

Lodge and Island of Quiet

By Bro John Bower, North West Mounted Police Lodge GL Saskatchewan

We live in a world of distractions. Information is flooding into our homes on a continual basis. We can read news articles from anywhere around the world with just a few key strokes. Our smart phones have more computing power than most of the first computers we worked on in the office or had at home. We are constantly bombarded with e-mails from friends and family, organizations that we belong to, and organizations that we have supported financially send us notes as well. We have access to 24-hour news reporting on the TV and have access to TV feeds from all over the world if you care to watch. Our phones ping or honk or make some other noise when we receive a text and one only need look around a sidewalk, bus or watch drivers to see that so many are obsessed with their phones and communication with their 'friends' on Face book and other 'social' media sites. So why should I be surprised that Masons seldom read a summons or an e-mail from the Lodge? In fact, why should I be surprised that Masons don't attend Lodge as we know we should?

It is actually, for the reasons noted in the preceding paragraph that we SHOULD be focussed on Lodge for one or two evenings a month. When we enter a Lodge room, we turn off our phones, walk away from media, traffic, deadlines and the hustle and bustle of life. In Lodge, we sit quietly and commune with each other as a family of men with shared beliefs. We listen to the opening and closing of Lodge and should be comforted by ceremonies and perambulations that do not change, and are repeated around the world. We are reminded of why we joined Masonry in the first place. When we sit in Lodge no one is a doctor, plumber, retiree, store clerk, banker or king. We do not see the distinction of wealth or public status but what we see is our Brothers in the most moral fraternity in the world. In Lodge we can put the world aside, find a quiet contemplative spot, listen to discussions that are polite and not shouted or filled with expletives. We can listen to, or present, a paper on an aspect of Masonry that is interesting or thought provoking. But, above all, we can rejoice in witnessing and partaking in ceremonies that have repeated themselves for decades without change; we should find comfort in that, after living in a world of uncertainty and change.

It is for those reasons that we should read, and respond, to our summonses. We should take a few hours each month to attend Lodge and sit with our Brothers. We should do a bit of reading or research about Masonry on a regular basis and then tell a Brother about what we learned, either in Lodge or over a cup of coffee. Brethren, if we do not support our Lodges we will not have them in the future for our sons to join, and the world will be a sadder place for the loss.

I just finished reading Family Matters by the Canadian author, Rohinton Mistry. Originally born in Bombay, Mistry moved to Canada in 1975 and has written three novels and a book of short stories about life in India. If you have never read his work then this would be a good one to start on – the story of a family as it deals with the incapacitation of the father/step father as he declines due to Parkinson's and a broken ankle. The reason I mention it is that I found a few very profound bits to quote that should resonate with all Masons. One of the characters receives an award for valour and honesty in transporting a bank deposit during WW II. He receives a clock in recognition and always told his family that they should "Remember, people can take everything away from you, but they cannot rob you of your decency. Not if you want to keep it. You alone can do that, by your actions." A Mason is reminded of the exemplary life that we are taught to lead – that our actions are not only observed but recorded. We are also reminded that in the end there are only deeds that will be remembered. You will be remembered for your actions and the people you have touched – not for wealth, not a car, not the size of your house or the cut of the suits you wear.

In another section, one of the men is watching the old man slowly deteriorate and is contemplating his own death and thinks; "Carrying your death with you every day would make it hard to waste time on unkindness and anger and bitterness, on anything petty. That was the secret: remember your dying time, in order to keep the stupid and the ugly out of your living time." I believe that fits in well with the admonition in the Third Degree to remember your inevitable destiny and to know yourself before you die.

Brethren each year our Lodges elect and install the officers of our Lodges. Some of these Brothers remain in their chair for two years due to the fact that there is no one stepping forward to take on the role of Worshipful Master or Warden. We must support these Brothers, so when your election night comes up and your installation night a month or so later, step up and assist your lodge, there may even be a chair there for you.