

Grand Orator Dale R. Seubert's Grand Oration

Good afternoon brethren. Before getting into the oration, I would like to thank Most Worshipful Brother Thomas C. Jackson, Grand Master of Masons in Minnesota for allowing me to serve the Grand Lodge of Minnesota as Orator this past year. It has been an honor. I have enjoyed doing the orations at cornerstone ceremonies and presenting the key note address at the annual meeting of the International Peace Garden Lodge on the border between North Dakota and Manitoba. It was my fourth visit to the Peace Gardens — all of them most enjoyable. If you haven't been there, arrange a visit when the Most Worthy Grand Matron and the Most Worthy Grand Patron, Order of the Eastern Star, make their pilgrimage during their triennium. Plan to spend the entire weekend. It will be an exciting and memorable weekend with lots of activity, time for good fellowship, enjoying the beautiful flowers and grounds and attending worship or just visiting the very beautiful and inspirational Peace Garden chapel.

One of my favorite writers is Harvey Mackay. His favorite saying is “ten percent of you won't remember 10 percent of what is said 10 minutes after it is said. But I hope it will cause you to have the desire to dream, the courage to win and the will to succeed.” I tend to be a pragmatist so I was delighted to understand that our Grand Master's lapel pin has four letters that provide very pragmatic advice. These letters— one in each corner—e q r & s, stand for engagement, quality, relevancy, and solvency. If every brother and lodge were engaged in Masonic programs, if all our programs and degree work exhibited quality, if our community outreach programs were relevant, and our lodges maintained and improved their solvency, Masonry would once again be the organization of choice for many leaders of our community, like it was when I joined the craft in 1955.

Harking back to Mackay's favorite saying, I hope most of you will stay awake long enough to take with you at least one idea or concept or at least a word. Yeah my brothers I have a word and though the skin may slip from the from the flesh—oops! I got a little carried away. Actually I have three words, mentorship, leadership, and vibgyor. For those of you wondering about vibgyor, it is a little bit of trivia I learned in high school as a way to remember the colors of the rainbow—vibgyor—violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. I don't plan to talk much about vibgyor but mentorship and leadership will be featured..What is different today than in 1955? We could list many, but one of the most significant was social networking. Masonry was a big part of our community fabric. As the son on a Mason, I was aware of the men who were Masons and sensed the bond that existed between them. Young men joined Demolay and young women joined Rainbow Girls. Our DeMolay Chapter had one adult advisor for 60 young men, our chapter had Dad Leik and then Dad Osborn. DeMolay brothers learned how to be workers, and organize, and we developed leadership skills.

Today, too many people expect—big homes, easy living, and all the toys. And they want it “right now.” and many want someone to give it too them. Dr David Walsh in his book “no” describes this state of mind as “more, easy, fast and fun.” Such immediate gratification only brings temporary enjoyment — not lasting fulfillment. Many of our new members need mentorship. They need engagement to realize the full benefit of Masonic membership. It isn't the things that come easy in life that give you the most pleasure, but those things for which you must work hard to achieve your dream or goal. A quote that I carried in my notebook portfolio during my working years was by H. G. Wells

—“The best measure of our success in life, is the ratio of our accomplishments to our abilities.”

One of my good friends, Shashikant Sane, is the spiritual leader at the Hindu temple in Maple Grove. He said that wisdom is knowing the right thing to do. Virtue is doing the right thing. Shashi gave me the following list of seven deadly sins as described by mahatma gandhi:

1. Wealth without work
2. Pleasure without conscience
3. Knowledge without character
4. Commerce without morality
5. Science without humanity
6. Worship without sacrifice
7. Politics without principle

What do these have to do with Masonry? These are all characteristics of our Masonic teachings and values and where we hope to arrive at the end of Jacobs ladder. I don't know about you, but I like to remind myself frequently about the true values of good character, which leads us to mentorship.

We are all aware that many lodges have a low retention rate. On chanel 11, a while ago, they had an “ extra” about supervisory training that companies were undergoing. Training which would enable supervisors to better manage the new millenium generation of employees effectively. A good mentor program can be a very effective means of integrating new members into the fabric of your lodge. It is my opinion that we don't ask enough of our new members. What better way than through a well designed and implemented mentor program.

