

2008-2009 MASTER'S REPORT

As I close my second and final term, let me get right to it. Last year I reported that there is not a quick fix to the membership problem. But, for the first time in a number of years, we have entered more than we have lost due to death. Fortunately, we have lost only 4 to death and we have entered 9 since September. Unfortunately, the economy has hit us and we have a number of brethren (42 at this time) who have not paid their dues and are in jeopardy this coming fall of being suspended for Non-payment of Dues. We have already lost one of our entered apprentices for similar reasons. Not only did the economy hit our membership, but also it lowered interest rates, which means we made less money on our investments. And Brothers, I have checked the fine print and there does not seem to be a “stimulus package” in the works for our fraternity. I still expect that one of our first lessons will hold true, that time, patience and perseverance [will] accomplish all things; I just pray that we can hold out that long.

We continued with a meal before every regular meeting. A few new folks came out, a few attended more than once, but we still didn't see a grand increase in our total attendance. Really we gained a camaraderie and fellowship that breaking bread together creates. But given the economy and our low rate of return, it is time to re-evaluate doing something like this.

We ran “The Second Annual Great Chili Cook off”. Attendance and participation was down, so it is time to re-evaluate that program also. Although we still had a lot of fun!!! Brothers are talking about trying it again next year, so that will be up to the new Master.

We sold a few more shirts, hats, aprons, bibs, etc. We have jackets in the works, but they are a problem to get done. But with the relationship with Barb Spry who does the embroidering, we are not losing anything at this point and maybe making a few dollars. I would suggest continuing with the program. We have gained another \$110 or so prior to this evening through these efforts.

We also tried a new method for raising funds for the Masonic Home. Every Mason has to realize that, in the Blue Lodge, we have one and only one charity, and that is the Masonic Home. It is our duty to raise funds for it or donate to it. We have tried the donation path. We have tried the incentives to increase donations path. Both were successful, but both depleted funds. Last

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year we held a raffle of a Masonic Afghan. The price of the Afghan is all that it cost us. This year I tried to increase the size of the donations, by offering the Master's parking spot for donations of \$250 or more. I was the only person to donate that much or more. We do need to have an innovative, non-fund depleting method for raising funds. Other Lodges win the Harrison Award every year and there is no reason that we cannot. We are usually among the top 5 lodges in donation percentage, but this year we didn't even make the top ten.

We continued with "the Master's Hat award" which was sort of successful and because I switched to books the last half of the year, I figured we spread a little Masonic light while having some fun.

Senior Warden David Parker continued to keep our website up-to-date and several members have mentioned that they look there first or it saves them from looking for their trestleboard. It has even been suggested that we could eliminate printing trestleboards if we could get everyone to look on the website or email trestleboards. It is a possibility for a future savings. Our younger members are all "computer literate" and expect to look at websites and email for the information as they move us into the paperless society. I think of us as beginning to work in that direction, so I strongly suggest we keep the good efforts on track. Also, more than just the Senior Warden and the Worshipful Master can contribute to the website. For example, Brother Tom Herron has some beautiful Masonic jewelry and paraphernalia that he is researching. I am sure once he gets the history of a piece together, he could get a digital picture of it and give the story to our webmaster for posting. I continue to work on digitizing Past Grand Master Rinehart's speeches.

The Masonic Hall Company is to be commended for taking care of our grounds. See how beautiful they are and how nicely things are kept. There have been several minor upgrades as well as the major repair of the lamppost. Likewise, they are trying to alleviate the financial burden to the lodge, as we have had to buy large sums of stock the last several years to help pay the taxes and summer bills. They have started to rent out the hall and through the monthly poker night are making some moneys back. Please let it be known that the hall is for rent on specific terms which are designed to protect our building and major investment. Brother Art Wilson is

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primarily responsible for many of these efforts. However, again this year, we need to support them for this summer and I move that we purchase 400 shares (\$4,000.00) of Hall Company stock to help alleviate their summer bills.

This year I tried a new format for the trestleboard. It was designed to be used to add some advertisements and although Brother Cochran raised that point in Lodge, no one went out and “sold” any ads.

Bottomline. We were under our financial budget overall in expenses. Grand Master's visit cost us less than budgeted although we had a bad and late count from the Grand staff and their ladies, Ladies at the Table was at a greater cost than planned due to a large number a last minute cancellations, we had no Past Master's apron and banquet costs to cover, reduced bank charges, and several other areas did well and last year we had no Master's jewel or bar to purchase. I plan that this year we can get away with one bar for both years, although last year we were to perform repairs to my jewel. Income was a little lower than anticipated partially offset because we had 8 paying Entered Apprentices not 2, etc. Financially, we are still sound although we were closer to breakeven with the reduced interest rates.

Our big weakness at this point is still in the officer line. We have fine dedicated officers willing to perform their duties; however, we do not have the necessary interest in progressing. Consequently, we still use up our Past Masters' energies to continue to keep the Lodge alive and functioning. Like the Marines, we are looking for a few good men that are dedicated and willing to stick it out for several years to make it through the line. This will strengthen our corps of Past Masters giving us a larger rotation base for as long as we need to “recycle” Past Masters. For this problem, I do not have a quick solution. I hope and pray every evening that we can turn the trend around.

So, to conclude, I thank the officers and members for their support. I particularly wish to thank the Past Masters for without them, this lodge would surely fail. I encourage you to continue to support our Lodge with your time and talents. Your presence is much appreciated AND absolutely necessary to remain functioning. In Past Grand Master Rinehart's speech on the Dead

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Lodge, which I used in the May 2009 trestleboard, there was a poem that I think reflects what will happen to our lodge, if we continue to let Somebody Else do it. Please take my words to heart. I think our next Worshipful Master plans to be in the East only one year, most everyone else has been there several times and we are all "Weary and Worn." Our Past Masters have become Somebody Else in this little poem. I repeat it here to close my remarks:

SOMEBODY ELSE

Adapted from:
Saskatoon Cosmopolitan Club

There's a guy in your Lodge
Called SOMEBODY ELSE.
There's nothing this fellow
Can't do.
He's busy from morning 'til
Late every night
Just substituting for you.

You're asked to do this
Or you're asked to do that,
And what is your frequent reply
Get SOMEBODY ELSE Worshipful
He'll do it much better than I.

There's so much to do in our Organization,
So much, and the workers so few,
And SOMEBODY ELSE is getting
Weary and worn,
Just substituting for you.

God bless Freemasonry and God Bless St. John's Lodge No. 2. **SO MOTE IT BE!**

Fraternally submitted,

Herbert J Atkinson,
Past Grand Master,
Worshipful Master 2008-2009