

THE BENEFITS OF BEING A LODGE OFFICER
by R. W. Brother Jack L. Allen, Grand Orator

As a 21 year old newly raised Master Mason, I had high school, college and U.S. Navy time going for me, plus experience from a variety of odd jobs, from gas station attendant to retail sales, not to mention a new marriage.

Not bad, one might say, for a 21 year old. But the next eight years of my life would provide much more... all because of my journey through my Masonic lodge's officer line, starting as Chaplain.

I had taken orders, if not direction, from men and women older than me, but I had never been put in the position of guiding men who were senior to me in age.

I had messed up my checking account balance with the few thousand dollars I made back then, but I had never had to forecast a budget of five figures a year in advance.

I had been responsible only for myself .and my young bride, not the status and future of 900 Master Masons.

I looked after a used car and an apartment, but I had never been involved in the purchase of real estate, and the design and construction of a Masonic Temple.

I had planned the meals for two, but never a picnic for 300.

In every case cited above, those add-on experiences were ones I had going through the line.

My lodge had never worried about a budget until there was a building on the horizon. Fortunately, our veteran Secretary was also an accountant. He did the budget -- I did the learning.

Officers, senior and junior to me, found the property, sought out an architect and identified a contractor. They just turned it all over to me, as a 29-year-old Worshipful Master, and said "Make it work."

Every officer behind me in the line, the year I was Worshipful Master, was older than me. But they didn't make

that an issue. I had learned to plan, execute and finally delegate. I had a wonderful year as Worshipful Master.

To this day, when someone says where is your department's budget, I have it and can explain it. If they thrust blue prints under my nose, I can read them. If they ask me to chair a committee, I can organize and I can work with people.

All of this -- and much more, I can do because I was an officer in my Masonic lodge.

The fact is, in this conglomerate-oriented world, some men never get a chance to experience leadership, or to have a variety of experiences, but our Masonic lodges offer the opportunity to learn leadership skills through the TELL, WILL and Series IV programs. The individual concerns of each lodge allow us to deal with budgets, short and long range planning, physical plants, community events, charity, youth, and a whole host of their experiences.

Being an officer is more than learning the ritual. It is all part of Masonry's philosophy of taking a good man and making him a better man.

The skills and lessons one learns in the lodge line make us better members of the church board, the PTA, our union -- the list is endless.

Give it some thought. Then, talk to your Worshipful Master about your desire to learn and grow.