

Applied Masonic Research

by
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Worshipful Master, Brethren: Having just come out of the kitchen I feel very humble to be your speaker on the first meeting of this new year. I always considered the first meeting in the Blue Lodge, which is usually rededication night, as the most important meeting of the year. That is when you set the tune or the course for the year ahead.

My topic for today is "Applied Masonic Research". I believe, however, that I would do better if I told you the secret of making good old fashioned BEAN SOUP!

Since our Worshipful Master, in his infinite wisdom, wants me talk about Masonic Research, I better get to it. Note that I have added a certain adjective to describe the type of Masonic Research I will be talking about: **APPLIED MASONIC RESEARCH!** No doctrine, or faith, or knowledge is of value to a man except as it bears fruit in action! This is very true, especially for a Research Lodge. We have heard many excellent research papers presented in this Lodge of Research. Research papers, unfortunately, have a way of winding up like many good College Thesis; as dust collectors on the shelf. They do not bear fruit in action.

What I am about to propose is one method of making our research come ALIVE! For a better name I will call it the A. Douglas Smith Jr. Blue Lodge Visitation Program. Briefly, this program would consist of three steps:

1. Invitation by the Worshipful Master of a Blue Lodge for the A. Douglas Smith Jr. Lodge of Research #1949 to present a Research Program on a night he has dedicated to Masonic Research.
2. The Research Lodge to apply imagination and creativity to one or more of its research papers and present it in the Lodge as a

dramatic presentation, rather than as a mere talk.

3. Presentation of the Research Program in the Lodge.

The logical question you might ask is: "What benefits can be expected from such a program?" I will mention three, although I'm, sure you can think of more.

1. It will give us an opportunity to plant seeds of Masonic Research in the Blue Lodges.
2. It will improve our image as a Research Lodge.
3. It will stimulate interest in our members to participate in our research activities.

I would like to give you an example of how this program would work. Let us assume that you are members of Elmer Timberman Lodge #54. Your Worshipful Master has dedicated this stated meeting to Masonic Research and has invited the A. Douglas Smith Jr. Lodge of Research #1949 to present a program. He has concluded his business and has invited me, as the Research Lodge representative, to the East.

Wor. Master, my Brethren all:

Your Worshipful Master has designated this night as "Masonic Research Night. The A. Douglas Smith Jr. Lodge of Research #1949 is honored to be asked to present a program for you on Masonic Research. What is Masonic Research? Masonic Research is the careful and diligent search of knowledge about Freemasonry; i.e. its origin, history, growth, members, ritual, symbols, teachings and the application of those great teachings.

The A. Douglas Smith Jr. Lodge of Research meets for that purpose. We do not raise

candidates but concentrate on Masonic Research. We meet on the 5th Saturday of the month, or quarterly, in the North Room of the George Washington National Memorial in Alexandria, VA. All Master Masons are invited to attend and those who are interested in expanding their knowledge of Freemasonry are invited to become a member. The dues are only \$10.00 per year. Let me emphasize that you do not have to be a high ranking officer in Freemasonry or a gifted speaker or writer to be a member. All that is required is to be a Master Mason in good standing and a keen desire to know more about our wonderful fraternity. If you have that desire we cordially invite you to become a member.

One of our objectives as a Research Lodge is to encourage all Blue Lodges to maintain an active Lodge Library and to encourage their members to use it for their own Masonic edification. We know your Lodge has a library and on behalf of the members of A. Douglas Smith Jr. Lodge of Research #1949 I would like to present this book entitled: "Doug Smith Speaking" for your Lodge Library. I know that your members will find it most enlightening and they will be the richer for reading it.

Now I will get on with the program. As you all know, during the year 1987 we celebrated the Bicentennial of our United States Constitution. This celebration is to last over a five year period, so it is not out of place for us to celebrate it again tonight; the beginning of 1988.

We in the Lodge of Research believe the more our members and our citizens know about the Constitution, how it was formed, etc. the more they will appreciate what we have today!

My remarks will be directed toward what took place back in the town of Philadelphia PA on May 25, 1787. That is the day it all began! I ask you to use your imagination and come with me in Spirit back to Philadelphia at that time. I ask you to use your imagination because it is unfortunate that we can't hear the facts from the lips of someone who was actually there!

(HOLD IT! HOLD IT! WE WERE THERE!)

(Enter George Washington and Benjamin Franklin)

(West of the Altar)

B.F.: Allow me to introduce ourselves. This is your Commander-in-Chief, General George Washington and I am your humble servant, Benjamin Franklin. I can see this is a Masonic group so you can just call us Brothers. That stubborn Tyler, however, didn't think we were members of the Masonic Fraternity; claimed our dues cards were a little out of date!

