

BRICKS - MORTAR - and MASONS

M.W. Grand Master, W.M., Distinguished Guests, Ladies and My Brethren:

To express that I was pleased when Norval asked me if I would be the after dinner speaker at his reception would surely be an understatement.

We were standing in the rain following the Shrine Salute to America back in July. Even though it was pouring rain, I was grinning from ear to ear with the prospect of becoming a small part of the festivities involved in paying homage to Brother Norval.

Well!!! My friends it is Show and Tell time again with Archie Bunker!! Now don't laugh. There are a lot of people in this audience tonight who think I look like Archie! and after I finish this message a lot more of you will think that both Archie and I were blessed with the same grammar teacher in grade school!!! But - please be assured that any resemblance between R. Harry and Archie is purely coincidental. Absolutely!!! No way in the world would I ever call my First Wife 'Ding Bat'--or for that matter would I refer to that 6' 4" son-in-law of mine as 'Meat head'. If there were no other reason than Love of Life!!! My own!!! It surely would have a bearing on how I addressed either one of them.

I inquired of Norval that night in July what topic he would like me to speak on and he immediately replied that he would like to hear a message pertaining to the value of self sacrificing -- Kinda figures!!! With that thought in mind I have entitled this message, on this really special night here in Des Moines, "Bricks - Mortar - and Masons". I just happen to have a very special brick with me tonight. Now! You really didn't think I would come up here empty handed, did you?

The very first time I met Norval I was informed that he earned his living as an honest to goodness bricklayer. I thought, "Gosh, isn't that neat! a Master Mason that is a genuine operative mason. But you know, as time progressed and we became better acquainted I began to realize what was more apparent and unique about this brother was that this bricklayer we are honoring tonight was a genuine speculative mason.

"Isn't this a nice looking brick?" But it is immaterial how nice this brick may look or be, it is not very useful, just by itself. If they are just piled up, regardless how high you pile them, the situation never changes. They are still just a pile of bricks. However, if your desire is to build something with these bricks, how you tie them together becomes an important element in your building plans. It is the mortar or substance that binds them into one solid mass that gives them purpose for existing. The right amount of sand, cement, and water is all there is to it!!! Not quite.!!! The sand must be clean and free of dirt, almost like silica sand; the cement or the adhesive material must be high grade and the water must be added in the right amount by the master craftsman so that the sand and cement become the right consistency allowing the finished structure to have the strength and beauty which makes all building functional and distinctive. Without question, in all types of building it takes the master's touch before it can become a reality, a total complete structure.

Speaking of the master's touch - I must tell you a true story (all my stories are true). This story is about a brick fireplace wall I erected a few year back - or maybe piled up - in the family room, in my basement. Our city building inspector informed me that I had to erect a buffer wall around a cast iron stove I was using to supplement the poor heating situation that prevailed in our basement. I thought that shouldn't be such a big deal, I'll just put up an imitation fireplace wall around that stove; mantel and all. That ought to give the room a little class!!! So, I spoke to a friend of mine who was a bricklayer and he said "Harry, that's no problem, you ought to be able to do that in no time at all. I'll loan you my equipment; trowels, level, mud box - I'll even come up and get you started." And boy as I look back - was he giving me a snow job. Well!!! He did come up to the house and he did mix the first batch of mortar and he did lay the first course of courses of brick--- and then he left!!! Wow! That's when the fun began. Three weeks later I got to the 21st and final course of bricks of that fireplace. There never was a time during those three weeks when the air wasn't blue -- I even threatened my First Wife with bodily harm if she didn't get herself back up those stairs -- I told her in no uncertain terms I didn't need her help, aid, or assistance. In the first three hours I had more mortar on my shoes than I did on any of the bricks in that fireplace wall. Now!!! I would put the mortar on the trowel and then apply it to the brick---I would turn the brick over to lay it on the wall and the mortar would fall off. I don't believe at any time during those three weeks the mortar was ever of the right consistency; it was either too wet or too dry.

Shortly after that I took Norval into the basement to look at my work of art -- He stood there and looked - and looked - and looked - and looked at it. Because of the fact he is such a nice guy, he never once laughed out loud. Smiled maybe, but not laugh. Maybe on the way home he broke down. If you really want to know you'll have to ask Ruth about that. I'll never ask her. Don't ever try to down grade the talent that is required to be a master brick layer.

Bricks - Mortar - and Masons is what this message tonight is all about. The bricks are us. The mortar is the way we live our lives with each other, and masons are taught the method of putting it all together with the exact amount of water, sand, and cement. You may say "Why is it so important to build our lives in the manner that God want us to be?" First, of course, it is to glorify Him. Secondly, there are more followers in this world than leaders and it is easy for followers to take the least line of resistance and play follow the leader. So it is absolutely vital that leaders know the way. It is crucial that the mortar of these leaders be composed of the right substance. The mortar I'm referring to must consist of the right mixture of congenial parts; the sand must be clean like Brotherly Love, Compassion, Morality, and Truth. All are vital elements in that mortar of ours. But it requires the adhesiveness, the high grade cement to make it effective in building our lives. Like self discipline, determination, will power, and above all else - self sacrifice. Determination - Will Power - Self Discipline are all parts of the mortar that is necessary for reaching the goal of building a better life in the eyes of God.

As I was preparing this message Betty was looking over my shoulder and she saw me write down the word 'Will Power' and under her breath I heard her say "Boy I can't wait to see how this develops - especially since you're the guy who can't walk by the refrigerator without opening it". It is funny, every time I do that she always asks me the same question "What are you looking for?" And I always give the same answer "I'm just checking to see if the light is still lit."

Determination - Will Power - Self Discipline are almost related and are valued traits in everyone's mortar. The Creator loves his creatures but from his creatures he demands above all else, obedience, discipline, and self sacrifice. In the book of Luke--Luke explains "It is easy to call you Lord but hard to do what you say."

But let's zero in this evening on self sacrifice - that elusive trait of giving of one's self for a cause. When we mortals, the bricks of this society recognize the true value of what a high grade of cement - self sacrifice is; then it will become a way of life. Giving of one's self adds a great deal of substance to the mortar. Make no mistake about that. It is the giving, my friends, that makes the world go by. God so loved the world that he gave - the ultimate gift to man. Nathan Hale gave his life with the regret that he only had one to give. Every day someone gives their life so that someone else might live --- Policemen, Firemen --- it is self sacrifice -- pure and simple. On a lesser scale the leaders of our nation, state, and local government sacrifice a great deal of their time and talents to make this nation a better place to live.

Can we masons really expect this fraternity of ours to survive if we as individuals aren't willing to include some self sacrificing element into the mortar of our lives for the cause of Freemasonry.

No question about it -- self sacrificing makes for pretty good mortar -- right? And the greatest part about all this is that in this organization we have the knowledge of how to apply it. We are taught that the Trowel is the especial tool in the hands of the Master Craftsman. Now, I just happen to have one with me!!! How about that -- two shows and one tell -- all for the price of one. This trowel belongs to this brick--this brick and this trowel belong to a brother who is present tonight. He doesn't know it yet although it has his name on it. This brother to whom I am referring to possesses the right mortar and is the type of a master builder who will keep the wall straight, plumb, and level. Isn't that what masonry is all about? The Bricks, the Mortar, The Trowel, and the Master Craftsman. All we have to do is see if we can mix and apply the mortar without getting too much mud on our shoes.

Can we ask anything more than that?

GIVEN AT M.W. MORIAL P MARKS RECEPTION  
ON OCT 9 1982 - OUR NEW GRAND MASTER