

ALFRED DOUGLAS SMITH, JR.

by

Allen E. Roberts, PDDGM

L-S-M-F-T once meant "Lucky Strike Means Fine Tobacco". Right now it means "Let's stand, my fanny's tired." Sound familiar? It should. It's how A. Douglas Smith, Jr., often gets an audience's attention.

Or how about: "It's time to take a pee break, so let's do it and then we'll talk for a few minutes." There aren't many of us that can get away with that.

There are not many men who enjoy the respect, admiration, and love of most of the men and women who know him. There are even fewer men who can cover a greater variety of subjects at any given time, who can change from comedy or buffoonery to the dignified and serious. Doug Smith is one of this rare breed.

Doug served as Grand Master of Masons in Virginia in 1949, the year after I became a Freemason. I saw him once, dressed in his splendid regalia. The following year I met him for the first time as Executive Officer for DeMolay in Virginia. My Lodge, Babcock, wanted to organize a Chapter of DeMolay and he was asked to meet with us and tell us what to do. He wasted so much of our time with malarkey he and I had a brief argument, and we've been arguing ever since.

In 1957 the Grand Master, Archer Bailey Gay, stressed the need for non-ritualistic Masonic education. He charged the Committee on Masonic Information Research and Publications to devise a plan to accomplish this. It got nowhere under the appointed chairman, so somehow A. Douglas Smith, Jr., not an appointed member of the Committee, took over — probably under instructions from the Grand Master. Doug immediately made unprecedented changes. Among them was making me — a Junior Warden — an unofficial "grass-rooter".

One of the most important arguments Doug made was to call a meeting of this revised committee and include the elected Grand Lodge officers. He knew from bitter past experience continuity in any Grand Lodge is most important. You don't get it unless the line officers are on speaking terms and are free to offer their input. This continuity continued until 1970 and Virginia Freemasonry was the beneficiary.

Earl S. Wallace liked what he had seen so in 1958 he officially appointed Doug Smith chairman of the Committee on Masonic Information Research and Publications. I continued as a "grass-rooter" and "in putter" until the following year when I reached the height of my Masonic career and was made a full-fledged member.

Why is all this background important? Because it marked one of the highlights in the many milestones of Doug Smith's Masonic career. Although Thomas J. Traylor had seen the need to educate the Freemasons in Virginia, and worked toward that end, his efforts went for naught. He didn't have a firebrand such as Doug Smith to run with the ball, a fellow who knew how to find the men to do the job, and then how to get the best out of them.

From the beginning of his leadership in Masonic education, Doug made it clear that those who didn't work on his committee would be fired. He meant it; he did it. He made it an honor to be a member of the Committee on Masonic Information Research and Publications, which was later changed to Education. And this was at a time when expenses of committeemen weren't paid! Not even the cost of postage was reimbursed.

Doug is a tyrant when it comes to loving Freemasonry, and he expects everyone else to

feel as he does. Yet he is a paradox. He wants everyone to love and respect him, yet he is often blunt and a few consider him uncouth. He wears his feelings for all to see, but he still doesn't realize this. Doug has never forgiven a Past Grand Master who had blackballed him for membership in an invitational Masonic body. I suspect he will carry this malice to the grave.

He is one of the most precarious men I know. We have traveled thousands of miles together over the years, often to places where he is to speak. He becomes a nervous wreck, constantly worrying about how he will be received. Over and over again I've suggested he stop making speeches. I fear the anxiety will drive him to an early grave. I've pointed out that if speaking troubled me as it does him I'd quit right now.

Doug can't and won't quit, though. He has often pointed out that he's still trying to earn the title of "Most Worshipful". He won't believe he has earned it many times over. Many of us have recognized this for years. One of them is Stewart Wilson Miner.

Last year Stew asked me if I would help form a Lodge named for Doug Smith in Northern Virginia. I suggested it be a Lodge of Research for two reasons. One, Masonic education and research are Doug's passions (witness his work on the committee, and he was instrumental in forming Virginia Research Lodge); second, if the Lodges in the least Southernmost part of Virginia (Doug's terminology) were like those in the Richmond area, the opposition would be devastating. You are witnessing the happy results today in the A. Douglas Smith, Jr., Lodge of Research No. 1949.

