

# I Am the Guardian

by Kenneth B. deMoss, PM - Hope Lodge #145 Lafayette, Louisiana

I am the gatekeeper and silent guardian of the inner door. I sit quietly within the confines of your lodge mostly ignored and unnoticed by its members. Non-members who visit your lodge seldom if ever see me or me give a second glance and ever wonder what I am, or my purpose. I am quite used to this behaviour; for it has been this way throughout the centuries that Freemasonry has existed. My predecessors may have been fancier, made from exotic woods, or more richly carved. That matters little for I know my true purpose and will remain dedicated to the same. It is my duty and that of the members to protect the lodge and guard it from the profane world. We have, and will always, stand vigilant in that duty, by allowing no one to pass our threshold that the brothers have not first agreed to in unison. Only then will they be allowed to enter and become a brother and member of the Craft.

When a ballot is taken the act is momentous for the candidate and significant for the Lodge. It is an official act by each member in turn and by the Lodge as a legal body. The ballot has legal sanction and must be conducted according to solemn rules. So I sit patiently waiting for the call to be of service to the lodge and to work in concert with the brothers either to elect or reject all those who petitions for admittance. The brothers will line up, go before the altar as directed by the Master and place a hand deep into my darkened confines and select either a white ball or a black cube which they then will deposit even deeper into a recesses of my body, which remains hidden from view, until all have made their selection. Only then, when all members present have balloted, will the Master declare the ballot closed. Then he, along with the Wardens, uncovers and views the results of the ballot to declare it either dark or clear. The fate of the candidate is then revealed to all the brothers assembled.

When the results are revealed I scan the faces of the brothers and see disappointment in some, shock in others. Sadly, the results may not always be that which each individual brother wishes or thought and hoped the outcome to be. Some brothers may think it to be quite severe that it takes only one of my dark cubes to determine the fate of the candidate and keep a friend, family member or someone they thought worthy from becoming a member the order. However, that centuries-old rule has served the lodges well. If a brother knows something about the petitioner that would bring shame or discredit to the craft it is his duty to protect the lodge. The brothers whether they agree with the outcome or not, must always remember the results are the will of the lodge and should be accepted as such.

Even the writers of our ancient constitutions felt that the members of each individual lodge could best judge who were allowed to enter our fraternity or not. I take this task seriously, for it is the brothers and I who guard the door. It was never meant that all who apply for membership were allowed to join our fraternity. As an inanimate object I do not know nor care about the intentions of the balloting brethren. I can only hope their selection was made for the good of the order and not out of petty, vindictive motives or for any reason other than that which will benefit and help Masonry grow. So never cast blame upon me, for I am but a tool and can only carry out the will of the Lodge. I have no opinion; I am here solely to receive and to safeguard the ballot.

There is no option in Masonry that allows anyone to question or speculate on the reasoning or motive causing a brother to cast that black cube rejecting a candidate. Rather, you can only trust it was for the good of the order. Being obligated as Master Masons the brothers are held to a high standard of upright action. This means there should never be any attempt or design to obtain information or to even speculate as to how any brother balloted, for that is a most grievous offense and a very un-Masonic act. The Ballot is, and must remain, secret, sacred, and inviolate in the breast of brother who cast it.

The reasoning behind the secret ballot has always been to allow a man to vote his conscience without the fear of reprisal or reprimand. I am glad that I am just the silent and passive witness in this process for it is a sad truth that some lodges have been nearly torn apart by the presence of just one black cube that some felt was unjustly cast. In a perfect Masonic world this could never happen but you do not live in such a world, if indeed one ever did exist. However, my limited and simple world is just such a place; free from opinions, emotions, doubt, pettiness, or vengeance. I have no agenda other than to protect the Lodge, to guard the inner door, and to keep the ballot anonymous. And, as ballot boxes have done over the centuries, as long as the system remains viable, I, with the help of the dedicated and well-intentioned brethren, will forever help you guard the inner door, allowing only those few good and upright men to join your ranks as members and brothers.