

**Edward (Ted) F. Dunsmore**

**DDGM Talks**

Talk Number: 16

Title: That's Not the Way We've Always Done It!!

Date: Saturday, April 13, 2019

Presented at: Brock Daylight Lodge No. 745

# **THAT'S NOT THE WAY WE'VE ALWAYS DONE IT!!**

*by RW Bro. Edward F Dunsmore, DDGM, Niagara A District  
On the Occasion of His Homecoming to Brock Daylight Lodge No. 745  
April 13, 2019*

When you or I question a practice that seems to defy logic, the answer is likely to be. "That's the way we've always done it." The response shifts whatever blame there may be to some unnamed person at some unnamed time in the past. The response also indicates no thinking is going to go into whether or not what has been done in the past is the best course for the future. At best, "That's the way we've always done it" is only partially true. Consider the story of the young girl helping her mother prepare Easter dinner.

Before placing the ham in the oven for baking, the mother cut off both ends. "Why did you cut off the ends of the ham?" asked the daughter.

"That's the way my mother always did it," was the reply.

The daughter quickly vanished into another room where she promptly telephoned her grandmother to verify what her mother told her was true. Grandmother replied she did, indeed, always cut the ends off the ham. Why? "That's the way my mother always did it."

As fate would have it, the next week brought about a visit from great grandmother. Overcome with curiosity, as young children often are, nothing would do but to pose this same question.

“Great Grandmother, mommy always cuts the ends of her ham before she puts it in the oven. Mommy says she does it because that’s the way Grandmother always did it. Grandmother says she did it because that’s the way you always did it. Is it true, Great Grandmother? Did you always cut the ends off of the ham?”

“Yes, indeed, my child, I always cut the end off the ham.”

“But why?” asked the young girl.

Holding her hands about twelve inches apart, great grandmother replied, “Because my pan was only this big.”

If Freemasonry is such a progressive order, why then, is the new Master of a Lodge who seeks to bring about change that he views as positive, so often met with the words, “That’s not how we did it in my year!”

Indeed, we shall all be changed. In fact, the art of Freemasonry is the practice of intentional change. Freemasonry changes a man from profane, to Apprentice, to Fellow, to Master, and over time, through a course of allegorical moral instruction. Freemasonry teaches that life is about change. We learn in our Craft that men advance through life in three principle stages of change, namely youth, manhood and age. Additionally, Masons are taught that we are always undergoing the process of change via the use of our working tools as we seek to change ourselves from rough to perfect ashlar, better fit for the builder’s use.

Yet, we still hear those famous words, **“That’s Not How We Did It in My Year!!!”**

It has been said that the only person who likes change is a baby with a dirty diaper. And, frankly I've seen some of them who didn't much care for it either. One of the principal reasons that humans are uncomfortable with change is because, by definition, it is insecure. We are comfortable with what we know. The familiar seldom surprises us. It is important that we realize that one of the aims of Freemasonry is to provide stability. Indeed, there are few human creations more stable than the great cathedrals constructed by our operative relatives. So then, how do we foster security while at the same time maintain needed change? The answer requires us to have a firm grip of what Freemasonry truly is, and what it is not. Freemasonry is a course of moral instruction. Freemasons are good men who seek to become better men through the application of Masonic principles in their lives. Therefore, some things about Freemasonry must never change or Freemasonry will cease to exist. A few examples of these unchangeable things are: solid investigation committees of our proposed members, the Masonic tradition of initiating, passing and raising men in our ancient ritualistic tradition, the moral teachings of the fraternity and the expectation of high moral conduct from all Freemasons.

However, many things in our Lodges, not only may change, but also should change. For instance, a Lodge's meeting time, the attire expected of its members, the time of the banquet hour along with the food eaten at the banquet, or the lack thereof, whether the Lodge reads its minutes aloud or prints them for the members to silently read, are all things that are open to change to meet the cultural expectations and needs of the membership. Once an understanding of what things are changeable and what things are not changeable has been arrived at, then one may safely go about the business of making needed changes. When the changes are being announced and implemented, it is important to emphasize

first the things that will be staying the same. Often times, a new Master is so excited about his idea that he forgets to present them with tact and humility.

In his play, "Death of a Salesman", Arthur Miller tells the story of Willy Loman. During his prime, Willie had been the best salesman around. He knew everyone and everyone loved him. Over time however, Willie's friends retired or died. Willie found himself surrounded by people who did not know him. Instead of being viewed with great respect and awe by those he worked with, his new co-workers viewed him with impatience and disrespect. They wished that he would get out of their way and stop talking about the good old days. They had a business to run. Willy just wanted to be treated with the respect and admiration that he had grown accustomed to in his prime. At the same time, he was frustrated with his own decreasing ability to perform.

Our Lodges are filled with Willy Lomans'.

Many elderly Lodge members are having a difficult personal struggle with their loss of status and power. They have retired from jobs where they were once respected leaders. The children who respected and obeyed them have now grown and moved away. As they look around society, they see people young enough to be their grandchildren in positions of power and prominence. They feel impotent and used up. Therefore, in Lodge, the last place where they still feel a sense of power, they often go too far in their attempt to have influence and control.

As frustrating as this reality may be to the new Worshipful Master, he would do well to recognize the base cause of the brother's behaviour. The wise Master will do all in his wise scope of influence to show the elder members of his Lodge true respect.

He will appoint them to do work that they are capable of excelling in, and frequently praise them for their efforts. When these brethren are busy with overseeing the mentoring committee, the chairperson of investigation committees or assisting with the banquet hour preparations, they will be less likely to oppose the new Master's plans with the words, "We didn't do it like that in my year!", because they will feel they still have a sense of belonging, purpose and power in the Lodge.

And finally, the new Worshipful Master will do well to recognize and always remember that it is HE who is Master of his Lodge. While he rules his Lodge with brotherly love and concern for his members' well being, he must always govern with the good of his Lodge in mind.

Remember great grandmother preparing the Easter ham. If we look to the past for examples of doing the best they could with what they had, we also throw down the gauntlet to generations to come. We issue the challenge not to mindlessly carry on as we did, but to build on our accomplishments.

Our circumstances change. Our procedures must change with them. Our ancestors understood that. Do we?

In closing, a thought for today:

***When a storm is coming all other birds seek shelter.  
The Eagle alone avoids the storm by flying above it.  
So, in the storms of life may your heart soar like an Eagle.***

To the Worshipful Masters assembled here with us today, may the actions you put forward in ruling and governing your Lodge

allow you to soar like the eagle. Thanks to you my Brethren and take care.