As noted, Doug and I have been arguing since the first day we met. Rarely do I win, but I did once. We were in South Boston for a leadership meeting. On the way he told me Jesse White, the then Grand Master, wanted to add a fellow from Norfolk to the committee with the long name. I thought another fellow from there would be ideal. We continued our discussion in

the motel room until two o'clock in the morning. He finally agreed with me, or perhaps he decided he needed to go to sleep. At any rate, my friend was appointed. But in the long run I lost. My friend has become a bitter enemy.

The Midwest Conference on Masonic Education was formed in the early '50s. It proved an asset to the Craft. The Grand Lodges of the Northeast decided to emulate the Midwest. Among those approached for input were Doug Smith and Archer Gay. They leaned toward the newly formed Southeast conference, but backed away when they found this conference a "glorified mini Grand Masters and Grand Secretaries organization." Consequently, Virginia became a member of that Yankee and Northern organization called "The Northeast Conference on Masonic Education and Libraries."

Through a fluke Doug involved me in this conference almost from its inception. In 1961 the conference was to meet in Richmond. Doug wanted to show those Northerners that John Marshall was a Freemason and a Past Grand Master of Masons in Virginia. He asked me to help him prove it. With a little research we found a way. A play called "Lafayette Visits the Masons of Richmond" became the vehicle. A group of actors from Babcock Lodge helped and we put that play on in Masons Hall, the oldest Masonic temple in the United States.

Through Doug, I have met many of the great Freemasons in the country. He knows everyone that is anyone in the Craft. By being allowed to sit at the feet of these dedicated Masons I learned more about the aims, goals and purposes of the exalted who had come and gone. I also learned of the politics we aren't supposed to have in this Fraternity of Brothers. One evening stands out in my memory. It was in 1963 during a Northeast Conference. About sixteen men, all of them 33rd degree Scottish Rite Masons from both jurisdictions, except for me. Without exception they deplored the conferral of that degree! Why? Because "90% who receive it have done little or nothing for

Freemasonry." Other considerations were factors in the anointing.

One of Doug Smith's greatest faults, if it can be called that, is loving Freemasonry too much. From the day he was Raised, November 29, 1926, he has worked for the Craft. It was in Lewis Ginter Lodge No. 317 that occurred and to that Lodge he has given his allegiance. He and his father had wanted him to petition his father's Lodge, but an un-Masonic series of rejections had been taking place there, so they didn't risk it. In 1933, during the great Depression, he served his Lodge as its Worshipful Master. In 1937 he was appointed District Deputy Grand Master of the 15th Masonic District during a highly political, and again un-Masonic, period.

In 1942 Doug was Dr. Barrett's choice for Grand Junior Deacon, but he was defeated. But in 1944 he was elected. In 1949 he served with distinction the Masons of Virginia as their Grand Master. During the Grand Lodge session of February 1950 he proved his statesmanship. A strong movement was mounted to move the headquarters of the Grand Lodge to Roanoke or Norfolk. It remained in Richmond.

As Grand Master, Doug advocated the formation of a Research Lodge, and he broke the ground for a dispensation presented to the Grand Lodge in 1950 for the formation of such a Lodge. It passed and he was elected its first Junior Deacon, an office he proudly held until 1958 when he became Senior Deacon on the retirement of James Noah Hillman as the Lodge's Master. In 1962 he became its Master, and to my surprise, he nominated me for Junior Deacon.

Doug is proud of many things he has accomplished for the Craft throughout the years. He can point with pride to his eighteen years as Editor of the Virginia Masonic Herald. He can brag about raising \$65,000 for the Endowment Fund of the Masonic Home in 1939 when everyone said it couldn't be done.

Throughout the Masonic world the name of Alfred Douglas Smith, Jr., is synonymous with Freemasonry and the Order of DeMolay. No more appropriate name can any Masonic Lodge honor.

Doug's civic activities have been and are many and varied. He has put the principles of Freemasonry to work in the secular world. In the spiritual world he has been a life-long member of the First English Lutheran Church. For over twenty-five years he taught the men's Bible class. Frequently he has rushed home to carry out this commitment. One of his bitterest disappointments is his church's refusal to recognize Freemasonry as an adjunct to the teachings of the great men of the Bible.

You honor me highly by giving me this opportunity to present the first paper in the A. Douglas Smith, Jr., Lodge of Research. If this Lodge proves to be as excellent as the name it bears, all of us associated with the Craft will be rewarded.

May God bless each of you and your Lodge in the days and years ahead.