

Why Should He Ask
by Douglas O. Brenneman, Jr. Grand Warden

Brethren, I ask this question not in a negative manner, but more in a thought-provoking one. All our lodges are seeking new members as our membership dwindles. Just why should a man ask to become a Mason? Why did you ask? Why did I ask?

I asked my next-door neighbor for a petition not because I understood what Freemasonry stood for, because at that time I did not know. It wasn't because I knew a lot of Masons. It was only after I joined that I really realized how many I did know, especially in my church, and how I had respected these men for years and the high ideals for which they stood, the love they had for their God, their families and their communities.

These brethren were good men, lived the tenets of our fraternity, but I did not know they were Freemasons until I saw them in lodge or saw their names on the rolls of the lodge.

The main reason I asked for a petition was that my father and grandfather had been Masons.

Now, I never knew my grandfather and my father passed away when I was 21 years old. When I was growing up it was a time when you didn't question your father's authority and what was good enough for Dad was good enough for me. I can still remember the pride he had in the fraternity and how he used to say to strangers, "I see you have traveled," and then all of a sudden they weren't strangers anymore. I remember how he and one uncle of mine were a lot closer than the two that weren't Masons. I was only two years old when my father joined the Masonic fraternity and I can see now, after being a Mason myself for 24 years, how Dad practiced Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth as we were growing up and how the need of a neighbor came before his.

That is why I asked, but this brings me back to my statement about not knowing that men I knew in my community and my church were Masons until I joined the fraternity. Why didn't I know? It is because they practiced Freemasonry as quietly as we sometimes do today.

I am not pointing any fingers, for I include my lodge and myself. Does your lodge sponsor a little league or softball team? Does it have a dart team? Do you go to church as a lodge once or twice a year? Do you offer the use of your lodge for the local Bloodmobile and volunteer to help? Do you have a night that you recognize the local service clubs and what they do for our communities? Do you recognize an individual in the community for his or her contributions? Do you have a clergy night?

Do you involve your families and your friends? Do you help the needy and unfortunate, not only Masons, but also all of God's children?

Brethren, we are a part of our communities and we must practice Freemasonry and give back to our churches, communities and our schools. In our town, our service clubs are growing with good men every year. The average attendance at the local Kiwanis Club is in the 90% area and their dues are three times that of the Masonic lodge!

Why? Because they have things for their members in which they can become involved. Because they are visible and give a person a reason to ask for that petition. The humdrum of reading minutes and paying bills is not Freemasonry. We must show the world that Freemasonry is alive and well, and that we have earned and deserve the right to seek out men of high ideals for our fraternity.

The world is all around us and we are seeking new members, so we must communicate to the world "What, Why, How and Where". Let us be open about our love for our Fraternity and what it offers, not only to us but also to other men who are not members. Don't hide it in our own little circle.

I would like to conclude with a poem:

A Little More

I recall the kind old grocer
When the sugar he would pour,
How he'd tip the scale to balance,
Then he'd add...just a little more.

My how his business prospered,
Folks were always at his store,
For he'd give an honest measure,
Then held add . . .just a little more.

So it is with life, my Brother,
We would build a better score;
If, when we've done what is expected,
We'd add...just a little more.

Mountain Springs Lodge #302, S.C.