

Mentoring Masons....

Back in March of 2005 I shared some of my thoughts with you about how a stated communication of the 'Celestial Lodge Above' might look, and who would be there at that meeting, you remember...all those famous Masons whose names we recognize. We've had George Washington, the "Father of our Country", and Benjamin Franklin, the 'father' of just about everything else. In the Revolutionary War, a lot of the generals were members of the Craft; it was a matter of trust for Washington. We number among our ranks presidents, generals, entertainers and industry leaders. Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's was a Mason. When I think back to his TV commercials I could see the Masonic presence in him; he always came across as honorable and truthful, a good man. It's something that just stands out, you know? We've had hundreds of movie and TV stars. Gary Cooper of "High Noon" fame was a member of a Lodge in Los Angeles. And let's not forget John Wayne...a member of Marion McDaniel Lodge No.56 in Tucson. From Washington to Wayne: famous, every one of them. Their 'character' lead them to Masonry, and I'd like to think that their Masonry was a source of comfort in their fame.

Recently it occurred to me that there is one thing that is always missing from any list of famous Masons. Without this one thing, not one of them would have been a famous Mason. You won't find it in their biographies, and in fact this one thing is most likely unknown about most of them. It is not their place of birth or background, or parents, or religion, or spouse, or even their education. It's not their Lodge of record or even their Worshipful Master, although that's getting close. It isn't any of those things, but without it, they would never have made the list as a famous Mason. What could it be?

Well, I'll end the suspense. Who was their Masonic mentor? Who coached George Washington? Now there's a question! Who helped George Washington learn about Masonry? What did he explain? What qualities did he exemplify to his Candidate? What moral insights did he add to Washington's Masonic training? In what way and by how much did he influence our country's future leader? Did Washington's mentor sense any greatness in his Candidate? Now there's a thought for you, who sensed the greater attributes in the other, Washington or his mentor?

We know good men come to Masonry. From these good men, with a little hard work, some mentoring and nurturing comes the potential for great men. This potential greatness in every Candidate makes mentoring an awesome responsibility and is something that may make us hesitant to become someone's Masonic coach or mentor. The Candidate looks beyond the work of memorization; he looks to the mentor for the things he needs to see and learn about Masonry. His mentor is his lifeline to understanding and feeling secure in his choice to become a Mason. Mentoring is far more than helping a Candidate prepare a memorized script; Masonry is not a stage play. Masonry is a way of life, and the mentor is the living model for this better way.

If we chose the traditional route of entering masonry, each of us had a mentor who worked with us through the catechisms, and answered our questions about this new adventure we had embarked upon. He spent time with us asking questions, and drilling the answers into our brains, often turning them to mush after about a hour's worth of intense study....now you remember, don't you? My mentor was Rt. Worshipful William Young Roper Jr....some of you will remember him as 'Big Bill'. He set the tone of Masonry for me, he told me and showed me what I could expect, if I worked hard. He modeled the virtues of our Fraternity while helping me to understand them. He welcomed me as a good man among good men. Although 'Big Bill' was my 'official' mentor, in my 31 years as a Mason I still have many mentors. Some are here tonight; some have gone on to the Celestial Lodge. The names may not be on a printed list anywhere, but they are here, in my heart. They spent time with me to make sure I had the opportunity to improve myself in Masonry. Mentors have been doing this for as long as Masonry has been around. They are the unknown ancestors of every Mason, reaching back in time to the dawn of our Fraternity.

To a genealogist, the line of mentors would make no sense. There are no marriages to note, few bloodlines to follow, no documents to examine. Yet, behind each Masonic mentor is another mentor, and another, and another behind him. We are all Masonic descendants of these mentors, and like a family tree passing down characteristics from one generation to the next, the moral model of these mentors lives on in every Mason in this Lodge and in every Mason we greet as a Brother.

I like to think that George Washington saw qualities in his mentor that he adopted for his own that urged him to become a better man and perhaps even the great man that he was. What were those qualities that caught and fired his imagination? We can think about the answer in this way. In a Fraternal sense, George Washington's mentor is related to our mentor, so we may have seen the very same qualities that Washington saw in his mentor. We may have asked the very same questions that Washington did, and received the same answers. So, we may never know for sure who the mentors were for Famous Masons....but that's ok....be secure in knowing that they were Masons. They were us.

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