

## I Will Always ....WHAT???

There is a portion in our Obligation that goes, "...I will always hele, ever conceal and never reveal, any of the secret arts, parts or points...". We have all said it. We have memorized it for our proficiency and have recited it, perfectly. I'll bet you know what I'm going to ask.....you're absolutely right! What does it mean? What does it mean to "always hele"? And, just what are "the secret arts, parts or points" of Masonry?

For the longest time, I gave the meaning of the phrase, "always hele" a mental shrug. I figured I'd say it because I was supposed to say it, but I didn't know what it meant and to tell the truth, wasn't sure that many of my Brethren knew, either. There were other things in the Obligation that sounded more important, things that I could understand without having to do too much thinking - and with all the memorization going on, there wasn't that much room left over for thinking. Same thing for the arts, parts, or points. I decided that those words meant "Masonic stuff", stuff that eventually I'd learn about, somehow. But, it bothered me to be saying something, actually solemnly swearing to something, that I was unsure about. I figured I owed it to Masonry and myself to stop being mentally lazy and to find out.

Now, for the answers to these questions you have to do some research because you won't find the explanations in the Ritual. I found it in the "Masonic Encyclopedia", written by Albert G. Mackey, about 120 years ago. Now, I know that not everyone has a copy sitting in their bookshelf, but it is worthwhile reading.

Anyhow, I found out that "I will always HELE", with the spelling H-E-L-E, comes from the Anglo Saxon word, "helan", meaning to keep safe or secure, or cover, especially by hiding. We are saying, I will keep safe and secure, forever conceal and never reveal, any of the hidden mysteries of Freemasonry. Got it.

I found out that the next part of the phrase, "any of the secret ARTS, PARTS, OR POINTS", has three distinct meanings:

ARTS, are the specific Masonic things or knowledge made known.  
PARTS, are the degrees or structure into which Masonry is divided.  
POINTS, means the rules, customs and usages.

You have to dig a little deeper to figure out what those definitions mean. "**Arts**" refers to the preparation of the candidate, the due form of standing, the steps, the Obligation's Due Form, the Due Guard, Signs, Token, and Word of the degree, including the symbolism and the associated explanations.

"**Parts**" refers to Masonry's degree structure. Swearing to safeguard this one may seem a bit problematic. We know that there are open source books, pamphlets, and even semi-official internet sites that explain the degrees and structure of Masonry. There's even a site

that has the word for word ritual from Arizona on it. Apparently, there was greater secrecy about this in the past, but it's common knowledge, now.

But, "**Parts**" also includes the actual conducting of the degree ceremony and the Masonic symbols for each degree and their meanings. This includes the sequence of events in a degree; what was done, when, and by whom. Lastly, it includes the symbolism and meaning of the Square, the Compasses, the Working tools, Jewels, Lights, the Apron, and the content of the Lectures. So, despite some openness, the Masonic knowledge illustrating these Parts does need to be safeguarded.

"**Points**", refers to the clauses in our Obligation. You know, until I looked this up, I didn't think of the Obligation as a contract with clauses, but I guess that makes sense when you think about it. Let's look at the clauses. The first one is the Secrecy Clause, also called the Tie Clause. This is the part we've been talking about.

Then there's the Positives or Affirmatives Clause. In this clause we find out what the Mason will do.

Next, is the Negatives Clause, or what the Mason will not do. These are the "I will not" paragraphs. Finally, there is the Penalties Clause, or what a Mason agrees will symbolically happen to him under violation of the preceding clauses. This is the "binding myself under the no less penalty" paragraph.

So, now we know the details of what we must keep safely concealed, and never revealed. This one short phrase proves that there are many "hidden mysteries" in Freemasonry. Note that I said mysteries, and not secrets. We just didn't realize that some were hidden right up front in the Obligation, did we?

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