

IOWA SUPPLEMENT

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This month I am going to use this space as a follow up to last month's article about the importance of ceremonies. I now wish to stress what I believe to be the importance of well performed ritual!

Those who read my article that appeared in the October 2008 Iowa Supplement may recall that I wrote at that time, "...Masonic Bodies have many worthwhile charitable causes. So do most organizations that are attempting to recruit new members and keep them. In addition to that, Masonic Bodies have inspirational ceremonies and ritual. These are performed in a manner which *presents* ancient legends, majestic symbols and hidden mysteries of life. I consider this to be our trump card when competing with other organizations for membership, because few, if any, organizations can compete with us in this area."

Permit me to expand on what is "*presented*" – history, sagas, traditions! Also, classic expressions, doctrines and philosophies that will live forever! Also, themes of Commitment, Honor, Integrity, Truth, Morals, Ethics, High Standards and Fidelity! In other words, vital lessons which are necessary to be learned in preparation for the life you are going to live!

I believe that all Brothers, Companions and Sir Knights are impressed with and appreciative of well performed ritual. I believe that good ritual is important to each of them whether he is proficient or not in ritual.

Note that I just used the words: "well performed", "good" and "proficient". The power and pageantry of the ritual of the Masonic Degrees and Orders are the result of research by dedicated minds that delved into the history, legends, symbols and mysteries of many cultures. Don't we owe it to those dedicated Brethren, and to the individuals we are asking to "enlist under our Banner", to present ritual *proficiently*.

The unfortunate reality today is that there is an urgent need for the Brothers, Companions and Sir Knights in Iowa to become proficient in ritual. In 2008, at the 152nd Annual Convention of Iowa's Grand Chapter and the 106th Annual Assembly of Iowa's Grand Council, the Boards of Custodians reported the sad details. There are four (4) Companions who have passed the proficiency exams for the four Chapter Degrees and are designated "active" District Instructors. In 2007-08 two schools were conducted. The report does not identify how many Companions have passed the proficiency exams for the Council Degrees. It states that there were NO Council Schools. (Fortunately, Alpha Council # 1 did conduct a Council School on 2-7-09). At the 144th Annual Conclave of Iowa's Grand Commandery, the Board of Instruction reported that six (6) Sir Knights have passed the proficiency exam and are "active" inspectors. There were three schools in 2007 and four schools were scheduled for 2008.

In order to improve this situation I believe that there are two essential ingredients:
1) **Support from the leadership of the Grand Bodies.** This one is easy! I can tell you that if you want a York Rite school, all you have to do is submit a request to the Board. If you want to be examined and earn a certificate, all you have to do is submit a request to the Board.

I know from personal communication with the respective Chairmen of the Boards, that those requests will be honored in a heart beat.

2) **Individual desire to learn the work and to serve the Order.** If you want to learn the work, DO IT! If you want the work performed (and performed well), be a leader! Why don't you press the membership to learn more, and why don't you show them the way? There are two comments that I am tired of hearing. #1 – "I love the work, but I am not a ritualist." There are many small parts that do not demand committing to memory 100's of pages of verse. Also, most successful teams have a coaching staff. They don't block or tackle or carry the ball. However, they can point out ways to improve the performance on the field – encouraging good people to get in the game, prompting, following along with a script to note oversights. #2 – "I love the work, but I prefer to see the Degrees and Orders performed one at time instead of at "Festivals". How many Chapters, Councils and Commanderies in Iowa have the qualified personnel living within a reasonable distance to accomplish this? If some of the Companions and Sir Knights *acquire the desire* to learn the work, *ask* for help and *make a personal effort* there will be a lot more ritual performed one Degree and Order at a time.

I challenge you to be a leader! I challenge you to commit to memory some of the ritual of the Masonic Degrees and Orders! I ask for your help! I ask you to serve the Order!

I wrote last month that ceremonies are important! I write this month, **well performed ritual is also important!** They demonstrate that there is *order*, and people see a *hierarchy*. They show a command *structure* is in place. They can help generate *camaraderie* and *sense of purpose*. They can instill that vital energy needed to sustain a *will to fight!*

Remember that Grand Conclave is scheduled for 6/4-6/09, in Cedar Rapids. On the 4th we have planned for: 1) Retreat Ceremony where the Sir Knights will pass in review with Beauceants flying to the song "Onward Christian Soldiers". 2) Vespers Service. 3) Opening Competition between commanderies. Make plans to attend and bring your Beauceant!

In 2009, Sioux City will host a Festival April 4 & 11. (Point of contact is Gregory L. Kenkel, 712 251 7935). Estherville will host a Festival April 17 & 18. (Point of contact is Frank C. Osdoba 712 332 2271). Des Moines will host a Festival April 25. (Point of contact is David M. Dryer 515 961 3279).

These York Rite Bodies will Exalt, Greet and Knight Brothers if they will come to the Festival! The candidates for the York Rite Degrees and Orders can pay their fees to your York Rite Body. Bring them to the Festival and the Companions and Sir Knights of the host York Rite Body will do the work. You need only let the host know that you are coming and get your candidates there.

You may also bring new members into your York Rite Body by contacting the Iowa York Rite College. There are two colleges in Iowa. They exist to support Symbolic Lodges, Chapters, Councils and Commanderies. They will assist the local bodies with the work. (Points of contact are Pre-Eminent Governor Donald A. Radloff, Iowa College # 37, 319 240 1917 or Pre-Eminent Governor Richard W. Martin, Lewis & Clark College # 199, 712 212 0351).

Fraternally
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