

# Philippine Freemasonry for 1966-67

[Condensed from the address of our M.W. Raymond E. Wilmarth, Grand Master, at the Scottish Rite Luncheon, May 21, 1966]

We concluded on April 28, 1966, the Fiftieth Annual Communication of the most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons in the Philippines. During the twelve months that will follow, Philippine Freemasonry will be guided by the Grand Lodge Officers recently elected and installed. Today I shall briefly present to you some of the objectives we hope to achieve and some of the guidelines we expect to establish for our Symbolic Lodges. Of course we must all bear in mind one fundamental thought: *We can never accomplish anything in this world if we don't start doing something and we can't expect to get anything accomplished once we start working on it, unless everyone works together for the common goal.*

Therefore, the basis of our Philippine Freemasonry for 1966-67 will be coordinated positive action.

Throughout the Philippines and the Far East areas served by the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons in the Philippines, there are one hundred thirty-eight symbolic Lodges composed of over eleven thousand Master Masons who are eager to work, if properly directed by our Masonic leaders. Investigations conducted by Grand Jurisdictions throughout the world consistently report that decreases in Masonic attendance and membership have generally resulted from loss of interest occasioned by Masonic inactivity in the Symbolic Lodge. It is clearly

evident that if a Lodge offers nothing to attract new members or to hold the attendance of its regular members, it will decline and eventually fade into darkness. If we are to spread light and truth, we must first of all insure that our leaders are imbued not only with the light and truth to spread, but with the will and energy to spread it.

Officers should be elected for their Masonic leadership - not their popularity, station in life, or affluence. Committees should be chairmanned by energetic workers who know how to make others work with a smile, and like it. Committees should be staffed with members who think of Masonry first and their personal convenience later.

In the Grand Lodge the elected Grand Officers have been meeting nearly every afternoon from 4:30 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. working out the appointments to the Grand Lodge committees.

The appointments this year are the coordinated results of the deliberation of all the elected Grand Lodge Officers.

*The administration of the Grand Lodge will be by all its elected Grand Lodge officers, under the direction of its Grand Master. Unless we project an image of unified, direct, positive action at the Grand Lodge level, we cannot expect to inspire the same in our Symbolic Lodges. As others see us, so shall we be known by them.*

The first regular meeting of the Board of General Purposes was held on May 12, 1966, in the Plaridel Masonic Temple. On that occasion I presented the Board with the following four matters to resolve:

1. One of the greatest problems facing our Lodges and the Grand Lodge is the raising of funds to support our programs and projects. These cannot be supported from contributions of the Brethren alone. Like parish churches, our Lodges must engage in some kind of fund raising activities such as rummage sales, bake-outs, bingo, etc. The problem for the Board to solve is, What can the Lodge do to raise funds that will not be in violation of our constitution?

2. A study of our jurisdiction will show the great need for new Lodges in many areas and perhaps too many overlapping Lodges in other areas, like Manila. We want more Lodges but only *strong, self-supporting Lodges* that can help the Grand Lodge spread Masonry. We need to determine how many of our weak Lodges can become strong and self-supporting and we should determine what Lodges should join together with other Lodges to make a strong Lodge, where the separate weak Lodges cannot survive on their own.

3. It is no secret that some of our Brethren are elected to office in a Lodge and become installed on the basis of Certificates of Proficiency when in fact the Brother is not proficient in accordance with our constitutional requirements.

We need to have this matter thoroughly considered and a definite recommendation from the Board as to whether or not present proficiency requirements for Lodge Officers should be enforced or revised, and if the recommendation is to enforce them, a further recommended plan to bring



*Grand Master Wilmarth addressing Scottish Rite Luncheon.*

the proficiency standards of incumbent Symbolic Lodges up to the proficiency standards that may be recommended by the Board.

