

TEAMWORK MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

MORE LIGHT in MASONRY (IV): TEAMWORK MAKES THE DIFFERENCE by Allen E. Roberts

I asked a fire chief what the most frequent cause of fires was. He said: "Treasures in the attic that are too good to throw away, but which are unfit for any use."

So, "treasures in the attic" cause conflagrations. We've saved Father's old dried-out rocking chair, Grandmother's brittle dressmaking patterns, Uncle John's soiled sports clothes, Aunt Suzie's musty wedding gown and veil. All, and more, have sentimental value. All cost money to acquire. Most took a lot of effort to get at the time. All are equally useless and harmless-until a wayward spark touches them.

Most of us have "treasures in the, attic of our minds" that we're not about to throw away. It took years of study, considerable sums of money, and plenty of time and effort to acquire these treasures. Why should we throw them away?

Because some of these "treasures" have become "fool's gold". Often our musty ideas, our dried-out thinking, all the old knowledge acquired over a period of years can be more of a hazard than the treasures we've been storing in the attic of our homes. Antiquated thinking can destroy men and organizations. What we say and do, does affect those with whom we come in contact daily.

Only those who are completely isolated from life can afford to cling to the useless treasures that clutter the attic of the mind.

Not too long ago I was feeling poorly. With some prodding from my wife I visited my doctor. He's not my doctor just because he's a personal friend and Brother. He's my doctor because I know that he keeps abreast of the changes that are constantly taking place in medicine. He sets aside time to study, to attend and participate in medical conferences. He teaches medical students and other doctors. He put me in a hospital for a series of tests.

The tests, performed by experts in their fields, disclosed a tumor in my colon. An operation was necessary. I knew the surgeon well. I knew that he was constantly discarding old treasures and storing up new ones. So, I didn't hesitate to let him take over.

There is no profession that touches the lives of men more than does medicine. I know of no men who have a more difficult time in acquiring "treasures of the mind". And I know of none who have to discard these treasures more frequently. Those who discard them remain excellent doctors; those who don't become mediocre.

Actually, there isn't a field of endeavor in which man can stand still. Ever since the day that Mrs. Franklin is supposed to have told Brother Benjamin to go fly a kite, electricity has become a necessity. We couldn't get along today without it.

The computer runs on electricity. And the computer is an excellent example of how treasures acquired with time, effort, study, and money are discarded rapidly. Yet, these treasures are used as stepping stones for something better.

Even the food we eat has changed. The way it's cooked, packaged, and served now isn't like it was even a week ago. As we move about the country and world, we try new recipes and our tastes change.

They change, that is, unless we're like the mountaineer who came to town and saw a box of tangerines for the first time. "What are those?" he asked the grocer.

"Tangerines. Try one." "No, I reckon not," said the mountaineer.

"I've got so many tastes now I can't satisfy, I ain't aimin' to take on any more."

The mountaineer was being frugal, perhaps, but he wasn't adding to his treasures.

But the mountaineer isn't alone. Many of us "city slickers" aren't adding to our treasures, either. Too many of us consider the old treasures good enough. We aren't about to discard them and add new ones.

One "treasure" that has never been discarded, except in rare instances, is the committee. Committees are everywhere. They exist from the mighty Congress of the United States down to the smallest club in the country. Every American Lodge and Grand Lodge has committees. Committees, then, are "treasures" that should not be discarded. Right? Wrong!

It has been said that a committee is a group of men who individually can do nothing, but who can collectively decide that nothing can be done! A committee has a chairman. Too often the chairman is expected to do the work and the thinking of the members. The "committee" becomes a mockery; it's a one-man show. Example: the newscasts on any given evening focus on the Congressional Committee Chairman; the name of the Chairman is a household word; the rest of the members are kept so far in the background they appear not to exist.

During workshops on Masonic education or Masonic law, I am often asked: "If someone proposes something from the floor that I don't like, what should I do?"

"Give it to a committee, or appoint one," is my advice. "That will kill it."

More and more progressive organizations, even the Federal government, that want to get things done, are steering away from committees. They are appointing commissions, or even task forces. A few, too few, are using TEAMS. It is the latter that really gets things moving.

