



THE DIRECTOR OF CEREMONIES

Brother you have been appointed (or elected) Director of Ceremonies of this Lodge, and I have much pleasure in investing you with the jewel of your office. Your jewel, the Cross-Staves, is the emblem of power and authority. It will be your duty to see that everything is done decently and in order, and that there be no confusion or mismanagement in the ceremonies or other business of the Lodge. You will be expected to see that the Lodge room is properly prepared for all Masonic meetings; to receive Grand Lodge and other visitors, and to assign them their places in accordance with their rank in the Craft; to marshal all processions and demonstrations of the Brethren, both within and without the Lodge, and to give Grand Honours on all proper occasions. In addition to these regular duties, you will be expected to give guidance when needed, to the Deacons and other officers and generally to see that the ceremonies are decorously and properly conducted. In order that you may be duly qualified for the performance of these multifarious duties, I would recommend to you a diligent and careful study of the Book of Constitutions and Regulations, and the practical workings of the Ceremonies, as well as the ancient usages and established customs of the Fraternity, in order that you may, with due authority, correct that which may be wrong; and that, while encouraging and directing enlightened and progressive improvement, you may guard against innovations in the body of Freemasonry.

Installation, Canadian Work, Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon

THE DIRECTOR OF CEREMONIES “.....to see that everything is done decently and in order....” It is your duty to see that the lodge is properly prepared and that all brethren appear in the lodge in the clothing prescribed in the Book of Constitutions, and that every brother when in lodge or at refreshment, is placed according to his masonic rank. You shall have the direction of processions on all public occasions. It is also your duty to see that everything is done decently and in order and that there is no confusion or mismanagement in the ceremonies or other business of the lodge. You should receive Grand Lodge officers and other visitors and see that they are assigned their proper places in the lodge room in accordance with their rank in the Craft. You should be conversant with the Book of Ceremonies and well skilled in the ancient usages and established customs of the fraternity, so that you may with due authority, correct that which may be wrong and guard against innovations in the body of Freemasonry. You are free to move about the lodge to assure that the work is performed without confusion, while still maintaining the dignity of the occasion. During the conferral of degrees you should be the only prompter and the only one with a ritual book open. Your punctual and regular attendance at all communications and rehearsals of the lodge is essentially necessary.

Lodge Officers Guide, Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon

Historical

In 1815, the first post Union Book of Constitutions was published in England and it contained a whole section of “Private Lodges” under which heading it ruled;

The Masonic officers of a lodge are the master and his two wardens, with their assistants, the two deacons, inner guard, and tyler to which, for the better regulation of the private concerns of the lodge, may be added other officers, such as chaplain, treasurer, secretary, etc.

It is interesting to see how many officers of our present day officers were still optional in 1815. The rule changed in 1841 when the “etc” was dropped and a new version ran;

..for the better regulation of the private concerns of the lodge are to be added a treasurer and secretary and other officers, viz a chaplain, master of ceremonies and stewards may also be added.

It was not until 1884 that we have the Director of Ceremonies with his full title, capital letters and all;

...The Master may also appoint a Chaplain, a Director of Ceremonies, an Organist and Stewards. No brother can hold more than one regular office.. “(B of C 1884,1886)

The Assistant Director of Ceremonies made his appearance in 1911 as well as several other officers such as an Almoner, Assistant Secretary and so on.

Director of Ceremonies Jewel



Two rods "*in saltire*".

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE DIRECTOR OF CEREMONIES

The prime objective of the Director of Ceremonies is to ensure that all matters of Lodge ceremonial are carried out to the standard of perfection that the founders of the Lodge would have desired. In him is vested the responsibility of perpetuating the characteristics of the Lodge which differentiate it from others, at the same time ensuring that the procedures of the Lodge are carried out properly, efficiently and in a manner which the members will find enjoyable and rewarding.

It logically follows that most of the Director of Ceremonies' objectives concern matters of procedure in general and of ritual in particular. In the context of the latter, it is interesting to note that the word 'ritual' appears nowhere in the Book of Constitutions and Grand Lodge expresses no precise view with regard to the ritual practices of a Lodge. Indeed, Rule 15.21 of the Book of Constitution & Regulations states that the members of a Lodge have an undoubted right to regulate their own proceedings, provided they are consistent with the general laws and regulations of the Craft.

