

Where Have All the Flowers Gone

Presented at Bernard Lodge # 225, Listowel 19th October 2011

The subject of my address this evening isn't a longing for the sixties or a wish to listen to Pete Seeger, The Kingston Trio or Peter Paul and Mary. I will start with a joke stolen from R.W. Bro Tom Whitcroft DDGM of Bruce District. He started off his talk, called "It Isn't Funny", with this joke:

A lodge in Toronto (It is always easy to pick on Toronto) had a problem with vermin. Every meeting they found signs of mice and rats. They could sometimes be seen scurrying through the lodge, kitchen or banquet hall. They tried everything to get rid of them , making sure there was no food left after meetings, traps, poison even an exterminator failed. Finally the WM told the lodge he was going to try one last thing and hopefully the next meeting would bring better news. The next meeting came and there were no signs of any mice or rats to be seen. When asked what he had done the WM said he had called an emergent meeting during the month and made all the rats and mice Masons.

We all know of brethren who no longer come to lodge, some even as soon as receiving their initiation. Why does this happen? Some can be explained, members become too old , some find difficulty in accessing lodge (many lodges are not accessible to older or infirm Brethren), some move to other towns.

We can also come up with many other reasons, we seem to lose brethren once they have been initiated or made Master Masons. So many other things to take up their time and interest. Sports, many men continue to participate in sports late on into their lives, other fraternal or community organizations, family commitments, work commitments, even TV, even piques and quarrels among Brethren, the list goes on and on. It has even been suggested that we have stopped being a “going out” society. Once we “went out” for entertainment. We went out to watch a local hockey game, went out to have a drink, went out to the cinema to see a movie, went out to lodge. Today we watch hockey on TV, get a drink from the fridge rather than go out, watch videos at home and many don’t go to lodge.

So what is the real reason men stop attending Lodge? I believe some of the reason are as above, but not all. One thing men look for, especially younger men, is value for money. And by money I don’t mean dollars and cents. Men value their time and time spent away from family or other pursuits must be worthwhile. Has lodge become boring and predictable? Open, do business and close! If no candidates then no degree work, not even exemplify a degree. We don’t do any Masonic Education or sometimes when we do it is something read from a book or newsletter with little or no substance. Nothing to chew on or challenge ones thoughts. What is needed to change this? To stop the flowers from going? R.W. Bro. Denis Langridge spoke, at the official DDGM meeting in Wingham earlier this month, on a report from the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia given by the Grand Master M.W.Bro Paul D Gleason. One part of the report

spoke of increased membership in certain lodges within their jurisdiction, he stated;

“Success was a reflection on the diligence and hard work of Lodge membership activities, which included well developed mentorship programs, noteworthy Lodge Education, excellent ritual work and participation of younger Masons seeking and achieving proficiency in the conferral of degrees.”

Leadership was stressed as one of the most important factors.

Well my Brethren I believe our Grand Lodge has Leadership. M.W. Bro. D. Gary Dowling has clearly shown he wants to lead us. His theme is “**Believe in Freemasonry**”. He is passionate about this. He has said that believing in Freemasonry is a state you attain when you:

Believe in your **Heart**.

Believe in your **Mind**.

When you **do not doubt it, do not defend it, do not libel it**.

When you do **Learn about it, Live it, Love it and Leave it sound** for those to come.

In his speech in London last Saturday evening he spoke passionately about Masonry, what it meant to him what it should mean to us. How we should feel about it. He had us chanting “We will, we will Rock you!” His enthusiasm is inspiring and he truly wants to lead us to making Masonry what it should be and what it once was. If we do, I believe we can bring “some of those flowers back and keep others from going.”

I cannot hope to match his enthusiasm or his inspiration but I will be trying to follow his leadership. We all need to.

He talks about;

Engage.

Energize.

Excite.

He cannot do this alone.

I cannot do this alone.

I am challenging the Worshipful Masters of this District to help him and help me.

Become engaged. Engage your senior and experienced brethren. Reach out to engage those who are missing from our lodges, those who are part of the question "Where have all the Flowers gone?". Engage the newer brethren, help them to learn more of what Masonry means, make them feel, NO, make them an important part of lodge not just a new face that sits in the corner.

Energize yourself, your lodge and your brethren. Make coming to lodge something to look forward to, not just a meeting which could just as easily be missed this month. Make coming to lodge that shining star in the East which will energize you and them.

Excite your Brethren, especially excite those missing from the lodge room for so long. Make masonry exciting again and return it to that important,

meaningful fraternity it was in the past and hopefully will be again in the future.

But my Brethren, let me take it one step further. I don't just challenge the Worshipful Master's of this district to do this. I challenge everyone in this room and throughout every lodge in this District to become **engaged, reenergized and excited** yourselves and to help all brethren to become the the same and then we will all become "Believers of Freemasonry". The Grand Master has made this his theme and mission for the next two years I intend to make it mine for my year as DDGM. Make it yours.

Finally my Brethren the first line of the song is:

"Where have all the Flowers Gone?"

The last line of the song is;

"When will we ever learn, when will we ever learn?"

I believe NOW is the time to learn

Engage.....Energize.....Excite.

Believe in Freemasonry.

Thank you my Brethren