

CHANGES



The only person that likes change is a wet baby, " quipped Mark Twain. He goes on to say, "Everybody wants progress, nobody wants change". Have you ever noticed the last time you bought a bottle of Bayer Aspirin that the white cotton batten at the top of the bottle is no longer there, it had been there since 1914? But just recently, Bayer Corporation had decided to remove it because they said, quote, " "There wasn't really any reason to keep it there besides tradition. Besides, it is hard to get the darn thing out". Speaking of abolishing pain in surgery, Dr. Alfred Valcroe said as late as 1839, "It is absurd to keep on seeking to take pain out of surgery, the knife and pain, he wrote, go together and must be forever in-separable in the mind of the patient."

Medicine is slow to change, sometimes, science is slow to change, Astronomer Simon Nukem, declared emphatically, that human flight was a scientific impossibility, the year, 1903, and that very same year, two bicycle repairman, by the name of Orville and Wilbur Wright, decided to defy the declared impossibilities of science at Kittyhawk, North Carolina. And then you remember Marshall McCluan, who wrote a number of years ago, the written word is obsolete. And then wrote 15 books to prove it. Well, everybody hates change.

But if ever there was a word from Jesus about the positive side of change, it is found in our Scripture in Luke's Gospel Chapter 5 verses 36 to 39. "And he told them a parable also, No one tears a piece from an new garment and puts it upon an old garment; if he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins". And then he says something that seems to contradict what he just said, but it doesn't, it's really a warning, "And no one, after drinking old wine desires new; for he says, The old is good."

Here Jesus is painting a picture, speaking a parable, about new wine and new wine skins. Now what does it mean "New Wine". According to the new bible dictionary, it represents the wine made from the first drippings of the juice before the wine press was trodden, and as such it is particularly potent. So what is being dealt with here is potent fermenting wine. If you have every seen a wine bottle opening and making a pop, or made in the Province of Champagne, the cork could pop across the room. Present day, Home-Brew wine makers know of what I mean as the fresh juice starts its fermentation in an opening primary container that allows the grape juice to bubble and work. Only after it has settled down and converted most of the sugar into alcohol, can the wine be transferred in a tight glass container with a one-way valve.

When we think of a wineskin today, it is not the small kidney shaped leather container that is used at skating rinks and snowmobiling trips, for in those days, they would use the entire body of a sheep or goat, and clean it out and partially tan it, only partially so it was still flexible and use the neck as a spout. They would allow it to expand, as it fermented, just as bread rises, And it is important to put the new wine in a new wine skin because the old wine skin is brittle and firm and would burst under pressure. The parable speaks of waste. Now what in the world is Jesus, out of the blue, telling a story about how to bottle wine? What Jesus is doing is telling us a parable, an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, that is a mind teaser that has a deeper meaning. Like an onion that has many layers, this parable has different layers of meanings. Obviously, Jesus is the new wine and traditional religion of ancient Jerusalem is the old wine skins. Fermentation is about change. At the most obvious level the parable speaks of change, change, new wine, fermentation is about change. The change of the old covenant to the new. He is not here to patch up the old system, a reformer of the old system. He has come to transform it, to make people new from the inside out. Judaism, as good as it was, had become an old worn out garment. And it could not be patched with a few things from Christ's Gospel. The Gospel of the new covenant is simply too dynamic for an old covenant structure to contain it. It's about change from an old person to a new person.

There is a need for ongoing change in the church and I say that there is an ongoing need for change in the Fraternity. Dalton Camp, the longtime voice of the Progressive Conservatives says, "To resist change is to invite decay."

But before my word's become to heavy, let's digress briefly for a joke.

George and his friend, Henry were flown into northern Alberta for their annual Moose hunt and they finally bagged a huge Bull. Their ongoing problem is getting that thing out of there. Hunters in the crowd will agree with me that a moose shot on the ground gives a whole new meaning to the words "dead weight". On the appointed day the float plane came to pick them up and the pilot said, "I don't know boys, I don't think I could possibly put that thing on the plane and fly out of here, it is just too heavy". Both, George and Henry said, "It' all right, we've done it before, just trust us!" So they tie the monstrous moose over both the pontoons, the pilot now sees that the pontoons are just above the water, the plane is almost sinking, so He says, "Boys, I know we can't fly out of here". George says, "Trust us, we've done this before". So they back the plane to downwind side of the lake and roar off. Just as they reach the far shore, the plane miraculously takes off and they are flying, desperate to gain altitude. Until bang, they hit a tree in the forest, crash, bang, there is plane everywhere, moose everywhere, hanging from the top of the tree is the pilot, on the top of another tree there is George and Henry. So Henry says, "How do you think we did?" And George says, " I don't know, I think we got about 50 feet further than last year".