It is in this respect that the Director of Ceremonies plays such a vital role, for he will shape and direct the approach taken by the Lodge on all matters of ritual. The wise Director of Ceremonies will, however, ensure that the objectives he sets for a Lodge will be aligned with those of the founders and members, thus preserving harmony and eliminating any undesirable or ill-considered innovations. By achieving this happy state of affairs the Director of Ceremonies will have secured his main objective and he can then consider his other objectives, the settlement

of all questions of etiquette, the resolution of any difficulty which may arise in the Lodge and the provision of advice and guidance to the Worshipful Master during his year in the Chair.

The Director of Ceremonies must assume that he has suitable material to work with, that is to say that the brethren in the Lodge can understand and carry out his instructions.

He is responsible for the smooth flowing of ceremonial and ritual and may hold rehearsals. He may be responsible for prompting other officers who forget their lines. In some jurisdictions, he directs proceedings during the installation of a new Worshipful Master. He is also responsible for forming processions and introducing visitors, except in those jurisdictions which appoint a 'Marshal' for these latter purposes.

To him falls the responsibility of ensuring that our ceremonies are carried out with decorum, as well as to the instructions set out by Grand Lodge. Thus will our ritual convey to the Candidate, as well to ourselves, those important lessons it has been designed so to do. He is also responsible for the correct placement of visitors and Brethren within the Lodge, according to rank. He is sometimes entrusted with a baton, the emblem of his authority. In other Constitutions and in other Orders of Freemasonry, this Officer may bear the title of Marshal, or Mareschal.

Within the duties of his office the Director of Ceremonies has full responsibility for directing the Lodge ceremonies and the Lodge expects that – rather like the conductor of an orchestra – he will spell out in Rehearsal those standards of consistency and accuracy required to create a performance of, say, the Third Degree in which we can all take great pride.

To discharge this responsibility properly he sets the standards, remedial errors and necessary changes with his team. Should the current Worshipful Master or other PMs differ strongly with his methods and emphasis then this need to be resolved elsewhere and not on the lodge floor? The Director of Ceremonies, of course, does not have it all his own way of course. A good DC may need to advise, cajole, encourage, enthuse, perhaps tease - but in seeking to achieve his standards he should never admonish publicly. He always keeps in mind Freemasonry is recreational and that we are all volunteers. Remember too if others criticize a performer then by so doing they are criticizing the DC's own standards – and possibly the Master who appointed him – so let us all be cautious. Thoughtless words may hurt the feelings of more than one person.

Some Guiding Suggestions for the Director of Ceremonies

Introduction

This is one of the most senior offices to which a Brother may aspire. It is to the Director of Ceremonies that the Brethren look to for guidance and from whom the Master will seek confirmation of his actions. All floor work is totally under the DC's direction. Challenging and difficult tasks well worthy of the title 'Director', for the duties are to direct and guide. The

successful DC will, by good example, encouragement and careful coaching, not only lead his Lodge toward excellence in its work but he will also earn the respect and trust of his fellow Brethren.

The following guidance has been compiled to be helpful to the Lodge Director of Ceremonies and perhaps to be of some assistance in pointing out areas where improvements may be useful or required.

Qualifications for office

The effective DC will be an experienced mason, expert in the ritual and knowledgeable about good practice, etiquette and conversant with the relevant portions of the Book of Constitutions. He will be confident and courteous in manner, able to exhibit command and presence when required, yet sensitive and tactful in his dealings with Brethren. He will also be able to encourage less experienced Brethren by demonstrating good leadership. Often, newer members are reluctant to undertake ritual and to take roles within the Lodge for fear of failure. The Lodge DC, together with the Lodge Mentor, is ideally placed to ensure that this is not the case in his particular Lodge and that more experienced members encourage their attempts rather than admonish them.

The DC will be conversant with and able to direct all Lodge proceedings.

