

## Still Traveling East!

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At first I thought this would be an easy task but it wasn't. After writing and deleting several papers I eventually just decided to let it out. These are my thoughts as they are. So why did I become a Mason? Why am I still a Mason? Better yet, this essay also gets into why I'm still an active member of Cypress Lodge.

My journey into Freemasonry was a curiosity at first. As with any curiosity I tried to find out as much about it before ever attempting to join. What truly made the difference for me were the deep connections between Masonry and the founding of this Country. If men like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, James Monroe, and Samuel Nicholas were Masons there must have been something to it. As I searched deeper I discovered more interesting facts and some connections between the founding of the United States Marine Corps and Freemasonry. Tun Tavern is widely given credit as being the birth place of the Marine Corps. That credit was given because the first Regiment of Marines was recruited out of Tun Tavern. The man responsible for recruiting that Regiment was Samuel Nicholas. Samuel Nicholas was a Freemason and Master of the Lodge that sat directly above Tun Tavern. He has also been given credit for being the first Commandant of the United States Marine Corps. We can go on and on with all the different correlations, facts, and theories regarding Freemasonry; and the founding of the United States of America. The point is that I found something that struck a cord. Having served in the Marine Corps as a young man, the Marine Corps epitomized the type of person that I wanted to be. All the information I found about Freemasonry led me to believe that joining a Lodge was the next step that I needed to take. So, like all prospective Masons, I started the process of initiation.

Learning the catechisms and experiencing the degrees was the best part of my journey to date. We had a really great group of guys going through, and in that group I had great hope that together we could make a difference. You see, it was obvious to us that the lodge was suffering. The building is in need of renovation and the lodge needed Brothers to commit to its needs. The more Brothers that commit, the more we can accomplish, I thought. The problem is Masonry failed to connect with those brothers for one reason or the other. Not only with those brothers but a large number of those who came before me. After being raised to the sublime Degree of Master Mason the lodge failed to keep their interest. So one by one they started to disappear. Each Brother had his reason to stop coming. Maybe if Masonry would have touched on a passion within them they would still be active, then again maybe not. I remember a conversation with one Brother as we looked up at all the past Masters on the wall. He asked "Where are they all"? "Many of them are still alive so why don't they come"? I replied "maybe they think their work is done but truly I don't know". That night the lodge was virtually empty and we barely had enough Members to chair the seats.

It's been truly difficult to stay motivated when so many before me are absent. Such a small percentage of our membership is willing to give time to our fraternity. When the call goes out the response is often silent. It's truly always the same few that are here for whatever is needed. Those few are so busy just keeping the lodge running that they have little time to do much more. So many good ideas die on the vine waiting for someone to step in and act. The thought crossed my mind several times "so why should I bother if others don't"? Then I asked myself, could an operative Mason build anything without visiting the quarry? And if he visited the quarry but never used his tools would anything be accomplished? Should I attempt to do such a thing? And if only enough Masons show up to just keep the quarry open is it worth it? Maybe I can just go home and let others build for me? Then I thought, no that's not me. After all, what satisfaction would that give me?

Freemasonry has great ideas that must be preserved and glorified for all mankind. So I must glorify them and do the work that will truly give me satisfaction. We must glorify ideas like we are all free and equal. Ideas that tell us every man has a personal responsibility to seek his greatest potential. That every man's potential has no limit. Ideas that tell us we should all love one another as Brothers, and seek harmony not just within the lodge but with all mankind. In today's world how important is the idea that all religions should be respected and accepted? Freemasonry is a repository of many ideas and those are just some of them. The thing about ideas is that ideas are just that, ideas. Ideas require men to bring them to reality. We are all presented with many ideas during initiation and throughout life. The thing most men fail to realize is that ideas are nothing without action. It's through action that we can receive satisfaction. After all "satis" translated from Latin is "enough" and it takes enough action to achieve satisfaction. So I must act enough. When more men act together in harmony towards the affirmation of an idea, the greater the power that idea has. We have no better example than the Brothers I mentioned earlier that helped found this Country.

Brothers, all I can say is this: *As long as I can work in harmony with other Brothers* on the common task of improving this great institution, I will keep coming. Even if it's just enough of us to barely keep the quarry open. My hope is that one day enough Masons will show up and allow us to truly build something magnificent.