

WB Robert P. O'Brien (142) •

Address delivered as Grand Orator at the Regional Grand Lodge Communication, May 27, 1967, Machinato Masonic Temple, Naha, Okinawa.

My brethren, within the hallowed walls of Masonic Temples have trod great men of all the ages — King Solomon, Napoleon, George Washington, General Aguinaldo and many others too numerous to mention. The Tea Rebellion in America was planned and led by Masons; the freedom of the Philippines was planned and led by Masons. Yes, brethren, great moments in history were inspired by our Masonic ancestors. The history of Masonry throbs with great events, great names and great deeds. Within the tiled walls of Masonic Lodges, history was conceived and great men met to share the fraternal brotherhood that is the mystic cement of Freemasonry. Picture to yourself the thrill it would be if you could sit in Lodge with a Washington, a Napoleon or an Aguinaldo. Ask yourself then these questions, "Are there any great figures in my Lodge?" and, "Are there any great events transpiring within my Lodge today?" If the answer to these questions is "no", then I would ask "Why?"

I have come to the sad conclusion that Masonry today is becoming too matter-of-fact and too humdrum. We are allowing it to degenerate into a Masonic version of a high school play — ill-rehearsed and lacking in the warmth, the depth and the realism of professionalism. We are satisfied with performance that is less than adequate to express the glorious lessons we are trying to teach or to capture the mystic beauty of the ritual. To mouth the words, to follow the prescribed floorwork is accepted as

satisfactory by too many Masons.

To attract and hold the type of men that Masonry needs to exert its proper influence on the world community, we must recapture its magic. The ceremonies of each degree must be performed with an eye to the beauty of the work and an ear to the meaning of the ritual. It must reach beyond the mind of the candidate into his soul and the fibers of his being. It must inspire him with a burning desire to learn, to advance, to teach, to practice, and yes, to preach Masonry. It must dominate his thoughts so that its influence reaches into his family life, his business life, his community life and his religious life. It must arouse him from the lethargy that the routine of modern civilization imposes upon us all.

For Masonry to have its proper and intended impact upon the community, each Mason must take an active part in community affairs. He must volunteer and be in the forefront of all activities so that the teachings of Masonry may be impressed upon the uninformed — not by his stating them — but, rather by his living them. The light that Masonry can throw upon the problems of the world must not be buried beneath the bushel of false modesty of a Mason or the prohibition against advertising the charitable intent of Masonry. While a Masonic Lodge is limited in the extent and type of charity it may extend, there is no limit on the individual Mason. He should not hide his charity under the cover of false modesty, but

Turn to next page

rather parade it proudly before the world so that the light from his acts of brotherly love may shine upon the ornaments of Masonry and rekindle the luster past generations have lavished upon them.

There must be complete brotherly love — for every sect, every race and in every clime. This is still blighted by the minority in Masonry; that, blinded by the passions of their inheritance refuse to recognize all men as brothers. This senseless passion — which our nation is trying desperately to overcome — gives a falseness to the brotherly love we profess and mocks the words of our ritual. It cheapens the greatest of our truly Masonic ornaments and by association, places all Masons in the footsteps of a hypocrite. Surely the teachings of Masonry — to circumscribe our passions, to square our actions and to make true friendship exist when it might not otherwise have existed — are hollow mockeries if the hand that is extended in brotherly love to the world withdraws upon the sight of the Negro hand. When we yield ourselves up to this false pride which leads us to believe that we are God's chosen few and these others are outcasts of His world, then we are not only less than Masons, we are less than men. This slanted outlook upon the world, this stain in the cornea of the great window of Masonry is a blight that must be healed. It must be healed today — not next year or next generation. It must be healed before the great light of Masonry can truly shine before the world.

