

## Changes in life-style and benefits of freemasonry

Each month we hear that another lodge is in danger of closing, as older members pass away or resign due to ill health. and we ask the question why young men are not joining freemasonry as they did in the past, I feel sure that freemasonry could be a casualty of the life styles which young men and woman have adopted over the past decade, and which is possibly the reason why Freemasonry is not so attractive to young men today.

In the past I have been invited to a number of social events and have been talking to my son in laws business friends and their wives and am amazed to discover what constitutes the average young working persons lives. Their life styles seem to have developed around working long hours, shopping, decorating, eating out, running, exercising at the gym, gossiping on the social networks, twitter, face book, celebrity and sports watching, and the endless search for personal recognition and acceptance from others,

Discussing life in the fast lane and what the future holds for them was the most important issue, they seem to be searching for some direction in life, and when I mentioned Freemasonry I was not surprised to be bombarded with cynical and negative remarks regarding the craft, the men whom were mostly young business men said they were quite happy with their current social activities, of the pub, the golf club, and the gym, and couldn't justify spending additional time away from their domestic duties.

Their wives attitudes were the most surprising, they all knew about the good works that freemasonry does, the schooling, the rest homes, the charity work and what has been achieved, but were not sure of how membership of freemasonry would impact on their own family relationships. They said that with it being a man only club we would not be able to share in their men's activities, I said that in many lodges the ladies are the lynch pin of any lodge social events, they organise the Ladies evenings, and summer events involving the children and play a positive role in most activities bringing members and their families together.

Having had many discussions with the younger generation, it seems that the financial budgeting is no longer the sole task of the husband; it is now the wives who manage the family finances. A number remarked that the financial cost involved in joining a Masonic lodge could not be justified when they are trying to balance the family budget, they said that the men will be having a good time enjoying more domestic freedom, socialising, drinking, and having a good meal, but what will we wives get out of it but more time on our own, struggling with the children.

Based on this statement, remembering that young business men are seemed to be focusing on seeking personal recognition and acceptance from others, and remembering that young business men are encouraged by their senior managers to think outside the box, I changed tack, and focused on what benefits the family could receive over the long term, what I told them certainly made them think and back off from the negative attitudes they had first expressed,

Without going into too much detail about the craft degree workings the following is what I told them. Your husbands are young business managers who are hoping to improve their careers and progress up the ladder of industry, businesses pay thousands of pound each year to send their people on life improvement courses, they recognise that if they are to compete in the business world,

It is not just product knowledge that is needed, their people have to be that bit smarter, and that bit more educated in people skills.

They need to develop social skills, and soft skills.

Be able to listen as well as talk.

Be able to speak in a clear and interesting way,

Be able to build trust and respect with and for people.

To cultivate good social manners.

Be able to stand up in public and speak clearly.

Be able to memorise a subject, before they speak about it.

To develop a fair attitude in life, to people and situations.

Be well organised, as a person and as a colleague.

How does a man develop all of these skills without the high cost involved in attending life improvement courses? I said that the answer is to join a Masonic Lodge.

All the Social skills and life improvement skills are developed by Freemasons as they attend their Lodge meetings.

They learn communication skills, how to interact with people in interesting and empathetic ways, in other words not just talking but listening and encouraging two-way conversations.

They learn how to do this when they attend the social board after the lodge work is over. Eating, drinking, talking, joking, and making friends, creating relationships with people from all differing walks of life, professional people, business people, retired people, all with differing ages and differing outlooks on life.

The ability to be comfortable with people and situations is what freemasonry develops; this is developed and refined by each member of the Lodge as they move through the rituals of Masonic teaching.

At our social board the young mason is encouraged to propose the toast to the visiting brethren, if he has never stood up in front of a group of people before, this is a daunting and harrowing experience, however in the presence of encouraging brethren, the task becomes a pleasant and rewarding experience, you learn to anticipate that you may be called upon to speak or propose a toast, so you are encouraged to prepare something and be ready just in case, as the boy scouts say "Be Prepared"

Building trust with people comes naturally in masonry, when you are helped by senior members as you struggle to learn the words to the ritual, you realise that the brethren have no hidden agenda as would be applicable in the business world, so you learn to respect the people for their help and kindness,

In the business world where each person is trying to impress the boss and move up the ladder it is difficult to know who to trust, and if there is no trust there is no respect, in a Masonic lodge all the knife back stabbing is absent, people help because they want to assist the new man to progress within the craft, with this help becomes trust, and with trust grows respect.

As a person progresses in the business world he may have to entertain customers and friends at a social event or a gala dinner or some other such activity, having good social manners is something that would make you stand out above the other people at the table and would certainly impress the higher echelon, but as you didn't attend a finishing school how do you handle yourself in this goldfish bowl of entertaining.

Masonic social board is your finishing school, you will be with brethren who have made all the social blunders in the past, and they will be ready and pleased to act as role models to the young mason,

Eating a meal with others who may be judging you is difficult, but eating a meal with brethren who are coaching you is a different kettle of fish, to be able to eat, discuss interesting subjects, to be able to hold your own, and impress the others is an art which is not natural but is learned and developed over time.

You may not be entertaining customers each month but you will be certainly attending a Masonic social board at least once a month or possibly twice a month if you are invited to visit another lodge,

That is when preparation is a blessing, because as one of the visiting brethren you may be called upon to reply to the toast to the visitors, and in a situation where you don't know most of the brethren it will be more difficult than in the comfort of your own lodge,

This is the preparation for those dinners and galas or meetings which you may be attending in the business world, to be able to stand up in front of a group of people and deliver a speech or lecture is a rewarding experience and a skill which doesn't come naturally, it is something which has to be practiced and developed over time,

This is called presentation skills and companies spend thousands of pounds sending their managers on these courses, because they know that a bad presentation will produce a bad result for the company.

To be comfortable with public speaking can only be achieved if you know your subject, masons learn how to master their subject each time they are asked to perform a duty within the lodge. Without going into too much detail I explained that all the skills which have been highlighted, are learned and developed by the brethren, and it is no accident of fate that a high percentage of the senior brethren in each Lodge are, or were, in some kind of business or work that involves dealing with people.

These soft skills are not just additional business skills, they also apply to the man who wishes to become a better Husband, a better father, a better brother, and a better friend. It is a well-known

fact that most people, and especially business people will want to be associated with a socially cultured person that they respect and feel at ease with.

So ladies the answer to the question, what will Freemasonry do for you wives and your families that you husbands golf club, the pub, and the gym, will not do, is that over a period of time your men will develop into confident individuals, with a balanced outlook on life, and be recognised by senior management as a polished candidate for that coming promotion when and if it is offered.

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