

Who says Masonic Education has to be stuffy and “plain vanilla”, filled with just historical facts, and a lot of numbers like 2.110, or 2.152, from the Methodical Digest? I believe Education can also be entertaining as well as informative. Hoping to prove my point, I offer the following; entitled,

### **Freemasonry - Men in Good Company**

I dare say that most of us present tonight will probably not be famous in our lifetime. But, over the past couple of centuries a lot of really well known men have been members of our gentle Craft. For just a couple of minutes, please let your imagination take over and allow me to paint a word picture of what might take place on the evening of a stated meeting of The Celestial Lodge Above.

It's been a very warm early summer day, but we can feel a soft gentle breeze as the sun is now beginning to set behind the Lodge Hall. Gathered in the far end of the golden paved parking lot, crowded around examples of their automotive genius, we see *Bros Henry Ford, Ransom Olds, Walter Chrysler, John Willys and Andre Citroen*. The only vehicle missing is *Bro Hart Massey's* tractor, and he's still a mile or so down the road, plodding his way toward the Lodge. Fear not, he'll be here in time for the meeting.

As we go through the main gate into the entrance hall greeting members and visitors we find *Bro Cliff Arquette* of Charley Weaver fame and *Bros Ed Wynn, Frederick Maytag, and David Sarnoff*. In a room just off the entrance hall, a group of senior DeMolays are gathered, including *Bros Walt Disney, Chet Huntley, Wendell Corey, Van Johnson, Robert Cummings, John Steinbeck, Fred McMurray and John Cameron Swayze*. *Looks like there might be a really good attendance for tonight's meeting.*

*King Gillette*, with razor in hand, just strolled passed the lodge caretaker who was having a minor problem with his vacuum cleaner, which was quickly cleared up with the help of its inventor, *Bro Frank Hoover*, while at the other end of the hallway *Bros Emmett Kelly, Clyde Beatty* and all seven of *the Ringling Bros* are discussing the upcoming Shrine Circus.

Taking a quick look around the corner and into the Dining Hall, *Bros John Molson, Frederick Pabst, and Joseph Schlitz* are busy rolling in some 'lite refreshments' for *Bro Sam Bronfman*, the late President of Seagram's Distillers, who is setting up for the Festive Board that follows the meeting. *Bros Dave Thomas, and Colonel Harland Sanders* along with some of the stewards are cooking up a storm in the kitchen. It's an easy guess as to what the evening meal will feature.

What a turn out for tonights stated meeting! Someone notices the Grand Master, *MW Bro Harry Truman*, as he enters the Lodge room accompanied by *Bros John Jacob Astor, Luther Burbank, Adlai Stevenson, JC Penney, SS Kresge, and Walter Bloomingdale*. *And with them is Prince Hall*... yes, they allow cross visitation up here, too.

Over in the corner behind the Treasurer's desk the Celestial Lodge Orchestra is busy tuning up. Members of this All-Star group include leader *Paul Whiteman, WC Handy, Irving Berlin, George M Cohan, Cyril Stapleton, Edward Kennedy Ellington, Count Basie, Tex Beneke, John Philip Sousa, and Jerome Kern*. Tonight's performance is to be M.C.'d by *Bros Arthur Godfrey, Red Skelton, and Danny Thomas*. Several Brethren can be heard nearby warming up their vocal chords, including *Al Jolson, Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, and Vaughn Monroe*.

Magical *Bros Harry Houdini, Harry Kellar, and Harry Blackstone* have already set up their props, while *Bros WC Fields, Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, Bud Abbott, Harpo Marx, and Foster Brooks* are overheard fine tuning their comedy routines for tonight's show. And look, *Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll* of Amos & Andy fame are here too. Did you know, Freeman was a member of Petersburg Lodge #15? Tonight's entertainment is being co-produced by *Bros Cecil B DeMille, Flo Ziegfeld, Louie B Mayer, William Wyler, Hall Wallis, DW Griffiths, and the Warner Brothers*.

A good number of sports celebrities have gathered together, including *Bro Abe Saperstein*, founder of the Harlem Globetrotters, who is explaining his players version of the game to *Bro James Naismith*, the inventor of the game. They are soon joined by baseball greats *Charlie Ebbetts, Ty Cobb, Branch Rickey, and Cy Young* the first pitcher to be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame.

A little further along the hall is an array of Masons dressed in everything from knee breeches and powdered wigs, to tuxedos. And, over there are *Bros Kit Carson, Davey Crockett and Buffalo Bill Cody*, clad in their familiar buckskins, right next to *Chiefs Crazy Horse, Tecumseh and Joseph Brant* in their native attire. Most colorful are the military uniforms of *Lord Nelson, Lord Cornwallis, Captain James Cook, the Duke of Wellington and John Paul Jones*.

