BALLOTING

November 7, 2005

My Brothers,

Tonight, I thought a short review of the Due Guard and Sign would be worthwhile. As Masons, we all make the Due guard and Sign on at least five different occasions in Lodge. We’ll go over those in a minute, but first, we’ll look at what they signify.

The ‘Due Guard’ has a dual meaning, one of which is symbolic. First, it is a visual mode of recognition by which we may know a Brother of the degree from a distance. We also make it to confirm our right to be in Lodge, in that degree. Secondly, when we make the Due Guard, we are symbolically referring to the degree’s solemn Obligation. We are confirming that we remember and comply with the content of our Obligation. In showing the Due Guard, we are making a statement of our Fidelity to the GAOTU, to our Masonic Obligation, and to our Brothers of that degree.

Making the Sign is a statement that we remember the Penalty in the Obligation for that degree. When we give it, we are stating symbolically that our actions to follow are honorable under penalty of Masonic law.

With this reminder, we can see that making the Due Guard and Sign is not a trivial matter. Whether we do it once or 20 times in Lodge, each time we do it we are solemnly stating our continuing Fidelity in all aspects of our Masonic Obligation, and binding ourselves honorably to this Fidelity and each other, under extreme penalty.

And now, the regular times we make the Due Guard and Sign are: For instruction; when coming to order as Masons in Lodge; when rising to address the WM in Lodge; when entering or leaving Lodge; and when approaching the Ballot Box to cast our solemn ballot.

I saved Balloting for the last in order to discuss something interesting that most of us don’t know or don’t remember. When we approach the Ballot Box we are to make the Due Guard and Sign. We all do it, but most of us signify in a general way, looking at the Ballot Box, the Worshipful Master, or somewhere off into space. We know we are supposed to do it, so we do it, but we don’t seem to know the reason or the symbolism behind the reason.

The ritual says that when Balloting, we are to make the Due Guard and Sign toward the Three Great Lights of Masonry, the Holy Bible, Square and Compasses. If you think about that, it adds a deeper significance to making your Ballot. You are not signing to the Ballot Box, or the Worshipful Master, or a Brother. You are signing your personal Fidelity toward the Three Great Lights which are the symbolic core of Masonry. Having reaffirmed that Fidelity, that special Obligation binding yourself to Masonry and Masonry to you, you may then approach your solemn duty of Balloting for the good of Masonry.

So, the next time you have the opportunity to make the Due Guard and Sign, and every time, remember that you are making a solemn statement of your continuing Fidelity as a Mason, to Masonry.

Masonry honors us with the opportunity to show this Fidelity; we honor Masonry by doing so, each time.

Br. Stephen C. Harrington