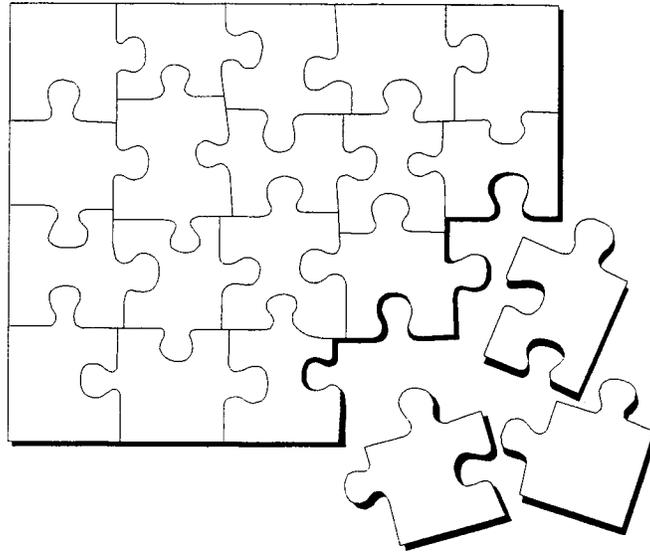


Continuing Masonic Education Series



Masonic Etiquette, Protocol, and Decorum

Compiled from various authoritative sources

by

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Grand Lodge A.F.& A.M. of Virginia

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PROTOCOL, ETIQUETTE & DECORUM (*Masonic Manners*)

Meaning of Masonic Etiquette:

Masonic Etiquette is, by definition, something that is not to be left to an individual to see or to carry out according to his own taste; he conforms to it because it was formally adopted by the group as a conventional requirement of acceptable polite behavior (whether he, personally, sees a good reason for doing so or not).

An act of Masonic etiquette is some movement, action, courteous gesture or speech performed at a given time and place, in a gentle, dignified manner, and according to a fixed rule, imposed by the Fraternity itself. Since the rules are for the good of the Craft as a whole, it affects each member.

An organization such as ours adopts these rules of behavior because we need them to carry out our good works in an atmosphere of harmony. They are not empty and meaningless, arbitrarily enacted and imposed for the mere sake of performing them. The precepts have been time-tested **AND** they work!!

Information on Masonic Etiquette:

If a Lodge Officer is in doubt about the correct form of etiquette for some particular occasion he has several authoritative sources of information upon which to draw. He should consult the Manual of Lodge Programs and Protocol, the Mentor's Manual, the Officers Manual, the Manual of Ceremonies or the Constitutions of Masonry. Or, he may confer with his older members, such as Past Masters, who usually have had experience of the kind needed on this occasion.

He may consult with the Grand Provost, members of the Committee on Masonic Education, or District Educational Officers. They have broad personal experience, familiarity with and ready access to several books on Masonic Etiquette. Sometimes these books may be too general in their treatment of certain topics and lack detailed explanations for specific application to a particular situation to be immediately useful. They are, nevertheless, valuable in providing general rules and principles which can be applied across the board.

The DEO can usually be counted upon to help identify the appropriate source of authoritative rule. In addition, he is acquainted with the "personality" of the District and can help you develop a suitable course of action.

He could confer with the Grand Lecturer, Division Lecturer, or District Instructor of Work. Though most of forms of etiquette are not confined to ritual - they belong to the same general field of study, and most experienced ritualists are also usually very well informed on the rules and customary application of etiquette, protocol and practical decorum.

Aged and Infirm:

If a member is infirm he should be assisted to enter the Lodge and to salute on the arm of the Junior Deacon; and if he requires it, a special chair or special seat should be provided for him. However, it is not fitting or proper to attract undue attention to his infirmity by paying him special heed, remarking on his presence, etc.

If an older member cannot attend Lodge, some mention of him should be occasionally made at a Communication and the Master should see to it that he is visited and otherwise reminded that he is present in the minds of his Brethren. A visitor should occasionally come to him as a Lodge emissary, speaking officially in its behalf, not as a private friend only, and for that reason should act as he would act in Lodge, and in Masonic decorum.

