECONDING MOTIONS

Before making or seconding a motion, a Brother should rise and be recognized by the Master. It is discourteous to remain seated in performing that honorable duty, and besides, the Secretary is unable to identify members for his records.

A Brother also should rise and address the Junior and Senior Deacons properly when he vouches for a Brother.

ANCIENT LANDMARKS

In your Master's degree you were carefully charged that the Ancient Landmarks entrusted to your care you are carefully to preserve and never suffer them to be infringed or countenance a deviation from the established usages and customs of the Fraternity. For a complete description of these landmarks you are invited to study pages 66 to 72 inclusive, of the *Masonic Manual of Alabama*. Each member should have a copy.

CONSTITUTION, RESOLUTIONS AND EDICTS

You are obligated to forever maintain and support the Constitution, Resolutions and Edicts of the Grand Lodge. To properly conform you should familiarize yourself with those portions with which you are concerned as a member. If you are an officer you should become acquainted with them until, as Master of the Lodge, you have a general knowledge of them all.

Your attention is directed to certain of the Edicts, which, if studied, will enable you to better perform your duties as Masons:

Edict 6.4 – Examination on preceding degree.

Edict 6.9 – Wearing of insignia.

Edict 13.22 – Authorized work.

Edict 13.25 – Legal information.

Edict 14.6 – Conduct of elections.

Edict 14.8 – Election of Officers.

Edict 25.1 – (inclusive) – Masonic
thru *25.16* offenses.

Edict 16.1 – Eligibility.

Edict 22.4 – Masonry not to be used for business or
political purposes.

Edict 13.7 – Masonry and religion.

INVESTIGATING COMMITTEES

Members of a duly appointed Investigating Committee should regard themselves as a UNIT and work together diligently in their investigation for the best interests of all concerned.

When you have been appointed a member of such committee you are entrusted with one of the most responsible tasks that can be imposed upon you. You have been appointed a guardian of the Inner Door.

The first member appointed usually acts as Chairman, unless otherwise stated. The committee should then meet immediately and divide the work, each pursuing different channels of investigation. For instance, one should look into the petitioner's business dealings, credit rating, and talk with his employer. If he owns a business, look into his business life, ethics, etc. The second should investigate his social connections, clubs, societies, and general conduct in social life. The third should investigate his home life, church life and other things in general.

After the investigations are complete the committee should again meet and consult on their findings, and then decide upon the report to be made.

Never use the telephone in making an investigation unless no other avenue is open. No one likes to give confidential information over the telephone, especially to a stranger. Always get personal interviews, or write by mail, sending a stamped and addressed envelope for answer. Your chairman may procure the necessary postage.

Remember that every applicant is entitled to the same thorough impartial investigation that you would expect if you were in his place.

After consulting with the other members of your committee upon their findings, you should be able to answer these questions:

Is the petitioner physically acceptable?

Is he mentally competent?

Does he believe in Deity?

Is he a good man, a good husband, a good father?

Does he pay his debts?

Does he go to church?

Has he resided in the state for one year or more?

Is he twenty-one or more years old?

Is he free-born?

What is his profession, trade, occupation?

Has he ever been rejected by a Masonic lodge?

Is he an habitual drunkard or dope addict?

Does he teach or practice polygamy?

Is he loyal to his government?

Does he retail, distill or traffic in spirituous, vinous or malt liquors?

Has he cheated or defrauded anyone?

What is his purpose in entering Masonry?

Has he ever been divorced? What grounds?

Has he close relatives who could influence him adversely?

What education has he?

Is he successful in his business or profession?

Does he dress neatly?

Does he appear to have personal pride?

DUES CARD DON'TS

Don't forget your card is valuable, so be careful with it.

Don't put it in your pocket without signing your name on it with ink.

Don't place it where it will be lost or fall into the hands of an imposter.

Don't overlook notifying your Secretary immediately in case it should be lost or stolen.

Don't carry a "deck" of old cards in your pocket. The last

one issued is the only one of value to you.

Don't discard an old or expired card or receipt without first destroying it.

Don't forget your reputation is something for which you are proud. If your receipt or card gets into the hands of a crook or imposter he can badly damage your reputation.

Don't assist strangers posing as Freemasons and presenting up-to-date cards. Send them to a relief board or to the nearest Secretary or Worshipful Master. Such officials should know how to handle them.

Don't forget to notify your Secretary of any change of address. He is doing his best to try to keep a correct record of all members.

(You will understand the bit of irony on the following page and know how to take it. The ideas were inspired by observation at various meetings here and there, and are included in this booklet for what they may be worth if any of them fit your conduct.)

HOW NOT TO BECOME POPULAR IN YOUR LODGE

1. Tell everybody who will listen that you can do the work better than anybody else. It will make a lasting impression.

2. No matter how much you work always ask for more. You can take it.

3. Don't hesitate to criticize all officers and directors of work. They will like you for it.

4. Speak right out when someone makes an error. The candidate should always know it.

5. Be as difficult as possible with members of the program committee. Make it plain you know more than they do.

6. Give the old "brushola" to anyone who suggests you are too active. He is wrong.

7. Always tell your WM how he should conduct the Lodge affairs. He may not know.

8. Put your feet on the Secretary's desk and read newspapers at every opportunity. It looks nice.

9. When sitting on the sidelines always carry on a loud conversation with the man next to you. It helps "gum" the works.

10. Never shake hands with anybody. Handshakers may be germ carriers.

11. Carry on as much "horseplay" as possible during the conferring of a degree. The Brethren will think you are "funny" and the candidate will get a kick out of it, although he may not see you.

12. Keep yourself in good physical condition so you can hop up and down continuously during floor discussions. You must be heard.

13. Yell across the room at other members during debates. The WM doesn't mind being ignored.

14. Eat peanuts when you can get them and throw the hulls on the floor. Candidates like to walk on them.

15. Disregard all established rules of decorum when visiting another Lodge. Maybe they will invite you back.

16. Finally: Get mad and go home if you can't have your way. Then stay there!

**This Booklet is a re-print and revise of a
Booklet written by the late Howard Nunnally
Murphy, Sr.**

**And we dedicate it to
BROTHER "PAT"**

**It is supplied by
The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge
F & AM of Alabama**

12 TRIBES OF ISRAEL

RUEBEN

SIMEON

LEVI

JUDAH

--A--

ISSACHAR

ZEBULON

JOSEPH

BENJAMIN

--O--

DAN

NAPHTALI

GAD

ASHER

--M--