Yet, too many lodges have made only a minimal effort in mentoring new members. W. Brother John Gann, Junior Grand Steward, who is in charge of this year's Mentor Committee, mailed a survey to 160 lodges. A total of 31 responses were received. Of these only 3 reported a high use of the Mentor Program and another 16 reported a moderate use of the Mentor Program. Of those reporting, 62% use the Mentor Program to some extent. What about the other 129 lodges? Is it fair to say that only 19, or 12 % of the Lodges are utilizing the Mentor Program to any great extent? We don't know, but one could assume, since 81% of the lodges didn't respond, there is not a widespread use of the mentor program.

The Mentor Committee has set out to modernize the new candidate's Masonic journey, starting with the introduction of prospective members to Masonry. A new interview style has been developed, thanks to W. Brother David Johnson, it has been designed not to ask direct questions, but to engage the candidate in a dialogue that will provide the information we need to determine if the candidate is a quality person we want in Masonry.

Even though the mentor program is a work in process, W. Brother David Johnson and I have proposed the following list of twelve forms:

1. Why a mentor program?
2. Prospect briefing guide
3. Mentor/first line signer responsibility
4. Prospect questions before interview.
5. Interviewer briefing guide

6. Interviewer question sheet
7. Interviewer answer sheet
8. Candidate information sheet
9. Candidate briefing guide before Entered Apprentice Degree
10. Mentoring guide between Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft Degrees
11. Mentoring guide between Fellowcraft and Master Mason Degrees
12. Mentoring guide after Master Mason Degree

As you can tell from the list, mentorship is not a simple task. As the old saying goes "anything worth doing, is worth doing right." If we want the Mentor program to succeed, then we need to give the lodges and brothers the best material available.

Within our committee we found wide divergence in the utilization and application of the present interview and mentorship process. For the past twenty years, I've heard brothers complain about Grand Lodge, "What has Grand Lodge done for me lately." Brothers, hold up your right arm. What's at the end of your arm? For those of you who were looking for a helping hand, there it is. The Grand Lodge can design the greatest systems and forms in the world, but the utilization and implementation is the responsibility of each and every lodge, and I might add, each and every Brother. Just like the federal government, the best implementation of any program is most effective when done at the local level. Not every Brother wants to do mentoring, but it should not be left to one or two Brothers. If so, they will quickly burn out. The mentoring work should be shared by as many brothers as possible. Why not have our newest Master Masons involved?. If at all possible, the first line signer should be in attendance with his candidate and involved in the mentoring as well.

Brother Brad Skeel forwarded to me an article from the Master of Harvard lodge, as in Harvard, Massachusetts. I would like to quote a portion of his message "a lodge is its membership and when those coming in are properly evaluated, welcomed and mentored, we brighten our collective futures and success." Now that's a powerful message!

Deputy Grand Master, R. W. Brother Tom McCarthy will make mentorship a key program of his year. Our Mentor Committee can not effectively implement and administer a good program throughout the state. We recognize that support from the District Representatives and Area Deputies will be crucial to increasing the effectiveness of the Mentor Program.

Another moral from Harvey Mackay: "There are two different types of people; those who lift you up, and those who pull you down. Lift people up; Don't pull them down."

This naturally leads to the second word I wanted to discuss with you. "Leadership." Back in 1955, many of the Masters in my lodge in Dubuque, Iowa were business owners and/or leaders in the community. Today, only a small percentage, perhaps one in 5 or 20% are or have been supervisors and even fewer, business owners. Therein lies a challenge even greater than mentorship. These fine young men aren't practiced managers or planners.

The Masters' and Wardens meetings are intended to help in this area. However, the Masters and Wardens' meetings aren't a venue that can deal with the specific needs of each individual lodge. District Representatives have a huge hill to climb if they are to make an impact on the lodges they

serve. I don't know how much is expected of them. Some of what I'm about to suggest, could be discussed and handled at the Masters' and Wardens' meetings. In the January/February issue of the Minnesota Mason was an article by Ken White announcing the Metroeast Masters and Wardens meeting designed to assist Jr Wardens and Sr Wardens plan their years. I applaud brother ken for his foresight and leadership. While this is good, I believe it would be better and more effective if handled at the individual lodge level. In order not to abuse the District Representatives' time, let me suggest that instead of sitting through an entire lodge meeting, they meet with the officers. What are those things that I believe would have a significant impact?