A TEAM is not a committee. It is a group of individuals working together to achieve the goals of the organization - the Lodge - that they have helped to establish.

Our mythical Worshipful Master, Ted Gray, in Part II of this series said: "Get the best men you can find on the several teams. One caution, though. Don't select men who think alike. We don't want a

bunch of `yes men.' We want men who think for themselves, men who will give us the action we need."

This selection of the men to make up the team is a critical point. The unfortunate inclination everywhere is to surround ourselves with people who think as we do. We do not really appreciate criticism. All of us would rather have a pat on the back than a kick in the pants. But often it's the kick in the pants that makes us stop to reflect, then do something better than we would have done it before.

The goal, or goals, to be reached will determine what qualifications the members of the team should have. In the first three parts of this series, we laid the groundwork for setting goals. In Part I, we determined who needs More Light in Masonry-all of us; we discussed the needs to be met, and how to find out what the members really want; and some steps to take to meet the needs. In Part II, we talked about planning; how to determine what the problems are; and some methods for solving these problems. In Part III, we worked with goals; we determined that goals, to be effective, must be set by all concerned; that commitment can only come from within the person himself; and there was a Guide to tell us at a glance how teamwork improves our goal setting.

The overall goal, or objective, of every Masonic Lodge must be to fulfill the PURPOSE of FREEMASONRY - to MAKE GOOD MEN BETTER. This means that every member must become a Master Mason in every sense that this implies. To accomplish this, every Freemason must be put to work for Freemasonry - doing what he likes to do.

The Worshipful Master can "Set the Craft to work and give them proper instructions for their labor." He can do it by establishing enough TEAMS to properly manage his Lodge. And to accomplish all that his Lodge should, dozens of TEAMS can be set to work.

This is the answer to the well-informed Brother who wrote: "More Light in Masonry: Who Needs It?" I feel that a better title would be Who Wants It?!!" He went on to write: "It was a sage who said: `You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink. You can send a boy to college, but you can't make him think'."

To which Conrad Hahn truthfully replied: "He may be a horse led to water, but a wise mentor, an individual with Masonic knowledge and enthusiasm for imparting light to another individual, can, I believe, make the water so palatable that the horse will have to drink in spite of himself. Impossible? If it is, then Masonry is `impossible', i.e., no longer viable."

To keep active men interested in anything, they must be given something to do that interests them. To arbitrarily appoint them to some existing committee defeats the purpose you are trying to achieve. They aren't going to work at something in which they have no interest.

How do we determine what interests a man? By asking him!

This simple solution is far too often overlooked.. As a candidate is working with his instructor and, hopefully, his Mentor, the Teams working for the Lodge should be explained to him. He should be asked to think about the Team he would like to work with after he is raised. If the one he wants to work with doesn't exist, start a new one! It just might turn out to be the boot the Lodge needs.

A TEAM, properly balanced with men of differing opinions and knowledge, cannot be static. It must move forward. It will be dynamic. It will set goals for itself that no Master, or any other leader, would dare to. In endeavoring to reach those goals it will create enthusiasm in the whole Lodge.

All of us have seen this happen. It may not have been in our own Lodge, but in one close by. For example: a small group of members believes the Lodge should have a new Temple. They convince others of the need; the enthusiasm begins to build' up. Soon the consensus of opinion in the Lodge causes the Master to appoint a committee to investigate the situation and report back. The committee, fortunately, works as a Team (and it usually does in a case such as this). The Lodge ends up with a new Temple. Why?

In all important situations like this, the Master wisely appoints a group of men of differing temperaments and knowledge. Each is a specialist in his own field. Each reports his findings to the group. There is a lot of discussion, a lot of give and take. Seldom, if ever, is a vote taken among the group. It arrives at a consensus of opinion. This later phrase - consensus. of opinion-is the "secret" to the success of teamwork.

Consensus is not a majority vote. One over fifty percent becomes a majority. Anyone who loses by only one vote isn't going to be happy. The chances of the majority winning his support are slim. Usually the objections of the fellow who loses haven't been listened to, and those objections may have been valid. He is frustrated. Often he'll leave the meeting talking about the "clique" that runs the Lodge. And he's probably correct!

