“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak. Courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”--- Bro. Sir Winston Churchill

The following article was received from Brother Gerald Edgar who is a member of Mosaic Lodge #125 AF&AM @ Dubuque and is a member of our Grand Lodge Writers Guild and Education Committee.

Know Your ABC's!

At an early age we learned our ABC's as the foundation of our education. Without that foundation, learning in any language is stymied. Similarly I respectfully suggest we re-learn our Masonic ABC's: Always Boosting Civil Discourse.

Recently, whether in society at large or even in a tiled Lodge, much less one of the many "Masonic" blogs & sites, we experience civil discourse about as often as we do a winning lottery ticket. Shouldn't Masons of all people be able to adhere to their Masonic ABC's when discussing Masonry with each other, especially in a quasi-public forum i.e. on-line?

Very recently, an acquaintance I see once or twice a year, mentioned Masonry in terms of a well known political figure of the same political party he greatly favors. I remarked that indeed the prominent Senator mentioned was a Mason and further noted he is evidence of the fact that we have embraced men from the entire spectrum of political beliefs. When I added that both the late Senators Barry Goldwater and George McGovern were Masons, he was shocked that we had members of such divergent political viewpoints (his sketchy knowledge of noted Masonic politicians caused him to mistakenly assume nearly all were of the same party he prefers). I told him that a close look at the political affiliations of Masons from Colonial times to today would make him realize we have always had a well balanced representation from the left to the right.

So although Masons who may be proponents/opponents of abortion rights, gun control, capital punishment, tax reform, foreign intervention, etc. may be at loggerheads, they by their very membership in our fraternity do 'agree' that being a Freemason is a laudable undertaking. If indeed liberals and conservatives, labor leaders and CEO's can be equally attracted to Masonry, why is it that increasingly we see aggravation, bellicose and churlish discord on-line and in Lodge rooms? I will not attempt here to consider all the possible reasons (a good debate topic!) except to observe that Masonry increasingly reflects society-at-large including contentious litigation. Civil discourse,
respectful debate, rational discussions et al appear to be a relic of the past. We look at the worst possible motivations in others' words and deeds, cite anonymous sources, argue rather than debate and act with acrimony rather than with Brotherhood.

Masonic Education includes many factual aspects but whenever there is a 'grey' area we perhaps should revert to our Masonic ABC's before continuing the conversation. Scholarly or scientific debate, for those who participated in same in school, begins with a clear statement of the topic AND agreement as to definition of terms. Then the see-saw battle begins but always with documented facts. Interpretation and application of said facts make it a "debate" but the goal always is to persuade, not demonize. On a personal note I am alternately amused and disheartened by Masons who argue a point of Masonic 'law' or a Grand Master's actions but do not have a copy of their Lodge's or Grand Lodge's by-laws much less Proceedings of earlier Grand Lodge sessions. Do Masonic officers at all levels as well as 'rank and file' make errors or even fall prey to their baser nature? Certainly! However as would-be critics of such perceived errors, do we practice our Masonic ABC's? Do we seek light or do we seek to tear down? Are we builders carefully rearranging the misplaced blocks and realigning the deviations found by our plumb or are we ruffians? Please, may we ever seek to always boost civil discourse!

**Words to Live By:** “Be civil to all, sociable to many, familiar with few, friend to one, enemy to none.” – Brother Benjamin Franklin

If you have any comments, suggestions, or questions, please send them to: shapiro.stanley@gmail.com

The Education Videos by our education committee can be viewed at: http://www.youtube.com/glmned
The latest Masonic Monday Question, and some of the past questions, can be viewed at www.Lodgebuilder.org and at www.mn-masons.org