There is also a need for Masonic education. A need which has been pointed out by our Grand Lodge and by distinguished Masons throughout the world. It is a need that is supported by the Grand Lodge and for which special publications have been made available. It is a need which we all recognize and yet a need that

is still not satisfied. We have within this distinguished body many eminent Masons — Past Masters and holders of many distinguished offices. It is my belief that it is from this body that the education process must emanate. I would propose to this body that it establish a monthly fraternal education meeting. A meeting at which all Masons may gather to eat together, to talk together, with appropriate speakers to expound upon Masonic subjects and to be followed by question and answer periods and lively discussion. This would provide an atmosphere of oneness among all Masons on Okinawa and would best utilize the talents available on Okinawa to accomplish a most urgent and necessary task. These meetings would also free the Masters of the Lodges so that they could concentrate upon the ritual and floorwork to insure the beauty and harmony of each degree conferred. Somewhere in the busy schedule which all Masons have, there must be time to raise the proficiency of all Lodge officers so that their knowledge of the ritualistic words and floorwork will be such that their minds can concentrate upon them and their voices and actions convey the lessons that Masonry teaches. It is through this letter-perfect knowledge of the ritual and floorwork that the magic of Masonry can be restored. Each officer must not only know his work, he must know the meaning of what he says. He must understand the message to be conveyed to the candidate and must, through personal belief in this message, impart it to the candidate. The candidate must be inspired, not just educated.

There is much talk of numbers in Masonry today, such as how many Masons were raised this year. If we do not create a complete Mason when we raise him, what have we accomplished? Is Masonry some produc-

Turn to page 27

tive organization that is judged upon the number produced per year? I hope not. The only measurement that is worthy of Freemasonry is what quality of Masons are they producing. One hundred dedicated Masons are worth more than one thousand non-dedicated Masons. One Mason who is active in the Lodge and the community is worth one hundred who merely wear the ring, who do not attend Lodges or who are active only in the other bodies. If we take in less men to become Masons, this may be a blessing. It means then that we can devote more time to each Mason, to educate him, to teach him the ritual and floorwork, to make a complete Mason of him. Thanks to our Grand Lodge, we now have time to spend with each Mason. No more of this man to Mason in 6 weeks. There is ample time with 30 days between each degree to teach and instruct and to demand of each candidate complete proficiency when he returns his work. This return of proficiency is when one lesson in Masonry can be taught — it is the lesson of perfection. Although we cannot expect or demand perfection in the body and soul of a Mason, we can demand it of his Masonic work — and we must. Acceptance of a slipshod performance now sets the stage for slipshod performance

throughout his Masonic career. Perfection in ritual and perfection in floorwork must be the rule and nothing less should be accepted.

Our Lodges look to the Regional Grand Lodge for leadership, for education and for inspiration. They hope that it will not become merely a Court of Honors and administrative office. They expect it to exert its influence for the advancement of Masonry on Okinawa and throughout this part of the world and they welcome its influence upon the Lodges and upon every Mason and hope that through its various officers, its inspectors and its lecturers, that it will provide the guidance and the education needed to establish a perfection of ritual and floorwork in every Lodge. They expect it to set the example at all times and they expect its officers to be ever ready to assist the Lodges or individual Masons whenever the need arises. Since this body is composed of Past Masters who have served their Lodges with dedication in the past, I know this same dedication will continue in the future and the expectations of the Lodges will not be in vain.

I ask each Mason on Okinawa to join with me in dedicating the coming Masonic Year to restoring the light and glory to Masonry, the beauty and grandeur to the ritual work and the dedication and devotion to our Masonic endeavors. **Δ**

GOING PLACES?

Allied Travel Experienced Personnel — Personalized Service — At Your Doorsteps.

Contact Bro. Ernesto Z. Gonzales

ALLIED TRAVEL—SAN MARCELINO

Plar del Temple Arcade
1442 San Marcelino, Manila
Tel. 50-14-11



Grand Master Tinio in the act of consecrating Laong-Laon Lodge #185, Saturday, July 1, 1967.