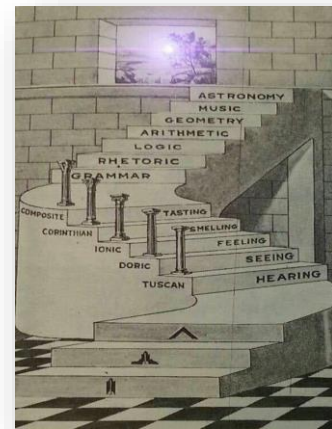


LEARNING AND CONFERRING OUR WORK; AND HOW MISS LANDERS AND A PSYCHIATRIST COULD HELP

Jaime Gonzalez, P.M.

We are taught through our Masonic journey, that we came to the lodge to learn. In so doing, some brothers will learn their lectures, turn in their proficiencies and then sit along the sidelines content to watch others confer the rituals, degree work, charges, etc. The fact that a brother takes the time to learn a part and confer it from memory is impressive! Memorizing the rituals, degree work, parts etc. can seem overwhelming to some. Starting small, can however, help ease the burden and make the task of learning, and presenting a little easier, and more enjoyable. When one considers the impressive nature of our work, one might also consider a more dramatic presentation of the work. Many factors can contribute to that experience such as lighting, music, incense, and the delivery by the presenter.

Grand Commander James D. Cole of the Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction (1) made a couple of insightful comments on Facebook on Nov. 14, 2022. He said, “Our ritual teaches us, even as an Entered Apprentice, that Masonic Education is critical. We must approach this with real seriousness and care.” On Nov. 15, 2022, he said, “If you take part in a Masonic degree, know your part well, and perform it with pride. Our ritual is not performed for entertainment. Its purpose is to teach.”



While skimming through Facebook recently, I noticed a familiar post by W.B. Richard Hanson (2) and several comments by other brothers, notably a post by Bro. Justin Ross (3). W.B. Hanson posted the familiar picture of our winding stairs, depicting the ascent to the Middle Chamber with the markings on the stairs indicating the lessons along the way.

Other brothers made some comments, but Bro. Ross made a very thought-provoking comment about the learning. He commented that it would be difficult for most of us to call ourselves Master Masons if we have not fully climbed the stairs in our personal lives. How many of us have studied grammar, astronomy, logic or have learned to play a musical instrument?

In the television program, “Leave it to Beaver”, season 3, episode 8, fourth grade teacher Miss Landers instructed her class to memorize a poem, “The Heart of the Tree”, and then to recite parts of it in class the next day. When it came time to call on the students, Judy Hensler stood and recited four lines, then Larry Mondello, and of course, Beaver recited their lines as well. But since their delivery was without enthusiasm, Miss Landers was not impressed. Miss Landers picked up the book and read aloud to offer an example of reading or reciting with emotion to help inspire the class. During their recitation the next day, the same students did a better job! My belief is that we, as Masons, can offer our candidates for degrees, and those along the sidelines, a better impression of the work, merely by adding emotion, without too much drama or rattling off the lecture like an auctioneer.

How can we, as Freemasons, apply ourselves to confer our work with enthusiasm?

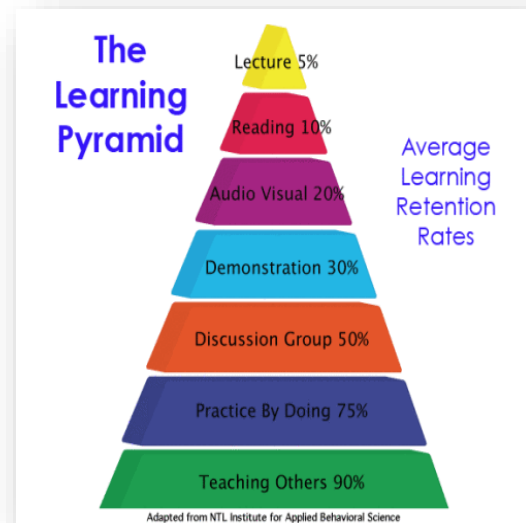
I believe we must divide the work among the Craft, and encourage them to study and memorize the work. It is not written anywhere that one man, or a few men must do all of the work. The Master, or degree team captain should assign different parts to different brothers, especially new brothers. Some parts may be easy, just as conferring the working tools, Bible lecture and Opening and Closing charges. The Worshipful Master may encourage newer brothers to be active. Even small lodges that don't receive many petitions can improve. Once brothers learn the work, brothers may feel more confident in their abilities. Should these brothers advance through the chairs, they will be better enabled to serve their lodges. Lodges can confer the work on “mock” candidates or assist another lodge with their work. In the second section of the Master Mason degree, the elimination of horseplay and improvisation will help convey the importance and seriousness of the degree. Miss Landers demonstrated how tone, inflection and pauses for effect will emphasize the

importance of the ritual being conferred. While it is not necessary to be Shakespearean in our work, some emphasis and timing would be impactful. The late psychiatrist William Glasser, M.D. (1925 – 2013) (4) noted that we retain more information when we teach others.

Merely hearing a lecture or reading is insufficient for information retention. However, when we teach others, we retain approximately 90% of what we learn. The Grand Lodge of Kentucky offers a recognition system by way of the Bluegrass Ritualist Awards. I first saw a distinctive lapel pin worn by a brother who conferred outstanding ritual work.

I asked him about it and he introduced me to the Ritualist program. Brothers who are encouraged to confer the work, will eventually earn the Ritualist Award with little extra effort and have the pride of accomplishment to go along with it. I encourage all of us to impart our knowledge to others. Imagine a stagnant lodge where one or two brothers carry the weight of conferring ritual work. When that brother lays down his working tools on this Earthly

plane, the lodge will have to scramble to fill his void. If, however, he has taught others, they will be more than enabled to carry on the work. We all have the capacity to learn, and improve ourselves through Masonry, and I encourage us to do the same. W.B. Dan Kemble (5) reminded me that learning is the essence of what we came here to do. If we haven't really completed the journey of the winding stairs, are we truly Master Masons? Remember brothers, learning NEVER ends. Learning is both the beauty and challenge of our journey!



NOTES

(1) Illustrious James D. Cole, 33°, currently serves as the nineteenth Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, 33°, Southern Jurisdiction, USA, Past Grand Master of Virginia. His comments are used with permission.

(2) Worshipful Brother Richard Hanson is a Past Master and currently serves as Master of Marion Hale lodge. His comments are used with permission.

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(3) Brother Justin Ross, a member of Abraham Lodge has served his lodge as Secretary and currently serves as Chaplain. His comments are used with permission.

(4) William Glasser, M.D. is a noted psychiatrist, his books are widely available and are in the public domain.

(5) Worshipful Brother Kemble has an extensive Masonic resume which includes being a Past Master of William O. Ware Lodge of Research, Newport Lodge No. 358 and Elvin E. Helms Lodge No. 926. He has served the Grand Lodge of Kentucky as a member of the Committee on Masonic Education, the Committee on By-Laws, District Deputy Grand Master for District 18, as Parliamentarian and as Grand Pursuivant and is a frequent presenter about Masonic topics around the state.

Jaime Gonzalez is a Past Master of Valley-Daylight Lodge 511, currently serving as Junior Warden of Buechel Lodge 896, Past District Deputy Grand Master, Past President and current Secretary of the Greater Louisville Masonic Education Association, he is a Senior Ritualist and serves on the Credentials Committee as Chairman, Grand Lodge of Kentucky.