My point is this, there is an old saying, If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got. And there are Chapters that have doing the same old, same old things as far as methods and they are no further ahead this year

than last year, maybe 50 feet further than they were last year or maybe 50 feet backwards than they were 50 years ago.

Look at the changes we are facing today. The Shrine Temples moved to allow Masons directly into the Shrine, bypassing the Royal Arch/Knight Templar route or the 32 degrees in Scottish Rite Masonry route. Did we ask for this change, and have we really done something about it since? No longer can we sit there waiting for candidates to march through on the way to the Shrine and hope a percentage stick around the Royal Arch to really see what it is all about.

I suggest the most important committee to be struck each year is the Membership Committee led by an energetic Chairman who attracts active helpers and new ideas. He should ensure all the Companions regularly attend Craft Masonry Lodges with our pamphlets and Exaltation application forms in his pocket. Those forms should always be placed beside the sign in register and the Companions should not be shy in promoting Capitular Masonry. Most importantly, they should specifically make a point of asking a worthy Mason to join. Companions should ask the Worshipful Master for time at a Lodge meeting to present a paper on Royal Arch Masons. There should be no misunderstanding what Royal Arch Masonry is and how to join a respective Chapter.

To assist the Chapters in their marketing efforts, a Royal Arch Masons Website Committee was struck in February 2003 at the Grand Executive meeting in Red Deer, and I'm pleased with the launch of the Grand Chapter web page May 1, 2003.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to prepare a paper or essay on your Chapter and how it fits in your town or city. In your own words, you could explain why a Brother should join your Chapter. Type as long as you want, add pictures, maps showing locations, events, and then post it to the web page. Then where ever you go, just point the Brother to read your page. Free of charge and you don't have to print out anything. Post your Application for Exaltation on the WebPages, so the Brother can download the file, fill in the blanks and print it out. He could then mail the form to you with the application fee and ask for someone to come visit him to explain the procedures. Free of charge and you didn't have to do anything. How many Brothers out there attached to the Grand Lodge of Alberta, 8,300? Now, you can reach them free of charge because of a simple link on their webpage to ours.

The technology computer software and hardware to use the Internet is evolving at high speed and at this time, it is possible to broadcast real-time audio and visual webcam feed on the Internet. The recent Iraq War was broadcast around the world with laptop computers using simple webcams and satellite phones. I challenge the Chapters in Alberta to embrace this technology and install high speed Internet cables into the Chapter buildings to allow worldwide communication with the Fraternity. Imagine sharing a two way broadcast with another Chapter on the other side of the world. Your only limitations are the timezones and your imagination to organize the meeting. Imagine also having the Annual Convocation and the executive meeting broadcast on the Internet so Companions who could not travel could watch the proceedings.

The high majority of men joining Masons today belong to the computer and Internet age. They are comfortable with the technology and the research and education that can be accessed through the Internet is large and growing by leaps and bounds. Confidentiality and security of information can be arranged and the existing Companions can be sourced for hardware and their know-how to make it work. Our webpage launched this year is long overdue and while in it's infancy, will grow with the talents and attention of the Companions around the Province. This cheap, cost effective method of communication should provide a reliable tool for promoting Capitular Masonry and allowing effective, real-time communication from the Grand Chapter to it's members.

How about the family unit over the years. Once upon a time, just the Dad's worked and Mother looked after the kids. Television and all the extracurricular activities the children get into now never existed at the levels we see today.

The Masons who have young children are driving their family to all their sports activities during the week. They don't have time. A lot have their own extra studying or home study programs for further education to keep their jobs. They sometimes have daily homework required for their regular job. Chapters who are having problems getting membership to the meetings, how about moving to a Saturday afternoon so Companions who travel from afar, can make the meeting.