4. The sources of income of the Grand Lodge are very limited. The expenses of operating the Grand Lodge are becoming increasingly greater each year. Some detailed plan must be developed for forward planning so that our Grand Lodge can effectively discharge its responsibilities and obligations. One of the greatest expense items is transportation of Grand Lodge Officers to attend installation ceremonies of provincial Lodges, another is special travel of Grand Lodge officers on specific events. We need a complete study of our program for Grand Lodge visitations, paying more attention to travel for Grand Lodge Lecturers of the Craft than for ceremonial purposes.

This is an illustration of how we expect to utilize the Board for General Purposes during our Masonic Year 1966-1967. Incidentally, I have informed MV Cervantes, PGM, President of the Board, that I have at least nine other matters which I shall refer to the Board in successive months.

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## PHILIPPINE FREEMASONRY...

(From page 4)

We shall be concerned with our youth especially in the year to come. Every day we read of the great problems of juvenile delinquency and control of the younger generation that are facing government officials. These problems have become so great, many parents have become disillusioned as to the future for their children. As Masons, we have been concerned with this problem for years, because we realize today's youth is tomorrow's Masons.

We shall constitute, through our Committee on Youth, a coordinating body with the positive mission of developing youth activities that will attract and inspire youths to expend their energies in constructive and self-improving endeavors, with the ultimate aim of creating within these young men and women an intense sense of pride and accomplishment in doing good. This will take time. This will take patience. Most of all, it will take the cooperative effort of Lodge and family for the coming year. I would like every Lodge to consider the youth of today, as a priority among their projects for community assistance.

Closely akin to the problem of youth is the problem of the increase in crime. Since our Masonic Brotherhood is a Fraternity of men, it cannot disassociate itself from the vital problems of men. Crime is one such vital problem.

Masonry can be a strong aid in every community in its fight against crime. It possesses the organization throughout the Philippines by which the nation can be united in its crusade against crime. Every Lodge can create an anti-crime committee to work with the local authorities in re-

ducing crime within their jurisdictions.

I look for our Committee on Education and Public Service to develop and coordinate our efforts to assist law enforcing agencies suppress crime.

From time to time we are asked: What is Freemasonry? What is its function?

I tried to answer that question in my address in Dumaguete City at the Convention of Visayan Masonic Lodges on January 8, 1966, when I explained:

"According to the ancient charges Freemasonry offers itself as the center of union between good men and true, and the happy means of conciliating friendship amongst those who must otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance. Freemasonry has survived centuries of changes in culture and political forms of government and has withstood persistent attacks from multitudes of uninformed and misinformed critics. The fact that Freemasonry has survived under these circumstances is ample evidence that it does serve an important purpose in the lives of men; most certainly those men who have embraced it and have remained active in it."

We shall encourage our Lodges to develop leaders with the vision to see and the courage to act for God, country, and our Order.

Our Philippine history is filled to overflowing with accounts of heroism and sacrifice of Masons who have arisen from the solemnity of their Lodge rooms to lead their Brothers to victory in the cause of freedom from tyranny and oppression.

Each year passes putting deeper away in the archives of time the actual events that made the history of this glorious land. We must not be so engrossed in progress that we forget

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the sacrifices of those who have made this progress possible.

Our Program Committee has been given the task of preparing suitable events and activities to keep before the eyes of our countrymen and alive within the hearts of all, the memory of those Filipino Masons and their deeds.

In the year 1966-1967, Philippine Freemasonry will observe the holidays of all Masonic Heroes and establish a pattern throughout our Lodges to be followed in the years to come.

In the few weeks that have passed since our recent Communication we have received two petitions for dispensations to open new Lodges. Our policy is to grant dispensations for new Lodges only when it is clearly evident that the new Lodge is financially capable to successfully meet its obligations, that its operation will not draw members from other Lodges thus weakening our present organization, and that the opening of the new Lodge will definitely increase the actual number of Master Masons, thus truly expanding Masonry in the Philippines.

