

## Shhh! It's a Secret...

Masons in Virginia are not permitted by the Grand Lodge to use or have in our possession cipher or codebooks that contain our ancient ritual. But there are some jurisdictions that have, and still do allow such self-help digests for the candidate. Actually, nowadays anyone can find some version of Masonic ritual somewhere on the Internet. If you Google "Masonic Ritual" you'll get over 118,000 pages, including a complete copy of Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor, and even some U-Tube videos of 'supposed' ritual reenactments. Some of what is presented it is easily recognizable by members of the craft as a total fabrication, and others are eerily on target. Anyone can *read* about our ritual – but, as a candidate, you *experience* the degrees. And that is what I refer to as 'Hiram's key'.



An often repeated story about Freemasons, but most certainly *not* one of our 'secrets'.

The real secrets of Masonry are learned through the process of experience and understanding. You have to seek within yourself a path to enlightenment and to seek the understanding of Deity. That's the great object of Masonic study. And, if you attain it, no description can be adequately placed in words – because it's experiential only. It's a process of becoming different, enlightened, better... through a spiritual journey on your own path, not that of another person. You have to search within yourself to find the understanding of your relationship to God and Man. In the words of the ancient mystery schools, "Know Thyself, and Ye Shall Know the Universe and God."

So what are the "secrets" that we cannot tell our spouse, children and friends? It can't be the degree work or words of the ritual, because those can be found in any good public library, and now on the Web...everything is right there in plain English. It can't be the history or philosophy of Masonry, as those are the subjects of many, many, books available to the general public. Much of our history and lore has been the subject of numerous well-produced PBS and Discovery Channel programs for the viewing public.

So what is left to be a "secret"? The secrets that you cannot communicate are those that are beyond mere words. We can only allude to them and attempt to illustrate them by use of symbols – such as the implements of architecture, most expressive, or sacred geometry. For the real secrets are 'secrets of the heart and spirit' that only take place when you begin to follow and understand the spiritual path that Masonry attempts to point to, through our ritual and mythology. It's further emphasized and enhanced by the way in which we confer the degrees. It's all part of *your* Masonic education that I've noted on many occasions is most certainly a lifetime journey.



Our order is like the internal workings of a fine pocket watch...it has its own secrets as to how and why it works.

The underlying teachings of the degrees are a spiritual path – first, by discipline of the material aspect of your nature, secondly by the discipline of your psyche through aspiring to greater knowledge and virtue, and lastly by participation in the ritual of the legend of Hiram Abif...that symbolic death to your material aspect and the rebirth as a spiritual being. We learn that time is encompassed by the eternal. As recorded in the scriptures – Jesus said ‘heaven is all around us, we just cannot see it’. We have to learn to step to one side and find it. I urge you to study, to question, to learn and to share with those that follow you in this journey. We are brothers of the light – the light of understanding, tolerance and compassion.

Could it be that we are spiritual beings on a human journey of discovery, rather than human beings on a spiritual journey. We are seeking to discover that spark of deity within each of us, which is a tiny reflection of the Great Creator that spoke us into being. That spark which is the point within the circle – the deathless, immortal part within us, which can only be discovered by glimpses of the divine through the dark glass of our material senses – those are the secrets that we cannot express, but are the goal of every Mason. Those secrets are your passport to travel in the foreign countries that are mentioned in the opening ritual of the Lodge.

So to those who have a willing ear, let them hear -- anything that you can tell them about Masonry – educate yourself so that you can be an ambassador for the Craft and disseminate information, especially true Masonic light – so that when a good man whose questions you have tried to answer knocks on the door of Freemasonry, it will be because he has developed a favorable opinion of our gentle craft, has a desire for knowledge, and has a sincere wish to be serviceable to his fellow creatures. Be both a student and a teacher of the Craft. Remember: Teachers open the door for you, but you must enter by yourself.



.....Another ‘nugget from the quarry of Freemasonry’. TM

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