1. Encourage each lodge to establish a long range planning committee and long range objectives for their lodge. After the lodges have established goals, share them at the Masters and Wardens' meetings
2. Meet with the Senior Wardens individually and ask the following:
 - A. What would you like to improve in/about your lodge next year?
 - B. How do you want your year to be remembered?
 - C. What plans do you have to develop your line officers?
 - D. What organizational tools will you use to accomplish your goals?
 - E. What type of person do you want as a candidate?
 - F. What could the Past Masters do to help?
3. The District Representative could meet with the Past Masters of individual lodges and determine what resources are available.
4. The District Representative could attend some of the lodge officers meetings to determine their organizational skills.

It would be my hope this would not add to the District Representatives' responsibilities and time commitment, but rather a redirection and focus on those issues and matters that have potentially the greatest impact.

MWB Jeff Lewis, now Potentate of Zuhrah Shrine, has given me permission to use part of the presentation on leadership he gives to unit heads. Jeff says leaders are not born, they are developed or self taught. There are those who say leaders are born. Without getting into a discussion of which theory is correct, let's just say that we need more leaders. In his presentation, Jeff says, there are three styles of leadership, directive, country club, and participative. Directive leadership requires a strong hierarchy, and notably is found in the military. Country club leadership is on the other end of the spectrum. This is where leaders rotate in and out, with little in the way of conflict and where decisions are handled in the back room. For us though, the most effective form is participative. MWB Lewis says it works well in volunteer organizations because members are more apt to "buy into decisions" made by hands-on leaders who operate as part of the team. Members will feel ownership over these ideas and directions. In volunteer organizations like ours, one has loyalty only to that where he feels a part and has a stake.

Ed Halpaus published an article in Mehr Licht, more light, about leadership. There was discussion about each of these points. For the sake of not taking too much of your time today, let me give you his seven bullet points.

1. A good leader empowers those under him/her
2. A good leader nurtures leadership in others.
3. A good leader is a follower.

4. A good leader knows when to get out of the way.
5. A good leader sets the tone for the group.
6. A good leader practices servant leadership.
7. A good leader encourages good work, but is not a perfectionist.

Since MWB Lewis says leaders are not born, perhaps there should be more leadership training sessions for our lodge line officers, District Representatives and Area Deputies. My dad had only a sixth grade education. Nevertheless, he owned and operated the most successful plumbing business in Dubuque. The three most important things I remember him telling me: first, take care of your body, second, now that you have a college degree, you will find out you don't know anything, and third, work smarter not harder. Pretty darn good advice, I might say. In Lake Harriet Lodge, W. Brother Dan Akins was mentored by W. Brother Edgar Zimmerman. When Brother Dan Akins complained to Bro Edgar that he didn't have enough time, Bro Edgar told him to run faster. Both of these sayings are poignant. From these two comments, "work smarter not harder" and "run faster," you could conclude that the word "prioritize" is applicable in both cases.

Another Harvey Mackay moral: "Believe in yourself. You can't satisfy everyone. Just make sure that you please yourself." I've heard that put another way, "You can't please everyone. If you try, you will please no one. Just do what you believe is just right and true."

In conclusion I would like to say, I have a dream, that you will remember, three words — mentorship, leadership, vibgyor:

Mentorship — that we truly engage our new brothers

Leadership — if each of us will do our best, we will lead our craft to a higher level of accomplishment.

Vibgyor — if we can improve our mentorship and raise our leadership effectiveness, there will be a rainbow awaiting us

Brothers what are the three words I want you to take from this oration: Mentorship Leadership and Vibgyor. Thank you for your attention

Dale Seubert

Grand Orator 2008-09

Grand Lodge of Minnesota A.F. & A.M.