

MOUTH TO EAR

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(From The Scottish Rite Journal)

In 1946, I traveled with a friend down to a little town called Abingdon, Virginia, to see what the Barter Theater had to offer. It offered nothing except hard work and board. My friend, not accepting the work they offered him, stayed one day - I stayed five years. In that time I grew to love the town and all it offered. The people, in particular, were simply marvelous.

Occasionally I would be assigned to go down to the printing shop and get posters made for the upcoming shows at the Barter Theater. One day, in talking to the owner of the print shop, one Elmo Vaughan, I found that he belonged to the local Masonic Lodge, No. 48, in Abingdon. My father was also a Mason and had advanced to the Thirty-second Degree in Scottish Rite Masonry, and I told this to Elmo. He was pleased, and sensing his pleasure, I asked him if maybe I could join. He said nothing, continuing his work, and a short while later, I took my posters and left.

The next time I saw Elmo, I asked him again about joining the Masonic Order - again he said nothing - and again my work took me away. We became good friends and finally one day I passed by and again I asked if I could join the Masons. Instantly, he whipped out an application and I hurriedly filled it out. I didn't learn 'til later, that in those days, you had to ask three times.

I was thrilled! Not only was I going to be the first actor ever in Lodge No. 48, but I could just imagine my father's surprise when I would spring the old greetings on him! I wanted only to surprise my Dad - and was I surprised, when after I was made an Entered Apprentice, I found I had to remember everything that happened to me at that event and come back and answer questions about it!

I was assigned to a dear old man of about 92 years of age who, I felt, must have been there when the Lodge first started. He was really of the old school - and he started me out with the foot-to-foot, knee-to-knee and mouth-to-ear routine of teaching.

Besides doing my work for the Barter Theater and a little acting to boot, I was also going to that dear Brother for my work in Masonry. I would tramp all over those lovely hills and work on my "Whence came you's" and one day - oh, one fine day - I stood foot-to-foot with my Brother and answered every question perfectly! I was ecstatic! I was overjoyed and couldn't wait to get to Lodge to show my ability as an Entered Apprentice.

After I quieted down, that dear Brother said, "You've done fine, but aren't you really only half started?" I couldn't believe him! I knew my work; what else was there? He said "Wouldn't it be better if you knew all the questions too?"

I couldn't believe my ears! All that hard work and only half done? He gently sat me down foot-to-foot, knee-to-knee and mouth-to-ear and taught me all the questions. That didn't come easy, because I was almost doing the work by rote, but with careful listening and by really applying myself, I was soon able to deliver all the questions and answers perfectly! The night that I stood in front of the Lodge and was asked if I

were ready to answer the questions of an Entered Apprentice, I respectfully asked if I could do both - questions and answers. I was granted that wish and later found that I was the second man in my Lodge to have ever done so! I am truly proud of that, never having demitted, I am still a member in good standing in Abingdon Lodge No. 48.

I tell this story not for the merit it might gain me, but to tell you that learning the Entered Apprentice obligation taught me a great lesson in acting as well: that before I ever attempt to do a part I should work, rehearse, feel, almost live that part to know what I am talking about!

As I've advanced in Masonry, I have found we are an elite group of people who believe in God, country, family and neighbors. We work hard to help our fellowman; and through our charitable work, such as support for the Childhood Language Disorders Centers, we have made it possible to help many children grow into good American citizens. We should always be proud of the Order we belong to. Where in all the world do you find so many great men and Brothers who have helped the whole wide world? But - we are hiding our light under a bushel basket!

Recently I attended a dinner for a friend, and I ran across a Brother who identified himself in a hushed voice. I asked why he spoke in a whisper when talking about Masonry, and suddenly I realized he wasn't the only one who had ever done that. I speak out loud about Masonry to everyone! I'm proud of the fact that I belong to an organization that made me a better American, Christian, husband and neighbor; and all it took was a little self-determination by going foot-to-foot, knee-to-knee, and mouth-to-ear!

[RAH note: This article took my attention as soon as I read it and believe it can be an excellent tool when working with our candidates and their proficiencies. When our Lodge presents a copy of The Craft And Its Symbols to a newly initiated Brother, a copy of "Mouth To Ear" will be included. It should be an inspiration to the candidate while learning his work. Suggest that you use this when contacting Brothers who are lax in learning their work. Also suggest making copies for the candidates coaches in your Lodge so they can make them available to their candidates. And I also suggest, for a better appearance, deleting this paragraph before reproducing.]