

## November Masonic Minutes – Meeting One

We are coming into that time of the Masonic year when newly elected and appointed officers of the Lodges are being installed and the Craft now find themselves beginning to implement plans for the ensuing Masonic year. The year will be defined not only by how well it has been planned, but perhaps more importantly by how passionately these plans are executed. As we approach the performance of our various duties as officers and members of the Craft, it may be well to reflect upon the admonition we received in the Entered Apprentice Lecture concerning how we are to conduct ourselves in this order. We are to serve with, “*...freedom, fervency and zeal.... There is nothing freer than chalk, the slightest touch of which leaves a mark behind; there is nothing more fervent than charcoal, to which when properly ignited, the most obdurate metals yield; and there is nothing more zealous than clay.*”

Chalk is a soft white porous limestone substance that is used in a multitude of ways, but operative masons who quarry stones and prepare ashlar for fitting have a specific use for it. When working on the rough ashlar they need to establish a point or line to mark a place to begin chiseling. When establishing the length of a wall, a rope laced with chalk is used to place a temporary line. Operative Masons often use the plumb to establish perpendiculars and they use chalk to make marks as a reference for setting a door jamb, corner, or pillar in the proper place. Chalk is used countless times throughout their efforts to erect structures, but it is never found in the final edifice because its sole use is to guide the Craftsman. Chalk is the substance we as Speculative Masons use to make temporary marks for goals. We are to be free in the use of the chalk because it establishes placement and is the forgiving friend of the inquisitive mind. It allows us to draw out our plans in advance of its execution and if while in the contemplative state of using the chalk we find ourselves in error, the chalk can be brushed away and reapplied without destroying the structure. Our desire to be as free as chalk will encourage us to contemplate where we best fit, test, erase, move, and test again until we find ourselves in the proper position to best serve our fellow man. In this manner we eventually “make our mark” and establish a pattern for others to follow.

Charcoal is a carbon ash substance that has been used in metal forges for millennia. Charcoal burns up to 2700 degrees Celsius and most irons melt between 1200 and 1550 degrees Celsius. The intensity of the heat that emanates from charcoal can change the structure of the elements it touches. The Entered Apprentice is taught that “*when properly ignited, the most obdurate metals yield.*” What does it mean to be “properly ignited?” In terms relating to forges it means not just to ignite the coals, but to strategically place the airflow to maximize the radiance of the coals that are working to heat the metal. In Masonic terms it implies that we use our passion for philanthropy and the betterment of the human condition in ways that change the elemental structure of those forms that need improvement so that the trained blows of the Maker can fashion them anew. As Masons we are to serve our fellow man by being fervent in our efforts to enlighten humanity with Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. We are to let our passion for serving others be a quiet and consistent force that outlasts the hardness of those who want to resist the change from selfishness to selflessness.

Clay is a combination of earthen minerals with metal oxides and organic matter that often trap water within its structure. It is the substance used to make pottery and the implication here is obvious; we are the clay who is being fashioned by the Grand Architect. We are to be malleable and eager to move into forms that best serve His purposes. Our ability to change, mold, and form anew becomes a measurement of our zeal.

As we move into the roles for service to our Lodges, our communities and our families, let us remember that the most effective programs are those whose members are eager to make a mark, relentless in their passion to serve, and always open to adjustments for the benefit of all. Such is the invaluable advice we receive as Entered Apprentices which we are to carry throughout our work of the Craft.

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