We were there on the date you mentioned, May 25, 1787. Can we be of any service to you?

Narrator: What a great surprise! I was just about to tell our Brethren here about how the Constitution came about. My knowledge is limited to only that which has been written by so-called historians and I just commented on how unfortunate it is that we can't hear the facts from someone who was actually there. Suddenly you appear! This is really a miracle! Please continue to the East and tell us what really happened back there in Philadelphia 200 years ago!

(They approach the East)

(The Chaplain's and S.D.'s chairs are placed at the foot of the East, facing West)

B.F.: I think it fitting that the description of such an important event in the life of these United States should only come from the lips of he who presided over that event, my good friend and Masonic Brother, General George Washington.
(Ben sits down)

G.W.: My companion here is always the diplomat. Yes, I will be glad to tell you what really happened back there in 1787.

After our glorious strike for freedom in 1776 and our victorious end of the war of Independence in 1781, our land was governed by the Articles of Confederation, which were nothing more than a treaty of amity and alliance between independent and sovereign states. We had a land with no President, no national courts. The only central body was the Continental Congress, in which each state had one vote. The Congress had no power to impose taxes or coerce states to raise an army. I vividly remember back in the 1780's the lack of national purpose and direction had brought economic depression and even talk of war between states. There was no uniform currency; I even had to exchange my good Virginia coins for Pennsylvania shillings! Foreign trade was regulated by individual states and trade barriers were being erected between states! I could see that the wheels of government were clogged. It was this sad picture of our beloved country that we fought so hard for that caused me reluctantly, to give up my retirement as a country gentlemen at Mt. Vernon and once again offer my services to my country. Thus, I arrived in Philadelphia on Sunday, May 13, 1787. (Bro. George sits down)

B.F.: (seated) You should have seen the welcome he received! Thousands of citizens turned out excitedly to meet him! The delegates of the Convention unanimously paid him the honor due him as America's great liberator by naming him to preside over the Convention. It was a wise choice. The General's commanding presence was such that all were simply awed into persisting in their work, in spite of the long, hot weeks and months that laid ahead; hot in debate and

disagreement as well as in bodily discomfort.

You Virginians can be proud of the fact that the Virginia Plan, introduced on the floor of the Convention by Edmund Randolph, then Governor of Virginia, served as the cornerstone of the Constitution. The Virginia Plan originated with James Madison, a young Virginian, then only 36 years old. In my humble opinion, I consider James Madison the author of the Constitution! His plan called for the creation of an entirely new political system; a new political culture. The plan for a national government composed of three branches; legislative, executive and judicial, controlled by a unique system of checks and balances. It was Madison's dream and he made it come true.

G.W.: (Seated) We were eleven days late in getting started due to lack of a quorum. Travel in those days was very slow. You know, it took me four days on horseback from Mt. Vernon as compared to a few hours by your transportation today.

Overall, fifty-five delegates out of 74 attended, representing eleven of the original states. We convened on the 25th of May by the direction of the Congress for the purpose of amending the Articles of the Confederation. Note that our purpose, or our charter from the Congress to meet, was to amend the Articles of the Confederation. Four days later, the Virginia Plan, mentioned by my companion, was presented to the delegates. My good friend, James Madison, had done his homework in the days awaiting a quorum. Thanks to him, we started off on the right track to create a new democratic form of government to serve all the people and not to just amend the Articles of Confederation, as directed by the Congress. Those Articles were so weak and inadequate that many feared our country would end up as an

American Monarch or be divided into three or more separate and independent confederacies. This was my fear also!

B.F.: And mine too! I can distinctly remember a Philadelphia Newspaper editorial at that time urging the citizens of America to arouse from their dreams, or they will awake the subject of a despot!

G.W.: Thanks to Madison, however, we were able to avoid that disaster! The delegates agreed at the start to pursue their work in closed sessions, behind closed doors. This meant no press! It seemed the only way to keep the convention from disintegrating from contentious outside pressures. But it sure added to the physical discomfort with closed windows, shades drawn, bolted doors and no air conditioning, such as you enjoy today! It was hot and humid in Philadelphia at that time of the year! The delegates, however, were full of dedication and they proceeded with vigor, sweating through four months of hard, inspired, sometimes bitter and almost disastrous deliberations. They met for five hours a day, six days a week.

It soon became a battle between the smaller states and the larger states as to how they were to be represented in the two houses, the House of Representatives and the Senate. The Federalists, composed of the smaller states; Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland and New Jersey, (Rhode Island never attended) wanted equal representation in the lower chamber while the Nationalists, representing the larger states; such as Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Virginia, wanted representation in proportion to the population in both the House and the Senate. It was this issue that almost brought the convention to its knees!