The Director of Ceremonies will have identified the various roles and tasks to be undertaken at forthcoming meetings and will ascertain from the Worshipful Master whom he wishes to undertake specific pieces of ritual, toasts and other duties. The Lodge Secretary and the Director of Ceremonies should consult to confirm the content and sequence of business for inclusion in the summons for each meeting. At the previous Committee meeting, the Director of Ceremonies can usefully note items of business for the forthcoming meeting, clarify where these will be undertaken and who is to propose and second the various items. The agreement of Brethren selected to propose and reply to toasts should be sought prior to the meeting and advice given as to the length and content required. The practice of producing a schedule of work for all meetings/ceremonies for the year showing who has been delegated work/ toasts etc is strongly recommended.

Rehearsal

The rehearsal is a crucial opportunity for the Director of Ceremonies to ascertain that all Officers are conversant with their duties and that he and the Worshipful Master have agreed on points of procedure and continuity. The Director of Ceremonies will wish to pay particular attention to the performance of ritual and of floor work, especially that of the Deacons and of any Brother designated to undertake work for the first time. Brethren should by this time have learnt their parts and should make every effort to attend. It is advisable to have in mind reliable ritualists to act as substitutes if required. The over-riding approach should be to encourage everyone to give of their best and be acknowledged for the effort made.

Distinguished guests and Ruling Masters

The Director of Ceremonies should obtain in advance from whoever collates the attendance list, the names of any distinguished Brethren, including current Grand Lodge Officers, Worshipful Masters, and distinguished guests who are attending. This will enable him to be alert for their arrival, ensuring that they are properly received, and escorted to the correct seat in Lodge. The DC should be familiar with the order of precedence laid down in the Book of Constitutions and should be able to recognize a Brother's rank from his apron or collar badge.

The Director of Ceremonies should make a point of being at the Lodge at least half an hour before the time shown on the summons. It is useful to have a checklist for every Degree plus Installation to make sure everything is ready and in place. Officers' collars and gauntlets should be appropriately set out. Cards with the opening and closing odes should be distributed around the Lodge room. It is not possible to list every item required as this document is in the public domain so you should think about the items required for each ceremony and make a list of them. The Volume of the Sacred Law, the compasses and the angle of the square should be readily available for opening lodge. The aprons of Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts must be in correct order.

The Director of Ceremonies should check that the Worshipful Master and his Wardens are correctly dressed in relevant collars, cuffs etc.

The Director of Ceremonies' duties during the meeting are essentially to: • ensure the correct seating of Brethren, • escort latecomers to their seats, • oversee the conduct of business, including ballots, • give salutations to distinguished visitors, • ensure the proper conduct of ceremonies, • prompt all ritual except that of the Worshipful Master (prompted by the IPM), • attend promptly to any unexpected difficulties or emergencies, • organize processions, • advise the Worshipful Master as required.

Salutations The Director of Ceremonies should be ready to receive and escort latecomers, reminding them in which Degree the salute(s) to the WM should be given and then escorting them to a convenient seat appropriate to their rank. Ballots

The Director of Ceremonies will oversee the conduct of the ballot. He should ensure that the brethren are instructed in the correct manner in which to cast their vote.

Prompting The Director of Ceremonies alone should prompt all work, except that of the Worshipful Master which should be in the hands of the IPM. The presence of ritual books in open Lodge should be carefully avoided. Where exceptionally this is required, e.g. when an unusual or extended piece of ritual is to be undertaken, then this should be unobtrusive, such as at the Secretary's table. The use of copious notes and/or reading of a ceremony by the WM is to be discouraged. The IPM has a key role to support the WM in both the ritual and matters of business. If a WM is unable to manage all the ritual then it is preferable that the work be shared with other suitable Brethren

Installation Night The Director of Ceremonies is very involved in the installation of the Master-elect and his officers. His role may vary according to ritual.

Assignment

It is the new Worshipful Masters second meeting and the District Deputy Grand Master is visiting and may have several brothers accompanying him as well as several seating Worshipful Masters from local lodges what would be your duty as Director of Ceremonies in regard to introductions, seating, grand honours and the general conduct of the lodge?

References

The Freemason at Work by Harry Carr

Freemasons' Guide and Compendium by Bernard E. Jones