

Lodge Etiquette

by W.Bro. James A. Neal, PM

Masonic Etiquette

Learning Masonic Etiquette is a challenge for all Masons. The *Ahiman Rezon* (Thirtieth Edition) provides some guidance in Section II, "Concerning the Behavior of Free Masons as Members of a Lodge" on pages 178 – 180 and Chapter XXVII, "Of Rules of Order in a Lodge" on pages 834-835. The following is intended to provide Acacia Lodge Brethren with a quick overview of Masonic Etiquette drawn from these sections of the *Ahiman Rezon* and Lodge tradition.

The Worshipful Master's Authority:

A Masonic lodge is not a democracy. The Worshipful Master has the authority to:

- Rule any brother out of order on any subject at any time.
- Decide what can and cannot be discussed.
- Exclude any member guilty of indecorum from that communication.
- There is no appeal of a decision made by the Master except directly to the Grand Lodge.

Dress:

Brethren do not enter their Lodge room either without their apron nor while putting on their apron or even the tying of its strings. Aprons are worn outside of coats – not on the inside. As you visit other Lodges, you will notice that the dress code varies. Acacia Lodge #94 tends to be among the more traditional Lodges where it was once the code that everyone wore a coat and tie. This is still the standard at Acacia for officers on the nights that degree work is taking place. Shorts, t-shirts, cut offs, etc., while not forbidden are not considered respectful to the Lodge. As a general rule, when visiting another Lodge it is always safe to wear a coat and tie. If you find wearing a coat while visiting a Lodge not in character with the dress of others, then taking it off is just a matter of timing.

After the Lodge is opened:

- If a brother should enter the Lodge after the opening ceremony is under way, he should go to the Altar and give the customary salutes to the proper officer. First to the Worshipful Master, then the Senior Warden and last the Junior Warden. If he must leave before the meeting is over, the correct Masonic etiquette of his departure is that he should salute the Worshipful Master at the Altar before he departs. The salute should always be given properly and not in a careless or perfunctory manner. Entering or leaving during the conferring of degrees or balloting isn't done except at the natural "intermissions" which every Brother will recognize.
- Brethren do not pass between the Altar and the East when the lodge is open. As a courtesy to the Master, it is necessary that the Great Light which shines its eternal light and wisdom upon the Master to help him govern the Lodge should never be in shadow, not even for a millisecond, except during the processes of an initiation or degree work.
- The Master of the Lodge is always addressed as "Worshipful Master"; Past Masters can be addressed as "Worshipful Brother" or "Brother"; and elected Grand Lodge Officers including District Deputy Grand Masters as "Right Worshipful" with the exception of the Grand Master who is addressed as "Most Worshipful."
- One rap of the gavel by the Worshipful Master brings up a specific officer or Brother, two raps bring up all officers and three raps bring up all present. One rap seats everyone.
- No man sits while speaking in the Lodge room, no matter if he addresses an officer or another brother. All Lodge activity is based on each man in the Lodge as being a servant of the Brethren. This includes the Worshipful Master and his officers. While the man, himself, who has been elected Worshipful Master, does not gain any special honor, personally, as the Worshipful Master, it is to the Worshipful Master as the Master of the Lodge that a member stands to address. It is simply a form of respect ...and no different

- than attending a shareholder's meeting or a City Council meeting. It is expected that if you wish to address the audience, you will stand so all may see who is speaking.
- A good Mason does not talk while a degree is being conferred or during the work of the Lodge. Talking without asking to do so shows irreverence for the proceedings. Unless you have requested of the Master to speak, silence is the rule. This also means no whispering. If you have something of interest to say, raise your hand. When the Master recognizes you, you must stand up, and be recognized by the Master to speak.
 - Voting is mandatory: When an issue is put to a vote, all brethren present should vote. A Brother who does not vote is discourteous because he skews the ballot. He becomes the weak link in a strong chain. No matter what the reason of his non-vote, he injures the Lodge's ballot, its value and its secrecy. Failure to vote can injure a lodge's feeling of brotherhood, and by that injury, can injure the Masonic fraternity. No matter what reason you may privately hold about voting, it is poor Masonic Etiquette to fail to vote when requested to do so by the Master.
 - Prayers at lodge functions should be scrupulously in keeping with Masonic teachings. The Masonic Etiquette of offered prayers is that they should never be an expression of specific sectarian views or dogmatic creeds. It is a matter of courtesy that all prayers, speeches and discussions at Masonic affairs avoid sectarian, controversial or political tones. In the spirit of non-sectarianism, we must remember that since the day that our Creator found that Man created the Tower of Babel to glorify themselves; it is HE who changed man's language into the many diverse languages now spoken on Earth. In so doing, our Creator has many names across the world.
 - No private piques or quarrels about nations, families, religion or politics must be brought within the doors of the Lodge, as being directly contrary to the rules of the Order. Free Masons, as such, are of the catholic and universally acknowledged religions and of all nations.
 - Cell phones should be tuned off before entering the Lodge.
 - Smoking within the Lodge is not permitted.
 - On the Level: During the closing of the Lodge, all Brethren should be on the same level.