

Our Wonderful Fraternity is in Trouble

For certain, the most pressing issue at this time is the critical state of Masonic membership in the United States. Our net loss of members every year is about 50,000 members. What this means is that far more members are leaving our Order (deaths, other reasons) than are joining.

At this time we have 1.2 million registered Freemasons. This is the lowest number since 1924. In 1959, our membership peaked at 4.1 million members, so we have lost 2.9 million members since that year. One does not need to be a mathematician to see that if the current decline continues, we will essentially “run out of members” in just 24 years.

Of course, this dire prediction is simply based on numbers. Our Order will survive in some form, but it will be far removed from what it has been, and still is for the moment.

The question of why we continue to have a net loss has been debated for 57 years. Obviously, things changed in American society whereby our Order became less known and less attractive to young men. In other words, what we offer failed to compete with other things. Naturally, “what we offer” cannot really be known until a man becomes a Freemason, so we are at a great disadvantage here. There are no pamphlets or websites that can properly communicate the true meaning and benefits of Freemasonry. All we can do is lead by example and promote our Order (talk about it). If we see, or sense interest in a relative, friend or associate, then such should be “cultivated.” We do not solicit new members, but there is nothing wrong with saying that any man may become a Mason and explain things a little. By far, most new members are the result of this process.

There is also something else that needs to be addressed. Our decreased lodge attendance has greatly diminished our ability to properly and timely confer degrees. When such is the case, the impression left with candidates is poor and more often than not, he does not carry on as a lodge member. Although there are no statistics available, an estimate of demitted, not active (any reason) members is about 270,000.

What might be a solution here? Perhaps districts should be considering dedicated degree teams that either travel or consolidate the conferring of degrees (along the same lines as the AASR).

FOR THE GOOD OF THE CRAFT, it is important that lodges start looking at the issues raised in this article. Time is not on our side Brethren.

This article is provided courtesy of The Masonic Stamp Club of New York.