When we reach a consensus of opinion, all the arguments, pro and con, have been heard, weighed, and discussed openly and fully. The group has worked together as a TEAM. It has agreed that the final alternative is the best that can be obtained at the time and under the circumstances. We may not end up with exactly what we want, but what we do have is acceptable.

Teamwork is constructive. It puts plans into effect. It achieves goals. It takes constructive leadership (this will be analyzed at length in the next article in this series). The chairman of a committee can manipulate his members; the leader of a TEAM cannot. If he tries to, he will soon have no Team to manipulate.

There are certain criteria that should be considered in selecting men for the various Teams:

- Willingness to serve
- Ability
- Temperament
- Time available far the task
- Skills
- Experience

- Training

- Capacity to learn

It cannot be over-emphasized that individuals of differing qualifications should be members of the Teams. Charles L. Hughes, in Goal Setting, has said this better than anyone else:

"Many managers (leaders) have a tendency to select subordinates in their own images; that is, to staff their team with people who are like themselves. This is neither a healthy nor an effective approach to organizing and balancing a team. It is not healthy because of what it can do to individuals, and it is not effective because we cannot build a goal-achieving organization with identical people. The criteria for a balanced team do not require that each individual member be a miniature team unto himself; the necessary abilities must be present, not within each person, but within the overall group."

The Team leader is in many respects a "moderator". He calls the members of the Team together, states the purpose of the meeting, covers in broad terms the overall goal the Master would like to achieve. The Team takes over. Each member contributes to the discussion. Through a consensus of opinion the goal of the Master is set, or modified, and it becomes the goal of each member of the Team. Each man has committed himself to its achievement.

It is important to remember that Freemasonry is a voluntary organization. Men cannot be forced to work, to attend meetings, or to function in any capacity in the Lodge. Only through voluntary participation can a Lodge be successful in reaching the goals the Worshipful Master would like to reach. This is one of the many reasons the traditional concept of committees has been, for the most part, a failure in all voluntary organizations.

"Master's wages" in Freemasonry consists mainly of but one thing - RECOGNITION. A member of a Team is more likely to achieve the recognition he ought to get for a job well done than a member of a committee. Once Teams start functioning properly, everyone becomes aware of the importance of each member. As time goes on, each member of the Team will take charge of one or more of the functions chosen. Each man is a little better in some phase than anyone else. This will be recognized by the Team, and his knowledge will be put to work for the good of the Lodge.

Freemasonry is unique in many respects. The most unusual is the one that places the Worshipful Master in complete charge of everything the Lodge does. His decisions cannot be overruled by the Lodge, only by the Grand Master or Grand Lodge. All committees, or Teams, serve at his will and pleasure. He can veto anything they may do. This is as it should be, because he alone is held accountable for what his Lodge does or doesn't do.

The constructive Master uses his iron-fisted power with a silken touch. He will never overrule the proposal of one of his Teams unless the proposal violates a law of the Grand Lodge, or one of the Landmarks of Freemasonry. Such violation is highly unlikely. Every properly selected Team will have members who know the laws of the Grand Lodge and who are familiar with the Constitutions of Freemasonry.

The number of Teams necessary will vary for every Lodge. The number of members needed on a Team will differ according to the situation. It should be the goal of each Lodge to have every resident member actively participate on one or more Teams. (A few suggested Teams needed in a Lodge are listed at the end of this Talk; how they should function will be the subject of a later article in this series.)

Every man is an individual. We all know this, but we tend to forget it. Every man has his likes and dislikes. Every man has ideas that will benefit his Lodge and Freemasonry in general. No one can benefit from ideas that are kept buried. By utilizing Teams, by encouraging each member to serve where he is best qualified, ideas will be flushed out into the open. All of us will be the beneficiaries.

If we must continue to appoint committees, let's do it-BUT let's make them work as TEAMS.

Try it. You'll find that Teamwork does make the difference - the difference between success and failure, between stagnation and dynamic growth.