Altar:

In American Jurisdictions the Altar stands at the center of the Lodge room. It is a place of prayer, a pedestal that the Great Lights rest upon. The three Lesser Lights stand beside it; the obligation is taken in its presence; the Worshipful Master greets the Candidate across it; and it is, in addition, a symbol and emblem of religion. Members and visitors stand before it to salute the East when entering or leaving the Lodge. Masons, when near it, stand with dignity and act with reverence. It should not be draped or covered with flags, bunting, banners, or draperies of any kind which carry the insignia of any association other than the Lodge or Grand Lodge.

The Alter should be kept clean, its paint or varnish not marred, cracked or scratched. The top and kneeling pad, if upholstered, should never be allowed to become ragged, run-down or shabby. The ground between it and the East is a sacred

precinct which is not crossed by officers or members during Lodge Communications, except for the Deacons and Chaplain during certain ceremonies.

Anteroom:

The anteroom is a part of the Lodge room. It is not a separate place, therefore the decorum and etiquette of the Lodge room governs it too.

Since the Tiler is in charge of it, he is responsible to the Master to see that etiquette is observed. It should be clean and neat, with no litter lying about, the furniture in place, aprons correctly placed and stored, and nothing piled in it which does not belong there. Loud talking, joking, noise and needless moving about are considered inappropriate.

The Tiler should introduce himself to a visiting Brother the moment he enters the Anteroom, and should see to it that he has a

seat, if he must wait before entering the Lodge or while waiting for the examining committee. The door to the Lodge room is in the Junior Deacon's custody not the Tiler's; the Tiler should never open it or talk through it until after knocking.

When a member enters Lodge through the Anteroom after the Lodge is open he is to observe a Ceremony of Entrance, and this ceremony is initiated by the Tiler according to a fixed process, and the method is never altered for any member or officer.

Ballot:

The Ballot is secret, sacred, and inviolate. When a Ballot is taken the act is momentous for the Candidate and significant for the Lodge. It is an official act by each member in turn and by the Lodge as a legal body.

The Ballot has legal sanction and must be conducted according to solemn rules. It is etiquette for the Lodge Room to be in complete silence, without whispering, or discussion of the Candidate while waiting to cast your Ballot or any information about how a member has voted. The officers should remain at their stations and places in silence and dignity. Such of them as participate in spreading, inspecting, and declaring it, should act in strict decorum.

The period of etiquette and decorum doesn't end when you've cast your vote. It includes the declaration of the results by the Master, the restoration of the Ballot Box, and the return of the participating officers to their places.

Decorum:

It is difficult to establish a hard and fast line between etiquette and decorum. Both deal with propriety and good behavior. However, there is a sharp contrast between the focus and principles of the two.

In etiquette a Mason is controlled by rules of manner and behavior at certain times and places in which he has no voice because they are governed by Masonic Law and usage.

The principle of decorum stands at the opposite pole, for it includes manner and behavior in the Lodge room and our personal lives, as it is in each of us to decide and control. The essence of it lies in a Mason, when present in Lodge, not attracting undue attention to himself and not creating a disturbance.

Thus, it is etiquette to speak kindly to and about each other; and while that is an act of good manners, it is one required by the rules of the Fraternity. It is decorum not to whisper or in any way, disturb your neighbor during the conduct of business. That is good manners as required by a man's own sense of good taste and dignity. If he talks aloud, disturbing the Lodge, HE does it, and it is therefore for HIM not to. He must decide his own decorum in the same way that the Craft decides his etiquette.

There are points at which the two converge, such as when the Master must act to restore order and dignified behavior. He should reprove all disturbances quietly, promptly, without personal feeling, and attracting as little attention to the matter as possible. A glance of the eye or a soft tap of the gavel's handle is most often sufficient for the purpose.

District Deputy Grand Master:

A District Deputy on an official visit is received with an etiquette which reflects the fact that he is the personal representative of the Grand Master. When he is present in the Lodge room it is as if the Grand Master was there in person.

When he enters the Anteroom he announces his presence to the Tiler. The DDGM is not required to announce a visit in advance. It is a good practice, however.