Grand District Superintendents. The strength of the Superintendent is directly proportional to the success or failure of that particular District. If their year was just attending the required meetings and sending in the required reports, then the GDS was not doing their job. True leadership is required throughout their year to support and encourage their Chapters. I encourage Districts to move away from circulating the job of GDS from one Chapter to another in rotation, and move to a program where a motivated Companion wants the job and there is a competition for the job. I see nothing wrong with the GDS coming from one Chapter in consecutive years provided he is the best choice for the District. A candidate for GDS must prove a demonstrated interest and an ability to do the job and allow his name to come before a democratic vote.

Regarding our degrees, The Mark Master Mason, Most Excellent Master and Royal Arch Degrees are artistic and beautiful in their structure. I see nothing wrong with encouraging the Chapters to go into full costume for the MMM and MEM degrees in order to enhance the message to the candidates. As well, the hymns and perambulation songs are an important and distinct part of the ceremony and this music portion of the degrees must be retained and enhanced. Since a lot of the Chapters do not have an organist or have occasions when the organist is not available, music and hymns were arranged to be digital recorded on a CD and this ritual CD will be handed out to the Senior Officer for each Chapter when they register for the 2003 Grand Convocation. This CD is provided free of charge and the combination of a portable stereo and CD quality recording greatly enhances the ceremony for all involved.

Perhaps it is time to become flexible with the rules of conferring degrees and the regular business of the Chapters. A Saturday field day to impart all three degrees should be tried or contemplated. In Edmonton and Calgary, the work of each degree could be allocated to one Chapter allowing 3 Chapters to share the load for the one day. This could allow the regular meeting nights to conduct research and education or perhaps have a fun night where the Companions get together for cards, darts or even perhaps a wine tasting competition put on by the home brewers in the Chapter. If a MMM or MEM is awaiting his Royal Arch degree and the ceremony is scheduled for another regular meeting night, why couldn't we ensure the regular monthly attendance of that MMM or MEM member and conduct the business of the Chapter in the degree which would allow his attendance.

When it comes to methods, we have to be willing to change. Now don't mistake the content for the container. The Royal Arch content or message is the new wine, also our ritual and our research and education into our past and future, but the container has to be flexible and the container is the traditions and shapes and methods that we use to teach the message to the future.

When it comes to the message we don't change, but when it comes to methods, if it is not broke, break it. What I mean by that is we should never be afraid of new methods. But if something has always been done the same, maybe is the best the reason for stopping doing it. If a thing has never been done, is maybe one of the best reasons for trying it. No business could exist on outworn methods, but the Fraternity keeps trying to. Any business which has lost as many customers as the Fraternity would have tried new methods a long time ago or they would have been bankrupt.

In other words, this parable about putting new wine into flexible new wineskins, tells us we should careful not being content with the old. One of the reasons the fraternity is dying in Canada is because we have become content with the old. This year, there will be Chapters folding across Canada, sometimes in strong Masonic areas. There is nothing wrong with content; it's the container, the methods in which how it is shared. What I mean by that, is we all know the world has changed, and we all know that sometimes when you walk into some Chapters, it is like walking into a time machine, you smell the mustiness in the air. I feel the Fraternity must be flexible in its methodology but not in our message. All Chapter meetings are contemporary, to some generations, but most are contemporary to an era other than today. In order to reach the generation of the 21st century, we need to do whatever it takes to be culturally relevant, and to take the timeless message contained in our rituals, and pour it into new wineskins. In other words we must be flexible. The reason that new wineskins in the parable were a must have was because it could expand to the growing wine as it fermented. And Jesus was saying to the Pharisees of his day, that you cannot fit me into your box, it's not going to work, and we need to be flexible in our methods but inflexible in the message. In other words, the message doesn't change:

- the foundation of truth and wisdom upon which should be erected the temple of our moral and spiritual life will never change,
- having wrought in the quarries, discovered the Keystone and being taught how to receive wages will never change,
- assisting with the completion and dedication of our mystic Temple and your zeal and fidelity to the Craft will never change,
- your reception within the veils to see the Sacred Word restored to Light will never change,
- to befriend and relieve with unhesitating cordiality, every worthy Companion who needs your assistance will never change and by being kind, just, amiable and virtuous in your intercourse with fellow creatures will never change.

