



## PAPER

### Whatever title suits thee According to Fred & Charlie



**Summary:** The rights and responsibilities of every member of the Lodge.

Let us not forget...

*‘that we are all sprung from the same stock, partakers of the same nature and sharers in the same hope; and although distinctions among men are necessary to preserve subordination, yet ought no eminence of situation make us forget that we are all Brothers’.*

The extended Explanation of the Second Degree Working Tools

Fred and Charlie sat in their usual quiet corner of the Masons Arms. It had been an admirable Installation; everyone had put in a good shift. As there were also some ‘private’ Grand Lodge visitors adding to a full-ish Provincial Team it was perhaps just as well.

Charlie, whose normal approach to drinking beer was akin to a bilge pump with the control at max flow, was merely sipping slowly and thoughtfully.

‘Penny?’ said Fred.

‘Well...’ began Charlie hesitantly, *‘there was so much gold braid on show it was like a visit to the vaults at Fort Knox. Freemasonry is supposed to be all about brotherhood and equality. With all the ranks and saluting and sermonising that went on - where’s the equality in that, Fred?’*

Fred merely gave a quiet smile. He’d heard that question so many times over the years. He sat back, closed his eyes and began:

*‘Debrett, the publisher and editor of the ‘Peerage & Baronetage’ had more than a few words to say about rank and title. Had he been a Freemason he might well have felt the urge to add many, many more. For an organisation that prides itself on the democratic nature of our Brotherhood we do tend to make things very difficult for ourselves.*

*A basic question perhaps is to ask just where does the equality of brotherhood end and respect for rank and responsibility begin? For example, our Provincial Grand Masters have invariably been amiable and approachable gentlemen who normally delight in listening to your views at the bar. But should you be minded to slap one on the back at the next Provincial Meeting and, as his Brother, ask to borrow a tenner to buy a*



round, or remind him you really deserve an active rank on the next Promotion list, it would barely be micro-seconds before a distant stare transfixed you against the far wall. Whilst, as swiftly, the Provincial 'heavy mob' hove-to alongside, inviting you to join them outside for 'a quiet chat' and some fairly accurate fortune telling.' The moral? Brotherhood - Don't push it! Remember, while all men are born equal, some have to accept the burden of responsibility for the benefit of others. They surely deserve respect for their commitment and the rank that goes with it? Good manners, a natural courtesy, and plain common sense will always be the best guide.

Let the Lodge DC worry about titles and precedence for all those Grand and Provincial Grand Officers. Even within our own Lodge though, the various forms of address can be confusing, and many old hands still seek guidance. When should, say, Mr John Smith be called John, Brother John, Brother Smith, Worshipful Brother John, Worshipful Brother Smith, Worshipful Brother John Smith... etc. etc.? As ever, the Book of Constitutions is especially helpful when we dip into it. [Rules 6, 68 and 104a].

Let's start with the word 'Worshipful'. Rule 6 states that every Master of a Lodge, present or past, is entitled to be addressed as 'Worshipful Brother'. However, the only Lodge Masonic office entitled to the prefix of 'Worshipful' is that of the Worshipful Master. While casual reference may be made simply to 'the Master', courtesy suggests in his presence he is always addressed as 'Worshipful Master' throughout his Year.'

It follows that use of, say, 'Worshipful Brother Secretary' is plainly wrong. Even when he is a Past Master the incumbent is addressed as either Worshipful Brother Smith or Brother Secretary. Remember, 'Worshipful' always belongs to the person and, other than the Master, never to his office.'

'What if one or more Masons possess the same surname?' said Charlie.

'When one is a Brother and the other a Worshipful Brother then there are no grounds for confusion. We just use the surname with his rank. When both Masons are Brothers or both Worshipful Brothers then it makes good sense to include the forenames to distinguish them: 'Worshipful Brother Peter Smith' and 'Worshipful Brother Mike Smith' are admirably clear distinctions should both be present'.

In the 'Temple' a useful rule of thumb when addressing Brethren is to be either formal or informal but never mix the two'.

'Why on earth not?' Charlie queried.

'Let me explain. Should the Worshipful Master wish to thank Brethren on appointment or when they have assisted in a Ceremony, the good advice is to favour formality; use surnames and be consistent. If you decide however to use forenames then use them throughout – e.g. Brother Tom, Brother Dick, and Brother Harry. Through lapse of memory if you mix the two then this may come across as a form of discrimination between those within the Master's favoured circle and those now cast into outer darkness. Play safe, always remember we are a Brotherhood.

When we move from the Temple to the Dining or Committee Room however there are no guidelines laid down save that it is still custom to address the Worshipful Master as such. Simply rely on those basic rules of good manners, courtesy and common-sense.'



*In private conversation at the bar or dining table forenames or familiar nicknames rarely go out of fashion. It is courteous nonetheless to initially address a visiting senior officer by his title – he will indicate very quickly when less formality is appropriate.*

*Recall too that a new Member's forename is especially precious to him. Please try to remember it. It follows that 'Hey, you' to a very junior Steward is especially to be deplored. Apart from revealing you as an arrogant so-and-so, it can make for a very dry evening.'*

Eyes wide open, Fred glanced at a now empty glass. Charlie rose quietly to the occasion. Rank, name or title were quite unnecessary.



## Recommended use of Papers

Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
  - Followed by 'any questions'
  - As a precursor to a discussion (in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself)
  - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand).

If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling's dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his 'serving men', as follows: *'I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who'*. Rudyard Kipling

\*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version and any reference to ritual will be from Emulation unless otherwise specified.

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Fred and Charlie character drawings courtesy of Eddie Wildman.

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