A committee is formed to escort him into the Lodge. He is presented at the Altar and conducted to the East; Grand Honors are rendered; after which he receives the gavel. The Lodge is symbolically in his charge, until he returns the gavel and directs the Master to continue with his work.

- a. He is never permitted to seat himself on the sidelines, unless it is at his own (specific) request.
- b. A Master cannot fail in his practice of protocol if at all times he extends to the District Deputy the ceremonial forms that are established as proper and correct in his official dealings with the Grand Master.
- c. Proper deference to the DDGM includes allowing him the protocol of "final comment". No one should rise to speak on any issue after the DDGM has completed his prepared remarks. Worshipful Masters are reminded to encourage their members to make announcements from the sidelines before the DDGM speaks.

Distinguished Visitors:

If a visiting Brother unexpectedly arrives who, because of his title or standing in the Craft or some similar reason, is one that the Master desires to introduce to the Lodge, he may follow any of the following procedures.

- a. Have him presented at the Altar by a committee of his peers; ceremoniously conducted to the East and saluted. You may request that he be seated in the East.
- b. Instruct the Senior Deacon to conduct the visitor to the Altar and introduce him there (if he isn't a Past Master); after which he may be conducted to the East or back to his seat.
- c. Ask him to rise at his seat and introduce him to the Craft there, if he feels more comfortable that way.

Please remember that the Master must stand and remain standing until the completion of this ceremony if the Brother is a Past Master or holds title or office in a Grand Lodge.

In the Mentor's Manual, M.:W.: A. D. Smith, Jr., wrote that it is not proper to call upon the Senior Deacon to present guests who are Masters or Past Masters though some have confused one of the duties assigned to the Senior Deacon as being connected with the introduction of distinguished guests.

Dress:

Local custom governs good manners. In some geographic areas (and some Lodges), formal evening attire; in others, dinner jackets and black bow ties constitute formal dress. Some Lodges do not entertain a formal dress code (even for the officers corp).

In the summer season some Masters substitute an informal, but uniform manner of dress rather than wearing heavier winter-style clothes. In Lodges where homogeneous dress is expected and customary; it is the uniformity, rather than the style which establishes the dignified setting.

Uniformly dark outer clothing, a light colored (white preferable) shirt, and very dark tie is considered most appropriate for funerals.

Entrance During Meetings:

No member of the Lodge or visiting Brother should enter from the Preparation room. When entering from the Ante-room after Lodge is open he waits until signaled by the Tiler, steps through the door and advances to the Altar in due form; the Master acknowledges the salute. It is a ceremonious action on the side of both the Lodge and the Brother, and protocol requires that it be correctly performed. If a Brother ignores the formality, or is unfamiliar with it, the Senior Warden may whisper instructions in his ear for him to follow.

Etiquette Regarding Officers:

An office has a station or place of its own in the Lodge, with duties, responsibilities, and dignities inherent in it. The etiquette and protocol accorded to an officer represent the properties of the office, and is not directed to the officer personally.

A sloppy manner of saluting, of approaching the East (or any other station), of standing, and of speaking to an officer, is a reflection on the Lodge for a failure to give to the office that respect which belongs to it. If a Master exacts of every member, and

of every other officer, a faithful rendering of the form of etiquette that is to be accorded to his own office, it will create a more faithful observance of the form at every other station or place.

Examination of Visitors:

The substance of an examination is fixed by the Constitutions of Masonry and our Methodical Digest. The manner in which it is to be conducted is the focus of etiquette and protocol.

The Examining Committee withdraws with the visitor to a private place. They are in an official relationship with him and therefore their manners are formal.

They must keep in mind that their only purpose is to satisfy themselves that the visitor is, or is not, a Master Mason in good standing from a Regular Lodge holden under a Grand Jurisdiction with whom we are in amity. They are **NOT** called upon to test his proficiency in the ritual or to be personally inquisitive.

