COACHES

November 1, 2004

My Brothers,

I was thinking the other day about famous Masons and looking at a list of them on the internet. We’ve had George Washington, the “Father of our Country”, and Benjamin Franklin, the ‘father’ of about everything else. In the Revolutionary War, almost every general was a Mason; it was a matter of trust for Washington. We number in our ranks numerous presidents, generals, and industry leaders. Dave Thomas of Wendy’s was a Mason. When we think back to his commercials we can see the Masonic presence in him; he always came across as honorable and truthful, a good man. It’s something that just stands out, you know? Heck, we’ve had movie stars and TV stars. Michael Richards, who played Kramer on Seinfeld, is a recent Mason. Gary Cooper of “High Noon” was a Mason. And let us not forget our own Lodge Brother, John Wayne; our Lodge pin proudly commemorates his Masonry. From Washington to Wayne: famous, every one of them. Their character lead them to Masonry and we can be sure that their Masonry was a source of comfort in their fame. We take pride in knowing they are our Brothers, and we, theirs.

And while I was thinking about that it occurred to me that there is one thing that is always missing from this kind of list. Without this one thing, not one of them would have been a famous Mason. We won’t find it in their biographies and it is probably unknowable for most of them. It is not their place of birth or background, or parents, or religion, or spouse, or education, or profession. It’s not their Lodge of record or even their Worshipful Master, although that’s getting close. It isn’t any of those things, but without it, they would never have made the list as a famous Mason. What could it be?

Well, I’ll end the suspense. Who was their Coach? Who Coached George Washington? Now there’s a question! Who took George Washington through his proficiency? What did he explain? What qualities did he exemplify to his Candidate? What moral insights did he add to Washington's Masonic training? In what way and by how much did he influence our country’s future leader? Did Washington’s Coach sense any greatness in his Candidate? Did Washington sense any greatness in his Coach and want to become more like him? Now there’s a thought for you, who sensed the greater attributes in the other, Washington or his Coach?

We know good men come to Masonry. From these good men, come great men. This potential greatness in every Candidate makes Coaching an awesome responsibility and is something that makes us hesitant to become Coaches. Every Candidate looks beyond the work of memorization; he looks deep into his Coach for the things he needs to see about Masonry. His Coach is his lifeline to understanding and feeling secure in his choice to become a Mason. Coaching is far more than helping a Candidate prepare a memorized script; Masonry is not a stage play. Masonry is a way of life, and the Coach is the living model for this better way.

If we chose the traditional route, each of us had a Coach who took us through the proficiencies, and answered our questions. He set the tone of Masonry for us and showed us what we might expect in ourselves, if we worked hard. He modeled the virtues of our Fraternity while helping us to understand them. He welcomed us as a good man among good men. Coaches have been doing this for as long as there has been Masonry. They are the unknown ancestors of every Mason, reaching back in time to the dawn of the Fraternity.

To a genealogist, the line of Coaches would make no sense. There are no marriages to note, few bloodlines to follow, no documents to examine. Yet, behind each Masonic Coach is another Coach, and another, and another behind him. We are all Masonic descendants of these Coaches, and like a family tree passing down characteristics from one generation to the next, the moral model of these Coaches lives on in every Mason in this Lodge and in every Mason we greet as a Brother. In a genealogical sense, that descent makes us all Coaches.

I like to think that George Washington saw qualities in his Coach that he adopted for his own, that urged him to become a better man and maybe the great man that he was. What were those qualities that caught and fired his imagination? We can think about the answer in this way. In a Fraternal sense, George Washington's Coach is related to our Coach, so we may have seen the very same qualities that Washington saw in his Coach. We may have asked the very same questions that Washington did, and received the same answers. We’ll never know for sure, but what we do know is that Washington’s Coach was a Mason, and that is enough to know.

So, it really isn’t important to know who the Coaches were for the famous Masons. They were Masons. They were us.

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