B.F.: (Rises) Indeed it did! The convention was very close to floundering on the rocks! Delaware's John Dickinson threatened to lead the small States into an alliance with a foreign power rather than be deprived in both branches of the legislature, of equal suffrage. Governor Morris of Pennsylvania summed it up when he said: "The fate of America is suspended by a hair!"

Remember, George, it was at this point that you came to me and said "Ben, this is our darkest hour! What shall we do?" (George nods)

I said: "George, as Masons, we both know what we should do." And we did it; we prayed to the Supreme Architect of the Universe for his wisdom and guidance. I then saw the error of our ways and the next day I proposed to the delegates that hence forth prayers imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessings on our deliberations, be held in the Assembly every morning before we proceeded to business. I also proposed that one or more of the clergy of the city be requested to officiate in that service. I reminded the delegates that in the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger we had daily prayer in that very same room for Divine protection. Our prayers were heard and they were graciously answered. Had we now forgotten that powerful friend; or did we imagine that we no longer needed His assistance? If a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid?

My motion was seconded by Roger Sherman of Connecticut but in the discussion that followed, Hugh Williamson of North Carolina (not one of our Fraternity, by the way) remarked that there were no funds available to pay the clergymen. I always did suspect that

he was a tight-wad budgeter. Well, (Ben sits down sadly) after that, the matter of prayer was dropped without a vote. But I can assure you that from that day on, Brother George and I mentally asked the blessing of Deity on the convention's deliberations. And He answered our prayers! Just when it looked like our ship was sinking, the delegates finally agreed to a plan which became known as the "Great Compromise". It provided for a House of Representatives elected on the basis of population and a Senate in which all states would have the same number of Senators, or equal vote. Only the House could originate money bills and the Senate had no power to change them.

G.W.: (stands) The "Great Compromise" gave a feeling of optimism to the delegates. It now looked like something good would come out of the convention. It was the last day in July and I took a break and revisited the fortifications at Valley Forge. (George takes a few steps in thought) It brought back many sad memories of suffering and despair by our poor and ragged Continental Army. Yet, in spite of the sad memories that rushed through my mind, I could express my gratitude to the Almighty for the progress we had made in the convention. With His continued guidance the result of our convention would assure those soldiers of Valley Forge that they had not suffered in vain!

(G.W. returns to his seat)

G.W.: This brought us to the beginning of the third month of being cooped up in that hot assembly room. The smaller states had won their main point. Now the delegates tackled the Presidency; how he should be chosen and how long he should serve; the relationship between the three branches of the government; the judiciary, the legislative and the executive. By August 6, all was set

down in a draft, with a preamble and 23 articles. For five hot weeks this draft was debated, article by article; section by section. Thirty six sections spelled out what Congress could and could not do. When final agreement was reached, two key matters still blocked the light at the end of the Constitutional tunnel! First was the issue of slavery. Everyone knew it was an explosive subject on which the North and South were squared off, and that it actually threatened the success of the convention.

B.F.: Angry debate followed! Fortunately, the committee again came up with an essential compromise by postponing the prohibition of slavery until 1808.

(Ben rises and points his cane as he speaks)

I know that some of your officials have criticized us as shirking our duty. Well, at that time, in our opinion, it was a case of the ship sinking without a constitution, or to go ahead as we did and produce a constitution for our floundering country! (Ben Sits down)

G.W.: (Seated) The second stumbling block, how to set up the Executive Branch, or the Presidency, was turned over to a committee to resolve. They came up with the formula you use today; the President to be chosen by electors from each state, the number of electors to equal the states representation in Congress.

As the final draft was being printed in early September, a proposal to add a "Bill of Rights" was made. Although deemed worthy by most, it was just too much for the delegates to tackle at that point. They argued that the Bill could readily be added later by the amendment process provided for just that purpose. So, after four long, hot months of bitter debate, 39 delegates, representing 12 states, met on Monday the 17th of

September, 1787 for the signing. My companion here, being the great diplomat that he is, in order to smooth the ruffled feathers of the dissenting delegates, artfully phrased the last words to read that it had been approved "BY THE UNANIMOUS CONSENT OF THE STATES PRESENT."

We did it! Our work was finished! We all were exhausted, but not that exhausted that we couldn't meet that evening in the City Tavern to celebrate our accomplishments over a farewell dinner and a good glass of Philadelphia draft beer! Right Ben?

B.F.: Right on, George!

