

BROTHER “DAD”

As we close our Masonic year in June, I noted that this month includes “Father’s Day.” That brings to mind a number of pleasant Masonic thoughts, about my father, Brother “Dad.” I often think about the number of differences we had. He was great with his hands and had a knack for repairing things; I still have trouble with the difference between “clockwise” or “counter clockwise” and the best thing I can do to repair something is make a call. I have a decent brain and like to read; he liked to use his hands and relaxed making things. Still, one thing we had in common was Freemasonry.

We joined this great fraternity together. He had always been interested, but was waiting to be asked. One day I asked him if he knew how to become a Mason; he didn’t, but said he would find out (because I asked). He found out and the Brother who told him, Past Master Lou Josendale, had been waiting years for him to ask.

Because of Brother Dad, I learned a great lesson in Masonry and in Life, PATIENCE. I was just out of College and very used to learning quickly. The catechism came so quickly, that I didn’t want to catch my breath. But my instructor, Tuck Sturgis, told me to be patient; I could only progress at the rate that my father could learn because he was going to see me get all of my degrees. Dad didn’t have a high school education, but with much struggle, he learned the catechism and we progressed SLOWLY through the degrees. Since I always had to teach him, he learned it well; better then some learn it today, which explains why I may not be very sympathetic to those who claim to have trouble learning the catechism today. Brother Dad learned it!!

He was a great Blue Lodge Mason and would have made a great Worshipful Master, but because he had trouble memorizing, he didn’t pursue that path. Instead, he followed the path of being in the service to people. We eventually joined Scottish Rite Masonry, York Rite Masonry and the Shrine. Brother Dad found his calling as a clown. *Smokie* was his clown name and he so enjoyed entertaining the kids in the Children’s Hospital, or anywhere for that matter. Put a wild wig and sponge bulb nose on him and he was as happy as, well, as happy as a kid. He was in service to the children.

When I first became Master of St. John’s, Dad made as many meetings as he could, but he wouldn’t miss an opportunity to be a clown. Later, when I became Grand Master, he was excited to be on my staff, but he didn’t want to have to speak, so he didn’t. He and Mom were more than Aides to the Grand Master, they were the babysitters, taxi drivers, etc. we needed to raise three active children while serving in the Grand East. He was in service to his family more than being in service to the Grand Master.

He also became a “Lion” just to be in service to others. He delivered “meals on wheels,” worked at helping with the Masonic Club luncheons, and served in various capacities at NUR Temple in the service to Shriners and the crippled children. Although I haven’t been as involved as he in those things, we have always had our Freemasonry as a common ground. Now I am truly the widow’s son and I miss Brother Dad everyday; mostly, I miss being in Lodge with him.

At our most recent raising, Brother Testa impressed me when he offered a brief prayer that Masonry could make him the man that his father hoped he would be. Likewise, I pray.

Being in service to our Brethren with our father or son, is an opportunity not afforded to everyone. Why not take advantage of this opportunity if you have it and join something with your son or father; join Masonry together and you will have one thing in common.

As this is my last trestleboard, I thank you for the opportunity to once again serve you, my Brothers. May the Grand Artificer of the Universe, support, bless and keep you, now and forevermore.

Sincerely and fraternally yours,
Herb Atkinson