If the Examining Committee has the duty to satisfy itself that a visitor is a Master Mason in good standing in a Regular Lodge, the visitor also has a right to make sure that the Lodge he comes to visit is itself a Regular Lodge. He may, therefore, ask to see its charter. But what if the Lodge is already in session and the charter is hanging on the wall over the Secretary's desk??

It is etiquette to grant his request to see the charter; on the other hand it is also etiquette that we not disturb the Lodge by going to fetch it. In such a dilemma the etiquette of the Lodge should take precedence. The visitor should be told in a friendly manner, that if he wishes to examine the charter, he must come at another time, and before Lodge is opened.

If the visitor satisfies the committee, and if the visitor himself is satisfied, the visitor as yet possesses no right to enter until after the Worshipful Master has consented. The Committee should conduct the visitor to the Anteroom and introduce him to the Tiler who in turn ceremoniously hands him over to the Junior Deacon.

Visiting is a privilege, not a right (to seek to visit a Lodge is every Master Mason's right) and a Master may for good reasons of his own, refuse admittance to any visitor (except the DDGM and Grand Lodge Officers). If the Master does refuse, *Decorum* requires that he call the Senior Deacon to his side and privately instruct him to go to the Anteroom to instruct the Tiler not to admit the visitor.

A visitor may be refused admittance for reasons that do not reflect on him personally. Such an occasion might be when a particularly sensitive piece of Lodge business is about to be conducted or if a reprimand is to be administered.

Flag and Etiquette:

Guidelines associated with the care of our National Ensign are established by the government. The rules, as far as a Lodge is concerned, are simple and easy-to-follow.

If the Stars and Stripes on a staff is on the platform, in the East, it will be at the Master's right. If the flag of our Country is based on the Lodge floor, at the Master's left - which is on the right of the brethren. The Flag must never be used as a drape, a decoration, or an Altar covering. The flag is never dipped in salute to anyone. When rendering the pledge of allegiance ALL BRETHREN AND GUESTS face the flag, stand erect at the sign of fidelity. Citizens of the United States, alone, shall recite the Pledge.

Landmarks and Etiquette:

Before I'm taken to task by my Brethren, let me state at the outset that I know the Grand Lodge of Virginia has not adopted and published any single list or set of rules that are "labeled Landmarks." To me, however, a Landmark is some principle, law, or usage which belongs to Freemasonry and as such if it were to cease, Freemasonry would cease with it. Therefore, the phrase "observe the Ancient Landmarks" is, to me, another way of saying, "Do not act in such a way as to destroy Freemasonry." I believe that our "Landmarks" are enumerated. They are to be found in the Book of Constitutions adopted by Grand Lodge in the year 1791.

These "Landmarks" have a place in history. They focus on certain fundamental, ageless practices of ethical and moral behavior. There are some who say that Masonic etiquette, as a whole, is a basic principle and itself can be considered a Landmark. If etiquette were to drop out of Masonry, the Craft as we know it would deteriorate, disintegrate and in short order would cease to exist.

Letters to Grand Lodge Officers:

Protocol dictates that any correspondence intended for the Grand Master, District Deputy Grand Master, Grand Secretary, other Grand Lodge Officers, or Grand Lodge Committeemen in their official capacities, should be addressed in full and correct form. Even if a Grand Officer or Committeeman may be an intimate friend this rule is binding

because, since the letter calls for official action, it may be referred to other Grand Officers, may go into an official file, or may even appear afterwards in printed records, in which event personal familiarity is out of place.

It is a courtesy to a Grand Officer to include in the letter the writer's Lodge name and number, address, and also its District. Since there are many Lodges in our Jurisdiction, no one can be expected to carry each one etched in his memory. The letter should state the writer's own position in the Lodge, whether as a member, officer, past officer, or committeeman. To include such data in the correspondence may save the recipient the time and trouble to look it up. It makes a more prompt reply to your inquiry possible.

In some instances a letter addressed to the Grand Master or Grand Secretary may contain subject matter which will effect another Grand Officer or will be of special interest to him. In that event, send him a photo-copy. When this is done you should append a postscript to the letter to that effect, similar to: "A copy of this letter has been sent on this date to so-and-so." In like manner; If a member of a Lodge writes a letter in which the matter should, in courtesy, to be known by the Master, a copy is mailed to him and the fact is noted in a postscript on the original letter.