But the way to communicate must be poured into new wine skins constantly. Be conservative in your Fraternity yet progressive in your methodology. The message must never change but the methods must change with each new generation. We must be flexible in our methods. Now I know that I'm talking to some of you who are already converted to this new method, but I want to tell you, that the wonderful, contemporary Chapter meeting you are attending today, in 15 to 20 years will sound old fashioned and corny. And I'm warning you now, that you had better be ready to embrace the new wine.

Chuck Yeager is a wonderful pilot and was the pilot that broke the sound barrier. In his autobiography he wrote about one day when he was test piloting the F 26, the Canadian fighter plane used in Korea, and he decided to show off to a friend at a lake in the Sierra Madras. When he buzzed the house at 50 yards above the ground, upside down, the controls locked up, the ailerons would not move. He remembered several times before that this problem occurred to 3 or 4 other test pilots just before they crashed and died. Now you would think Chuck froze at that instant, going at supersonic speed, upside down at 150 feet above the grown, but not Chuck, he just reduced the throttle, pulled the nose up a little bit, which meant he was pointing down for a while, rolled over and climbed up to 15,000 feet and tried the same stunt a couple of more times with the same result. After making his report, they found the culprit, right back at the factory. They discovered a little tiny bolt in the cylinder of the aileron that was supposed to be installed upside down so it wouldn't catch. There was an old fellow on the assembly line who had read the instructions but had disregarded them because He said," everybody knows that you always put a bolt in with the head up and not down". And Yeager put in his book that they fired him but never let him know how many pilots he had killed because he wouldn't try something new and move away from his old methods.

New York Times ran this true story with the headline, "11 Years Caged in an Airport, now he fears to Fly". It tells a true story about a man who spent 11 years in the Paris Airport. He had spent 11 years there, because after being expelled from his native Iran, he lost his papers and passport and no country would accept him. In 1988, He bounced between the immigration officers of Paris, France and London, England, and finally the French authorities allowed him to stay at the Paris airport while they tried

to get replacement travel papers and passports for him. That little while stretched to 11 years as he lived sleeping on benches and washing in the public bathrooms, getting handouts from employees and travelers. In 1999, the French Government authorities finally presented him with an international travel card and a French passport, suddenly he was free to go anywhere he wanted. But he smiled, and put them in his pocket and continued to write in his diary, and would not leave. The authorities were left with the dilemma to try and gently coax him out instead of throwing him out, because it was acknowledged the airport had become home to him. The place got to comfortable to him. It truly was his home. What is it going to take to move you if you are too comfortable. And it is going to take as much courage for you to step out of your old ways. To become a new wine person. I think the thing that is holding us back is fear. The fear of change. Someone has said people fear or prefer the certain of misery to the misery of uncertainty.

I want to leave you with this true story about the early days of jet fighter planes. And the problem they had with getting out of jet fighters when they were crashing. In the olden days of propeller planes it was easy to climb out and parachute to the ground. But going supersonic speed, if you tried that you would probably kill yourself from hitting the plane or being forced back into your seat. They solved the problem by invented ejector seats that with a pull of the handle, the chair would be released from the mountings and literally a powder keg underneath the chair would catapult you out of the plane. And if you are not careful, you can get your knees ripped off when you come out or get knocked out from the shock of hitting the wind. Theoretically when they designed it, you just exploded out and leaned forward out of the seat, and automatically without pulling a ripcord, the parachute that was between you and the chair would open. But they had a problem. Going at 750 miles per hour or sometimes at Mach 2, when you exploded out of that thing, the guys were so petrified they wouldn't let go of the seat for their dear life. And some of them plummeted right down to the ground and died. So they had to invent a device that after 2 seconds after being ejected from the plane, would literally kick the pilot out of the seat, so that the parachute would open up. So listen, if Jet pilots have to be launched out of the chairs, what is it going to take to launch you out of yours?

Thank you for the opportunity to let me address you today. May God be always at your centre and keep you and yours safe in the years to come.

By Rt. Ex. Comp. Terry Gould