Narrator: Thank you Bro. George and Ben for telling us what really happened back there 200 years ago in 1787. We are celebrating the 200th anniversary of that masterpiece you produced! You might be interested to know that William E. Gladstone, an eminent British Statesman, no less, described the Constitution of the United States as: "the most wonderful work ever struck off at a given time by the brain and purpose of man."

B.F.: (jumps to his feet) Here! Here! And from a Redcoat! Bro. George, did you hear that? (George nods with a smile) I can't believe it! From a Redcoat! (Ben gets excited and stamps his foot, causing an expression of pain)

(Bro. George rises and assists Bro. Ben to his seat)

G.W.: Every time he gets fired up about his beloved country, his gout also gets fired up. I must get him back so he can rest; we have a long journey to make and he is getting up in years, you know. He has reached the ripe old age of 281 this year! (Applause)

Narrator: Before you leave, Bro. George, I would like to read something to the Brethren. I have here a letter I borrowed from the National Archives in Washington. It is your letter of transmittal to the Continental Congress after the completion of the Constitutional Convention. With your permission, I would like to read it.

(Narrator begins to read the letter but has difficulty reading the words)

Narrator: Bro. George, I'm sorry but the letter is quite old and I cannot make out some of your handwriting. Would you please read it to the Brethren?

B.F.: Don't feel too bad; we couldn't read his writing either! He was a better General than he was a writer.

G.W.: (George looks at the letter affectionately) Yes, this is my letter to the Congress, written shortly after the Constitution was completed. (George then reads the letter)

"It is obviously impracticable in the Federal Government of these States, to secure all rights of independent sovereignty to each, and yet provide for the interest and safety of all. Individuals entering into society must give up a share of liberty to preserve the rest. It is at all times difficult to draw with precision the line between those rights which must be surrendered and those which may be reserved. On the occasion of this Convention this difficulty was increased by a difference among the several States as to their situation, extent, habits and particular interests.

In all our deliberations on this subject we kept steadily in our view, that appears to us the greatest interest of every true American, the CONSOLIDATION OF OUR UNION; in which is involved our prosperity, felicity, safety, perhaps our NATIONAL

EXISTENCE! This important consideration, seriously and deeply impressed on our minds, led each State in the Convention to be less rigid on points of inferior magnitude, than might have been otherwise expected; and thus the Constitution, which we now present, is the result of a spirit of amity, and of that mutual deference and concession which the peculiarity of our political situation rendered indispensable."

That is what I wrote to the Congress. I might add that the compromise between individuals and States, so important back there 200 years ago, applies just as strongly today; more especially between the three branches of your Government. Without compromise, unity of purpose is impossible. I say to you today, beware of zealots, who in their blindness, let our basic freedoms: patriotism, love of country, respect for our flag, (turns and salutes the flag), respect for our government and yes, respect for the Presidency, to slip into disrepair. They do not really cherish them because they don't know what it is like to not have them. They weaken the TEMPERED MORTAR that your founding fathers used to cement this governmental structure into one common mass or whole!

America offers you today FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY! It is your sacred responsibility to see that they are passed on intact to those who come after you; to ensure that FREEDOM AND LIBERTY do not perish from the earth!

And now, if you will please excuse us, we will pursue our journey.

Narrator: (As George and Ben begin to depart) Bro. George, may I please have that letter back; my neck would probably end up in a noose if I failed to return it to the National Archives! (Bro. George returns the letter).

Brethren, let us show our appreciation to these two outstanding patriots! (Standing ovation)

(Bros. Ben and George retire, Ben on the South and George on the North, shaking hands with the Brethren as they leave.)

(As Ben and George retire)

Narrator: Brethren, let us show our appreciation to these two outstanding patriots! (Applause)

Narrator: Worshipful Master, we hope your members have enjoyed our Research program and if the A. Douglas Smith Jr. Lodge of Research can be of service to your Lodge in the future, please feel free to call on us. Thank you for inviting us to share your meeting with you.

(Back to the Research Lodge)

Narrator: Worshipful Master and Brethren, this is an example of how I visualize our Research Lodge Visitation Program to work. The program you saw today was borrowed from the Alexandria Scottish Rite. They performed this program during 1987 in 5 Blue Lodges and to the entire 7th grade of the Frederick County Middle School as part of their Blue Lodge Visitation Program and their celebration of the Bicentennial of our Constitution. At this time I would like to introduce to you Brothers Charlie Gray, who portrayed George Washington and Harry Fadely, who portrayed Benjamin Franklin. (Applause)

Narrator: Worshipful Master, it is my hope that you and the Brethren will nurture the seed I have planted and that it will bear FRUIT IN ACTION! Thank you!