

Masonry...and Baseball !

"The value in life is not in how long you live it, but in how well you live it." I don't know who said that first....it was probably the Greeks; they seem to have said just about everything at least once. But, you know, there's a whole world of topics and thoughts out there, and sometimes when I'm writing about Masonry it seems as though its all been said before. Despite that, we can be original these days even when things that we are saying seem to have been said before. And with some topics, it doesn't really matter if it's been said before because the 'saying' is the important thing.

For example, take baseball. It seems there is always something that's fresh to say, though the game has been around in some form since the mid 1800's. Actually the first game was documented June 4th of 1838 in Ontario, Canada. Baseball has evolved from sandlots to mega ballparks, from kids to professionals, but the balls and strikes, outs and innings, and general rules have remained pretty much the same. Players, teams, and leagues have come and gone, but the game goes on. Writing and talking about baseball has grown up along with baseball and has developed a rich history, with theories, and a philosophy of its own. It is written about and talked about in every media and argued at the office water cooler. It has historians... and even its historians have historians. Could Abner Doubleday have ever imagined a Baseball Hall of Fame, let alone a Baseball *Writer's* Hall of Fame?

One thing that keeps it fresh is a natural focus on the things that change: the players, the managers, the teams, and the games. Controlled change is one of the things that help keep it alive. Another is that baseball is broad enough in its scope and wealthy enough in its history to interest just about anyone. There is always some new or different observation that can be made about the playing of the game, then, or now. There are even comparative theories about baseball's different eras. How would Babe Ruth have done if he had played today with the watered-down pitching? Would Barry Bonds be feared as a slugger if he had to bat in the 'dead ball' era? There seems to be endless things to say about baseball, even if it's been said before. Perhaps Yogi Berra's quote, "Its deja vu all over again." is a good thing.

And now, I'll make the pitch you know is coming. In Masonry, like baseball, we know the players, the teams; the leagues.....think 'Brothers, Lodges, and Grand Lodges'. We know about the unchanging rules and the things that can undergo a controlled change. Think 'Landmarks' and our own rules in the Virginia Methodical Digest. We have a long Masonic history and our own historians, and we have historians who write about other historians. We can compare different eras in Masonry. We even have a water cooler if we want to swap Masonic stories.

When you look at it, Masonry and baseball have a lot in common. It takes a certain something to be a Mason, and a lot of practice and dedication to be proficient in our Masonic ritual and the way we present it. We have 'managers and coaches' who try to bring out our best. We have a bench along the sidelines supplementing our team that

watches and supports.....and heckles us when we deserve it. And we practice our skills to get it right when it counts, and to be as good as we can be not only for our own satisfaction, but for 'the good of the Craft' in general.

Baseball and Masonry also share a common problem; attendance. Baseball great, Yogi Berra once said this about attendance, "If people don't want to come out to the ballpark, nobody's going to stop 'em." I doubt that the Greek's ever said that, but I bet a lot of Masons wish we could stop 'em from *not* coming to Lodge!

It's been said that baseball is not just a game; it's a way of life. And, yes, our philosophy says that Masonry is a way of life. In anything we're doing that's a way of life, the value in living comes down to *how* we live it. If we channel our passions and our interests into doing the things that need to be done, and doing them well, then we are living life well. And there is satisfaction in that, as Leonardo Da Vinci said, "Life lived well, is long."

My Brethren, Masonic life is our game. We don't have to be a Lou Gehrig or Cal Ripken to be an "Iron Man", to be counted on to be there, day in and day out. We just have to get in there and *do it*. So, my Brethren...that's the wind up...and the pitch. Step up to the plate and take a swing.

Douglas Messimer, PM, LEO
Tuckahoe Lodge 6-08