

Masonic date: 08.17.6023 A.L.

This is the first of what I hope will be a regular series of blogs to our District which will assist in the employment and instruction of masonry during my tenure as your District Deputy Grand Master.

Sadly, my first District functions this year involved attending two masonic memorial events for two very eminent brethren which took place at opposite ends of our district. After giving the benediction at both services, I met with the friends and families of both our fallen brothers. I was struck by the profound impact that both these brothers had had on their communities, families and friends. They were pillars of virtue and uprightness, which will surely be passed on to the generations to follow.

When I was a young boy, my father announced one day that my brother and I were going to begin playing hockey. At the time, I had little interest in the game. It didn't seem very enticing to me to get dressed in hockey gear at 5 AM in the dead of winter and then ride in the back seat of his 1967 Grand Parisienne for practice at the Constantine arena in Fort Henry Heights (FHH)!

I later came to realize that my father loved the game, having played hockey himself for many years. And, perhaps he may have been "voluntold" by his commanding officer that it might benefit his career if he coached minor hockey. At the time, my brother and I could barely stand up on skates and I was quite resentful and perplexed by the initial experience. While under the tutelage of our father's coaching, we both grew more skilled and confident and the following year our team won the FHH peewee house league championship. My brother and I were both chosen to join the representative hockey teams playing in the OMHA and my father also advanced and began to coach the FHH peewee rep hockey team.

It was not long after that my father was posted to Canadian Forces Europe in Lahr Germany where he continued his coaching career. I had the great honor when I was 18 of being his assistant coach in several international hockey tournaments. I once asked him “why after all your success as a coach didn’t you move up from peewee and coach older players”? His answer sticks with me to this day; he said “ at this age the boys still listen to you and they don’t question your wisdom or authority”. Even now, my contemporaries often stop me on the streets of Kingston to ask me how my father is doing and tell me what a profound influence he had on their lives.

Later in my life, I followed in my father’s footsteps and led a local representative tackle football organization for the better part of a decade. Some of those players excelled and went on to have careers in the CFL and NFL. Occasionally, I’ll get stopped in the aisles of Canadian Tire or Home Depot by a young man who recognizes me and we’ll reminisce about the “glory days” and those players they played with in the past. I am buoyed to hear about their lives and accomplishments and how they too are giving back to their community.

I tell this story to illustrate the metaphor of how ritual, education and mentorship can influence not only those to whom we choose to direct and instruct but also to our own legacies as masons and the advancement of the craft itself.

There are currently over 2000 masons standing at our west gate, some of whom have already answered the necessary questions. They now stand ready as just and upright men, for you to cradle in fellowship guiding them through their masonic journey. As we endeavor to make ourselves better, it is incumbent upon all of us to re-double our efforts so we may lead those just entering the craft. We need to pass this

wisdom and knowledge to them, as it was passed to us by those who have gone before.

Becoming DDGM in my masonic journey was never something I had ever realistically considered. This journey actually began during a District car rally when the late great R. W. Bro. Sonny Clark handed me an affiliation form for Lansdowne Lodge, and time and circumstance did the rest.

To get here however, I stand on the shoulders of giants. The brethren who mentored me, corrected me and provided the shining examples of just and upright men are responsible for the result.

My hope is that each of you finds it in yourself to choose to share your talent, wisdom and brotherly love in the years ahead and inspire the next generation of caretakers of our noble craft!

Fraternally

R. W. Bro. David G. Wilkins

DDGM St. Lawrence District