*Bro John Diefenbaker* just signed the Tyler's Register with one of *Bro John Shaeffer's* pens. He's accompanied by *Bros Robert Borden and RB Bennett*, fellow Canadian Prime Ministers, and by *Bro Joe Smallwood* of Newfoundland. If you listen closely you'll hear the Tyler, *Bro J Edgar Hoover*, inform the brethren nearby that the meeting is about to begin, and to please be sure you have your best white lambskin apron on, step inside and find a seat.

On entering the lodge room the brethren are greeted by the Junior Deacon, *Bro Paul Revere*. Seated nearby in the front row are polar explorers, *Robert F Scott* of England and *Bro Richard E Byrd* of the US, together with *Matthew G Perry* and Canada's *Henry Larsen*. *Bro Charles Lindbergh* is seen in deep conversation with *Bros Hap Arnold, Eddie Rickenbaker and Charles Kingsford-Smith*, pioneer Australian aviator.

From the Junior Warden's station we hear a burst of laughter. *Bro Will Rogers* has brought broad smiles to the faces of the Royal brethren gathered around him, including *George the First, Frederick the Great, Gustav V of Sweden, King Kamehameha (III, IV, and V)* all of whom were Monarchs of Hawaii, and England's *George VI, and Edward*

*VI, and VII.* To the right of the Junior Warden's chair, architect *Sir Christopher Wren* is joined by Statue of Liberty sculptor, *Frederic Bartholdi*, and Mt Rushmore sculptors *Gutzon and Lincoln Borglum*. Bros *Norman Vincent Peale and Peter Marshall*, who will share the Chaplain's duties this evening, are talking with both of the *DuPonts, Peter and Victor, and the Rothschilds, James and Nathan, and Bro. Booker T. Washington.*

Standing at the Secretary's desk, *Bro Rudyard Kipling* is discussing the evening's proceedings with *Bro Robert Burns*, the long suffering Lodge Secretary, and *Bro Mark Twain*, who is scheduled to give one of the toasts at the Festive Board. Also taking part in the discussion are *Bros Arthur Conan Doyle, Walter Scott, Samuel Johnson, and Dr. Ralph Belamoy.* Seated nearby is *Melvin Jones*, you'll recall him as the founder of the Lions Clubs, but he was one of us too.

The Grand Organist, *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, goes over last minute changes to the musical program with *Bros Franz Lizst, Jean Sibellius, Gilbert and Sullivan, and Lionel Hampton.* You couldn't go anywhere else and hear all that musical talent!

*Bros Clark Gable, Peter Sellers, Wallace Beery, Douglas Fairbanks and Brian Donleavy* are all talking boxing with champions *Jack Dempsey, Jack Johnson, and Sugar Ray Robinson.* Another small group, in the persons of *Bros John Wayne, Roy Rogers, Hoot Gibson, Gene Autry, and Tom Mix,* listen closely to *Bro William Thaddeus Phillips*, also known as *Butch Cassidy.* *Bros Buzz Aldrin, Gus Grissom, and Wally Shirra* are right over here in the second row deeply involved in a conversation about space flight.

The founding members, *Bros George Washington, Sir John A MacDonald, Guiseppe Garibaldi, Benito Jaurez, John Hancock and Ben Franklin* were all seated in the East. They have been joined by *Generals, Omar Bradley, Jimmy Doolittle, George C Marshall, John Pershing and Douglas McArthur,* who take their seats next to *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Sir Winston Churchill.*

The Lodge Treasurer, *Bro Henry Knox* is busy explaining to *Bros Thomas E Dewey and William McKinley* that there are no dues in the Celestial Lodge...here everyone holds membership in perpetuity. Occupying the East for tonight's meeting is *MW Prince Arthur William Patrick Albert* the first member of the Royal Family to become Governor General of Canada, has gently tapped his gavel several times to bring order to the Lodge room, and now raps his gavel once to call up the Junior Deacon. Now it's time for us to leave this place of friendship and virtue...to mix again with *our* world.

I know that as you sat here tonight picturing this visit in your mind you probably thought of a lot of brethren that we didn't see in the Lodge room, some of them that you perhaps, knew personally. The Holy Scriptures teach us that 'in the place that is prepared for us there are many mansions'. Surely there are also many Lodge rooms, and I'll bet that the Past Master's and brethren from this Lodge who are already members of the Celestial Lodge are tonight gathered in another room perhaps practicing the floor work, or getting the Lodge room ready to receive those brethren who will soon be called to the Celestial Lodge.

With one last look at this brilliant assembly, one has to wonder what the public's perception of Freemasonry might be if they were able to visit such a lodge like you did this evening. From yesterday, today, and tomorrow, the names of the good and the famous adorn Freemasonry's roll. Our brother Mason's are everywhere and they do some really great and important things....and, as we have discovered in our brief visit tonight, from it's very beginning **Freemasonry** has been, and will always be, ***men - in good company.***

Douglas Messimer, Division Provost,  
Grand Lodge Committee on Education 3-05