And while we are considering the subject of new Lodges let us at the same time consider new members for our Craft. We want many new Master Masons just like we want many new Lodges. But we want true Masons — Masons who will make our Lodges strong and carry the Masonic way of life to every remote part of the Philippines. *We want Masons who want to be Masons in deed as well as in name.*

When I look at the map of the Philippines in our Grand Secretary's office, I see many black dots indicating Lodges in Manila and in other cities. But there are still many provinces without a single Lodge. To

me, this is a most serious objective for the year 1966-1967: to open at least one Symbolic Lodge in each province where there is none today.

How are we going to interest good men to join our Fraternity? There is only one Masonically lawful way. We must project a favorable image that will create a desire in the hearts of good men to be one of us. How can that be done? By showing your community that Masonry is a good institution to be a member of and that membership in it will bring to the member the respect and admiration of his neighbors.

In the May issue of the Cable Tow the Grand Master's Message distinguishes between Attainable Objectives which can easily be accomplished by the average Lodge and those far reaching objectives that may never be reached by some. It points out how a Lodge can take a positive step forward in its community by just a little plain hard work.

In September 1964, a conference of District Deputy Grand Masters was held in the Plaridel Masonic Temple. To my mind this was one of the most significant Masonic achievements of recent years. We shall have such a conference some time in October or November. It has been suggested that instead of having one in Manila, that we have two: One in Manila for Districts in the Northern Philippines and another in Cebu for Districts in the Southern Philippines. Either plan will bring together our most valuable contacts with the Symbolic Lodges where mutual problems can be discussed and everyone can contribute to the solutions. Working in unity and harmony is essential for any society of men, especially of ours.

I like to listen to the old timers talk. They speak of the good old days when

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Masonry really meant something to its members. They recall how difficult it was for them to travel miles to stated meetings when there was no modern transportation, but how proud they were to overcome the odds. They describe the dignified appearance of the Lodges when all wore coats and ties and some Lodges required formal attire, black tie and tails. They recount the pride taken in the ritualistic work and how keen was the competition for perfection.

When I hear these stories told I wonder what can we do to bring back that kind of Masonry? Can't we reorient the thinking of modern Brethren? Perhaps we have developed a new set of values over the years. In many ways this may spell progress, but in some it may mean departing from our Masonic way of life.

There are some things that are fundamental to Masonry that just can't be changed, if Masonry is to go on living. They are as essential to Masonry as breathing is to man. And there are other things which have always distinguished the true Mason, but which have not been practised by all. It is in this latter area that we must concentrate our efforts to return to tradition. We have made Masonry too easy to obtain and too comfortable to enjoy in recent years. In many cases it has become commonplace and monotonous. We must endeavor to break the monotony of our ways and inject an incentive for reviving the old standard of Masonic interest. Whatever the old timers had, we must have lost. I certainly hope that during the coming year we can regain some of it.

Freemasonry in the Philippines for 1966 and 1967 must meet the challenge of the times squarely, and as it

has in centuries past, rise to the occasion and maintain for the world liberty, equality and fraternity. In all parts of the world there are menacing elements that would strip mankind of these basic civil rights. These are the enemies of democracy and the foes of Freemasonry. We must stand united against any infringement upon these basic rights of free men and be prepared to render service to God, country and our Order as may be needed.

Our Grand Lodge possesses a unique organizational coverage of the Philippines and the Far East. It can be adapted to and used for the illumination of the citizenry — if our Brethren will only feel the urge — accept the call — rise to the occasion. It is quite wonderful to think about the many things that can be done throughout the Philippines by our Lodges. It far better to start doing them.

Let us then, my Brethren, join together in making Freemasonry in the Philippines for 1966-1967 an active, constructive, progressive, dynamic Masonry. Let us breathe life into our Masonry so that we may feel the pleasure of living as Masons. Let us make our Lodges places of harmony and temples of inspiration that the world may know us for what we are. And let our emblem, the Square & Compass become known throughout the world for what it really is: the symbol of brotherly love, relief and truth. For these are the three grand principles on which our Order is founded and it is on these same principles that our Freemasonry in the Philippines will continue, not only in 1966-1967, but throughout the centuries yet to come. △