

Masonic Minutes—July Two

The Art of Being a Good Guest

One of the oldest traditions of Masonry, and some would argue the most splendid privilege of being a Master Mason, is the ability to travel in foreign countries and receive Master's wages. Our "wages" is a reference to sharing perspectives with other Masons in relating their experiences thereby increasing ones own Masonic Light. Some of the oldest Charges and Constitutions governing the Craft refer to visiting other Lodges and how a Lodge should accommodate visitors. Some have speculated that this is the origin and reason for the universal modes of recognition we know as signs, tokens, and words. When you anticipate being a guest some basic protocols and etiquette should be observed before visiting another Lodge to ensure the best experience possible.

Contacting Ahead—This simple gesture of calling or emailing the Secretary of the Lodge you intend to visit can provide you with a wide array of useful information as well as extending the courtesy of allowing them to prepare. Some of the questions you might ask include verifying their meeting time, asking if they have a specific attire that they desire, if there will be a meal served and what the cost is if any, and also if they have any degree work or serious business they need to address so that you can adjust your schedule to stay for the entire meeting. The Lodge website will usually provide the necessary contact information and sometimes the preferred method of contact.

Arrive Early—Every reasonable measure should be taken to ensure you are on time if not a little early to allow the host Lodge to properly examine you. Introduce yourself indicating that you are a visitor and ask to speak with the Secretary or Master of the Lodge to inform them that you would like to be examined. This is where calling ahead pays off because you have already made contact with someone who will be expecting you. Be prepared to show your dues card and brush up on some of your ritual as some of the questions will probably pertain to the ritual aspects of the Craft that identify you as a Master Mason. As a side note; Apprentices and Fellow Crafts may visit other Lodges providing they can supply acceptable documentation of their good standing; typically a certificate from the Lodge Secretary or a proper vouch by another Brother.

Lodge Meeting—Maintain the highest respect and decorum at all times during the meeting of the Lodge you are visiting, after all you are representing your Lodge as well. Follow the proper customs and forms that you observe in your jurisdiction, and be prepared to see some things that you do not recognize as you will see some very different forms of Lodge customs. The Brethren of the Lodge will be very curious about you so be prepared to be asked to speak to the Lodge, but refrain from side conversations and speaking out of order; don't get involved in their discussion about personal Lodge issues unless they ask for your perspective; and, if you are brought to the altar to be introduced, remember that if they mispronounce your name or give an incorrect title there is always a polite way to correct someone. Always thank the Brethren for their hospitality and extend to them an invitation if they are ever in your area.

If you desire to travel outside of your home state some extra precautions might be taken. Contact the Grand Secretary's office of our jurisdiction to verify that the Lodge you want to visit is recognized by our Grand Lodge. Ask if they might require other forms of documentation other than a dues card as the Grand Secretary will probably know or can contact their Grand Secretary to find out. Follow the simple steps outlined as above, but remember they have the right to not permit you to visit so don't take offense if your visit is declined. Finally, in everything you do, follow the advice of your mother; "A little bit of manners goes a long way."