

WB Robert P. O'Brien,
PM (142)

Have you looked around the Lodge recently and observed the empty seats? One wonders where the brothers are that should fill those seats. One wonders if they are sick; if they have moved away; if they have lost interest or even if they are ever coming back.

For those that could come — and this includes non-member Masons sojourning in the vicinity of the Lodge — an active Mason must be curious as to why they don't. There are many answers I am sure and many faults to point the finger at.

Maybe the first fault lies with the Lodge that raised the absent brother. Maybe there was something lacking, something left out that made the difference between an active and an inactive Mason. Maybe the magic of the ritual was lost in a dry or unprepared recitation of the work. Maybe the language and actions of the brothers in the Lodge did not match the ideals taught by the degrees. The reverence invoked by the "G" Lecture may have been shattered by the careless profanity of another brother. The magic and the "ties that bind" are there in the ritual. They have been tested and tried over the centuries and they will work. The translation from the written to the spoken word, without feeling and without understanding is the pitfall for the careless or unskilled lecturer. Proficiency begins with memorizing but, it doesn't end there. It must go beyond this. It must reach the point where memory is unconscious and the work flow from an inspired image in the

brain to a heart-felt conviction in the voice and must include, an inspirational way of life and manner on the part of the lecturer. To mouth the ritual without this awe; this feeling of excitement; this desire to open up the candidate's eyes to the beauty of the work; is to use a golden horse-shoe to shoe a wild horse. All may well be in vain. The Lodge gains only initiation fees and dues for its efforts and loses an educated and dedicated Mason whose contribution to Masonry can not be measured in dollars.

What is this Mason like that should fill these seats? Is it a brother with a Masonic ring but no Masonic convictions? Is it a part time brother who remembers his brothers when seeking help but forgets them when the Lodge seeks his help? It is none of these! It is a Mason who has learned to love the ritual and lessons for the benefit they have showered upon his life by showing him the path of Jacob's Ladder. It is a Mason, who by the good that shines around him in Lodge, in his family and his community is recognized for his own worth and not by that bestowed upon him by the Craft. This is the Mason we seek to create and hold and the Lodges must mold and shape each new brother individually until he fits this image. The clay is soft and pliable at initiation and the master design must be quickly and artfully applied before the clay hardens with doubts and disinterest and can no longer be shaped. Is the Lodge

Turn to next page

at fault? The Lodge must examine itself with a critical eye and if the fault is there the Master's task is plain to see and the remedies of study, practice, learning and precept are available.

What happens when the brother emerges from his degrees with admiration for the ritual, determination to strive for the better things in life and then his attendance dwindles and finally his seat is empty? What goes wrong and where does the fault lie? Many things can go wrong. Maybe he was looking for a challenge in the Lodge, some task that would enable him to take his own measure as a Mason. Many challenges are available for him. He can be requested to present the working tools lecture or the apron lecture, to read a Masonic book and give a synopsis at a stated meeting, to understudy an officer, to learn a lecture or charge, to be chairman or member of a committee. These tasks will challenge him to advance in Masonry, to continue his Masonic education and above all to consider himself a real and needed member of the Masonic Fraternity as represented by his

Lodge.

Another fault lies in too rapid a dispersion of a brother's talents. As soon as he returns his proficiency he is avidly sought by York and Scottish Rites, by Eastern Stars, by the Shrine and a multitude of affiliated fraternities and soon he is spread so thin he can no longer continue his Masonic education in the Blue Lodge and without a real knowledge of Blue Lodge Masonry he is in the position of a student studying algebra and geometry with no knowledge of arithmetic as a foundation. He is trying to run when he hasn't learnt to walk; trying to fly before he knows his destination.

Yes, there are many seats empty in Lodge and there are many reasons why the brothers are not there. As active Master Masons each of us must do what we can do to overcome these faults and to fill the seats again. To restore the mystic glory to the ritualistic work, to bring inspiration and fraternal love to each meeting, and to mold the new candidates in the firmness of faith of the widow's son and the glory of Solomon should be our constant goal and inspiration. △



Pictured at left was taken on the occasion of Angalo Lodge No. 63 presenting Grand Lodge books to the University of Northern Philippines. In it are WB Amante Alconcel, WM; Mr. Julian Corpuz, Officer-in-Charge of the University; Bro. F. Aurellado and WB Graciano Pada, Sr., Lodge Secretary. Four boxes of books were donated.