Master's Hat:

A hat is presented to the Worshipful Master during his Investiture as reminder to the Lodge that it his province, alone, to remain covered, while the rest of the Brethren remain uncovered during Lodge sessions and other ceremonial occasions. The origin of this beautiful tradition is said to have been founded upon the wearing of a crown by King Solomon as a visible mark of refined dignity and authority.

It is said, that the Master recognizes only three superiors; The Great Architect of the Universe, Death, and the Grand Master. He should always remove his hat during prayer, in the presence of death (including . announcements), and the Grand Master (or his Deputy).

The Master's hat should generally match his dress; formal (silk) hat for full dress, a Homburg style with a Tuxedo, and an ordinary hat for ordinary dress. Frivolous caps should never be worn.

Non-Masons at Masonic Affairs:

On Masonic occasions where non-Masons are invited, there are three rules of etiquette and protocol to be applied:

- a. Non-Masons are not asked or expected to participate in any ceremonies or formalities which are themselves Masonic.
- b. The non-Masons are present as guests; the Masons are the hosts; the guest-host relationship is therefore observed.
- c. There are some usages of etiquette which belong to esoteric Masonry and are never employed when non-Masons are present.

Other usages are not esoteric and as such may be employed as are appropriate, at the discretion of the Worshipful Master. The order-of-precedence protocol observed during Masonic processions, for example, are non-esoteric and may be used when non-Masons are present and at a Masonic banquet when ladies are guests.

Objections From the Floor:

If a Lodge member believes that he has good cause to object to something that is occurring, or believes that something said or done wrongs himself or another, or questions the appropriateness or legality of something said or done, there is a specific way that rules of Masonic Etiquette and the practice of decorum would have him act:

- a. He rises and salutes the Master.
- b. He waits until the Master recognizes him.
- c. He states his objection, criticism, etc., in as few words as possible.
- d. He salutes and is seated.
- e. The Master makes a reply or takes action.
- f. The proceedings are resumed.

In any event it is not for the member himself to decide or to take action, for that belongs to the Master. He merely states his objection and does not elaborate or

discuss it, unless requested to do so by the Master. The member himself is finished with the episode when he has spoken and re-seated himself.

Past Masters:

In many societies an office holder reverts to the same status at the end of his term which he had before. The rule in Masonry is different. A Lodge member who has held the highest office in the Lodge has for life a Masonic position of his own. It has its own identity and recognition and carries with it the title of "Past Master." Past Masters have a standing in Masonic Law; certain duties may be assigned to them. In etiquette they are entitled to a deference which belongs to their position; in protocol they are entitled to a specific order of lineal precedence.

On their own part, Past Masters are bound to the same rules of etiquette that is observed toward the Worshipful Master by all other members of the Lodge.

Preparation Room:

The preparation room is a sanctuary for the Candidate and the officers preparing him. It is necessary that it be closed-in and that its privacy is strictly preserved. It is a breach of good manners for the candidate to be under view or made the subject of unkind remarks. The officers preparing him act with dignity and are not expected to discuss with him anything in the Degree he is being prepared for.

It is proper to review any Degrees that he has already taken and coach him to respond to questions in the same form and tense that they are asked. For example; "Is it,etc.? Answer "It is." ; "Do you ,....etc.? Answer "I do," Instead of "yes, sir" and "no, sir" which in Lodge sounds unsuitably trite.

Quiet in Lodge:

When during its proceedings a Lodge is disturbed by any officers or members who are conversing, rattling papers, etc., the Master gives a light tap of his gavel and asks for quiet. If the proceedings are necessarily brought to a standstill, until something necessary to the proceedings has been done, and the Master sees that the wait will last for some period of time, he may tap his gavel and say, "Be at your ease". In that event, and no other case is private conversation, roving about, informal visiting, etc., within the bounds of propriety and decorum.

