

Etiwan Lodge No. 95 AFM  
Mt. Pleasant, SC

23 February, 2014

Brethren,

Since recently returning from the Master's Workshop in Columbia, I have been giving constant thought to the lessons learned and how they apply to our fine lodge. One of the more frequent messages given throughout the work shop – and in particular from by Grand Master – was that of strengthening our lodges and maintaining peace and harmony.

My Brothers, we are a historic lodge of approximately 300 brethren that has existed for nearly 155 years. Surviving wartime (both home and abroad), natural disasters and the tests of time, we have endured with impressive numbers in our ranks, but names in a ledger alone do not a strong lodge make. While we have nearly 300 names on our roster, we are fraternally meeting and working together at a (small) fraction of those numbers – perhaps 12 to 20 on any given meeting night. While there are many factors that play into the limitations of active membership – age, health, relocation, employment and other extenuating issues, there is one in particular that stands out to me as a hurdle that can be effectively overcome – disharmony.

It is my understanding – both through direct interaction and hearsay of issues past - that some Brethren may not be actively attending Lodge due to disharmony. My Brothers, we are all human and as such subject to the will of our emotions. I myself have a hard time 'letting go' of times past in my personal life when I felt I was wronged and though I still struggle with it from time to time, I have also realized that the one who suffers most from my holding onto resentment is in fact, me. Whether real or perceived, when a person feels they have been wronged, it creates a wrinkle in the fabric of harmony. This wrinkle can become a significant tear, but even a tear can be mended.

One of the many blessings we have as humans is that of choice. We can choose to harbor anger and frustration, or we can choose to forgive or at least accept and move forward. As Mason's we are taught the tenants of brotherly love and affection. We are also taught to assist a brother in need and to help aid a reformation when warranted. Sometimes that reformation takes on the form of forgiveness or acceptance on our part.

Time is fleeting my Brothers and we are a fraternity of strong men bound by strong ties. While we cannot force another man to do anything, we can force ourselves to do something. There are many Brothers out there – from recently raised Master Masons who are in search of education and light, to seasoned Past Masters and Brothers who, while still searching for more light, have a tremendous amount of light to share. We need to be taking advantage of the precious moments afforded to us at our meeting times (and beyond) to come together and strengthen our bonds, improving not only ourselves, but assisting in the betterment of everyone we touch.

Being a part of this ancient institution is not a right, but rather an honored privilege. We have all taken the same obligations as many great men have before us and since – both famous and obscure, rich and poor, with the same understanding – we are Brothers, meeting on the level, squaring our actions with Brotherly love and affection, obligated to supporting and assisting each other however we can.

I have been a very proud Master Mason and member of Etiwan Lodge No. 95 since being raised on Saturday, 07 November, 2009. I was blessed with the opportunity to move right into the chairs and am honored to have been elected to serve as your Worshipful Master for the year 2014 AD / 6014 AL.

Whether this is your home lodge or your affiliate lodge, let us be mindful that this is our time, my Brethren, to take up the charge, reinforce the lodge, reach out to our Brothers and ensure we are each doing our part today and for future generations of Mason's within the hallowed walls of Etiwan Lodge No. 95.

I ask that we each take a moment to reflect and rekindle the fire within us for active participation in our great lodge. We get from Masonry that which we give and while it is my goal to provide as much to each of you as I can this year (and beyond), there is so much light that I am still in need of (as is every member of this lodge) – and each of you possesses some of that. Together, we can collectively make a difference in ensuring that our Lodge represents the epitome of what Masonry is all about.

Respectfully and Fraternally,

Robert (Bob) Heck, Jr. WM