



Why I Am a Mason

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"Are you a Mason?" The question was asked by the Master of the local Lodge. We were about to do a funeral service together. The answer was easy: "Yes." That same question has been asked, and the same answer given many times in my ministry. Until recently no one ever asked, "Why?" That is a bit harder to answer. But let me try. It was in a little East Texas town that I first encountered a man who called himself a "Freemason." As I observed his behavior in the community, it was evident to me that he had something and knew something that I wanted to have and know. There was a behavior that seemed to supplement his religious faith. As we talked, it was soon clear that I wanted to become a part of that group of men who called themselves "Masons."

There are some things that I don't remember about that night I took that first step toward a rich and rewarding experience that has enhanced my life. But there are some things that I will never forget. There was a foundation of trust...trust in God as the One to whom I could look for support and counsel...trust in a Brother who could lead me in my blindness to the light of understanding. I discovered the reality of prayer as the place to begin before undertaking any task.

So I began the journey that through the years was to lead me to a new understanding of myself, my fellow human beings and God. On that journey I discovered that I was not searching for some particular religious creed that would set me apart from other people. I was in fact discovering some great principles that would enable me to live life at its very best. Principles like faith...hope...charity...wisdom...beauty...truth. I would discover that there is a universal love and respect for all persons of all religious creeds and beliefs. My Masonry would let me stand with my Brothers as an equal no matter what their theology or religious beliefs.

While Masonry has never been a religion for me, it has set before me some very high moral and ethical standards that have supported my religious beliefs. It has also confirmed my duty to "feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and support the widows and orphans." While it is impressive to know the extent of Masonry's charitable organizations and agencies that work for healing and health (some say we spend over \$1 million a day), it is much more impressive to see a child walk, or a child see, or a child be nursed back to health from a severe burn. Most would not have

been able to receive such help had it not been for the benevolent concern of some Masons. So I saw duty acted out in deeds.

As I remember those early days working in the Lodge, I remember the care and support of those fellow Lodge members. They made me feel that I was someone special about whom they really cared. Across the years as I have moved to different churches (some United Methodist ministers move a lot), and visited in different Lodges in different places, that same feeling of support and Brotherhood has been there. Because of my position in the Church and membership in the Lodge, I have always felt wanted and accepted. That's a very special feeling!

While this great Country of ours has felt the impact of leaders who have been Masons, much of what Masonry represents is seen in those men who have lived the principles of Freemasonry in their respective communities. On my journey I have met some of them. One of them was Ben LeNorman, whose honesty was known and respected. He was an example to the youth of the little town where he lived. That example brought many a young man to knock on Masonry's door. Another was Don Davis, whose compassion for those who were hurting was unsurpassed. He would give of his time and money so that a crippled child might have dignity and health. He was willing to reach out to help anyone who might be hurting. No time was too valuable to give. No distance was too far to fly or drive. No effort was too great to make. When he heard the cry for help, he was ready to respond. These were good men who were better men because they were Masons. Neither of them will have their names in the books of history, but they will always be remembered by those whose lives they touched. And the best thing is that you know these men. Their

names may be different, but they are a part of every Lodge and live in every corner of this great land of ours. They are those who believe that Masonry is not something to commit to memory, it is something to live. You never hear it in their boasting...you see it in their living.

So the question "Why are you a Mason?" can be answered. It has allowed me to grow personally...to serve my God...and to reach out in concern to my fellow human beings. It has supported my personal faith and work as a churchman. Let no one say you cannot be a Christian and a Mason at the same time. I know too many who are both and proud to be both. Ben was...Don was...I am. I will always be glad that one day in a little East Texas town that was.