Rebuke:

If it ever becomes necessary for a Master to rebuke a member who has been unruly, he may do so after Lodge is closed, in person, and in private. If it is required that a rebuke be administered while the Lodge is in session, the method to be used is at the Master's discretion but, the etiquette required of him is that he shall deliver it in a friendly, even-handed manner. Decorum dictates that it shall be dispensed in a way that will not attract undue attention to the matter or create an additional disturbance.

Ritual Etiquette:

The etiquette governing the conferral of Degrees is strict. There shall be no talking, whispering, or laughing, or any disturbances during the Degree work. It is not an occasion for mirth. There should be no needless moving about. The officers participating shall never step out of their roles, to hold conversations, to make private remarks, to indulge in pantomime, or to make comments about the candidate.

Nothing outside the Standard Work taught by the Grand Lodge Committee on Work shall be substituted for any portion of it. If costumes are worn they must be correct and appropriate. Detailed arrangements are always completed before the Degrees begin and not improvised while the Degree is in progress.

Speaker in the Lodge:

If a speaker comes a long distance and appears at the request of the Lodge, the Master should ensure that he is met at the airport, train or bus, or at some specified time and place if he comes in his own car; that he is called for and conducted to the Lodge; and that he is comfortably seated in the Lodge.

He should be introduced by the Master, and such information shall be given about him as will make the Lodge to feel acquainted with him before he begins his address. The Master, or some officer designated by him, should remain at his side after Lodge is closed. He should be escorted to his hotel, train, or to his car if he came that way.

If he has training aids or other baggage he should be given assistance transporting them. At that or a subsequent meeting the Lodge should adopt a suitable resolution of thanks, a copy of which should be mailed to him by the Secretary.

Titles (Forms of Address):

In most Grand Jurisdictions there are one or two common variants of the uses of Masonic titles; the correct form for a particular Grand Jurisdiction can be found in its Proceedings, usually under the heading "Roster of Officers". In the majority of Grand Jurisdictions the titles run as follows:

- a. The Grand Master has the title of "Most Worshipful". This is written or printed in full, or may be abbreviated in the form "M:.W:.". A Grand Master in this Jurisdiction is not addressed Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the State of Virginia; but as Grand Master of Masons IN the State of Virginia.
- b. A Past Grand Master has the same title. Care should be given to the form used during introductions. He can be introduced as Past Grand Master of Masons in Virginia. But, if there are other Past Grand Masters present, he should be addressed as "Most Worshipful (full name), Grand Master of Masons in the year 19xx". Don't fall into the inadvertent trap of saying, "M:.W:.. (full name) Past Grand Master in the year 19xx". Why?? Because that was the year he was our Grand Master. He didn't earn the status of Past Grand Master until his successor was duly elected and installed!
- c. The same principles apply when referring to or addressing Worshipful Masters or appointed DDGMs.

The Master's official title is "Worshipful Master". The whole, correct title is always used to address him (or refer to him, when speaking to others). It is a recognized, official title, and wherever he goes (even in another Jurisdiction) is entitled to recognition. His title gains him unchallenged admittance to the floor when his Grand Lodge is in Annual Communication. If he visits another Lodge, he receives deference due his rank.

Every Mason carries the title "Brother". This title is employed in Lodge whenever a Mason is addressed or referred to. It is considered a MAJOR breach of manners and propriety to address or refer to him as "Mr. Blank", or "Blank".

Supplementary Notes:

1. If the Master of a Lodge is a member of a body in another Rite (the Royal Arch, Consistory, etc.) his Masonic title has no precedence. But, accepted ceremonial forms

established as correct in official dealings among Masonic organizations (i.e., protocol) indicate that the courtesy should be extended.

2. The converse is also true, when the Presiding Officer of a body in another Rite visits a Craft Lodge or when he sits in it as a member. Although his title has no official standing, the application of warm Masonic protocol requires his "proper" title should be used, as a practice of good manners, when introductions are made.

3. In polite society, a sensitive person does not use his Title when referring to *himself* orally or when writing a letter. It is not `Good Form` for an individual to refer to himself in a lofty manner. For example, a Past Grand Master never refers to himself (or sign his letters) as `Most Worshipful", He appends his rank (PGM). It also follows that the Complimentary Close of a letter signed by a PDDGM who was elected Secretary of his Craft Lodge would probably read:

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

Sam C. Strainer, PDDGM
Secretary

4. The same philosophy is applied to the Master's Office. His `Earned Title' is Worshipful Master - But, he'd feel uncomfortable calling himself `Worshipful.' The Complimentary Close of a letter or a Lodge Bulletin signed by the Worshipful Master could probably read:

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

Hiram O. Tyre
Master - 1999

Unusual Lodge Circumstances:

An unprecedented situation may suddenly arise in any Lodge. The Master may be caught unprepared by a condition that he and the Lodge had not encountered before, and not know of any pre-set rule to go by. In most instances etiquette is not involved. In some, etiquette is the substance of the matter.

Let's suppose that you have a visitor from another Grand Jurisdiction, where Lodge customs differ radically from our own, and the visitor does something or says something unexpected.

In that event the Master does not first address himself to the visitor but to his members. He explains to them that the visitor is acting according to the rules or customs in fashion in his own Jurisdiction. By indirection, he makes it clear to the visitor in what way he has acted uncommonly in this Lodge.

Note: IF THE VISITOR ISN'T AT FAULT, WE SHOULDN'T EMBARRASS HIM. IT IS THE AIM OF ETIQUETTE NOT TO EMBARRASS HIM!!

Once in a while a particularly sensitive, unprecedented condition may arise. In these cases there is a general principle for the Master to apply. He stops the proceedings where they are and addresses himself to the Lodge. He may:

- a. Ask them to be at ease for a short time, and take the needed opportunity to quietly reflect on the situation;
- b. Call a member to his side for private consultation;
- c. Call off, if more time is needed; or,
- d. If appropriate, assign the problem to a committee for research and concrete recommendations.

Only after he has sorted through all the facts, explores the possible solutions and weighs them carefully to determine their long-term consequences, he will make and announce his decision.

Visiting the Sick:

Expression of good Masonic etiquette is not limited to assemblies of the Craft. Certain etiquette belongs to the individual Mason:

For example; when a Mason visits a Brother who is ill, or infirm, or for other reasons is confined to his home.

- a. He will ask for permission in advance, in order to make sure of not arriving at an inconvenient time;
- b. Will present himself as coming from the Lodge;

- c. Will begin by bringing greetings of the Lodge; and
- d. Will adapt the length of his visit and nature of his talk to information received from the family.

There need be no report made of the visit to the Lodge unless the Brother visited requests there be, or the visitor believes the Lodge is entitled to news or may wish to tender some official act of courtesy.

Worshipful Master and Etiquette:

The Worshipful Master is the officer whose first duty it is to see that nothing is ever allowed to harm the Lodge which is entrusted to his care. For that reason he cannot tolerate a careless practice of etiquette. If, upon coming to the East, a Master finds that indifference to, or a casual practice of etiquette has crept into the Lodge he should find an early opportunity to address the subject with his officers and members.

What is the place of Masonic etiquette in the Craft? It has no SPECIAL place! It has every special place! It is ALWAYS observed whenever or wherever Masons assemble, or speak, or act in the name of the Craft! For that reason it is described as "Masonic". If it belonged to the Ritual of the Degrees a Master might conceive it to lie outside the span of his responsibility, and hold that it is only in the care of the Grand Lodge or Grand Officers; but it is in the ritual as elsewhere and in no sense peculiar to the Ritual alone.

The Grand Lecturer, the Grand Provost, and their Committees may consult and advise concerning a Lodge's practice of etiquette, but they cannot interfere. The Worshipful Master has full responsibility for etiquette, as he has total charge of all things in the Lodge. And, like all leaders, the W:.M:. may delegate authority, but the responsibility resides with him alone. Our Brother, Harry S. Truman, said it best, "The buck stops here!!"

The Worshipful Master is Master of the Lodge's etiquette in the same sense that he is Master of the Lodge. It is as much his duty to govern the Lodge in etiquette as in its business, its balloting, its debate, its conferring of Degrees.

Notes: