

What's for dinner, Steak or Hamburger

Freemasonry in the past offered the promise of a steak dinner. Men looking for the steak dinner went through the effort of building the restaurant, raising the cow, butchering the meat, trimming it carefully, building the fire, and, eventually, enjoying the steak dinner they were looking for.

As time went by, Masons began to realize that buying hamburger at the grocery store was a lot less work. They had a nice-looking restaurant and asked "why should we go to all this work for a steak dinner when hamburger is pretty good and a whole lot easier?"

So, for the past 50-75 years, we have had men who have come to enjoy hamburger putting no effort into maintaining the restaurant. Cheap prices that only pay for hamburgers provided nothing to maintain the restaurant.

Now we have younger men investigating what Freemasonry is about and are finding the old signs offering steak dinners in attractive settings. When they come searching for a steak dinner, they find it easy to get into the restaurant. They find the restaurant tired, in need of repairs, and generally neglected. When they sit down to eat, all they get his hamburger.

Some ask questions about what happened to the steak dinners. But what they generally hear is "hamburgers are good. They were good enough for my dad, it's good enough for me, and you should be happy with hamburger." They become disappointed and go somewhere else because they were led to believe they would get a steak dinner and didn't get one. In some cases, they are told that expecting steak dinners may be unrealistic.

Some of us have learned about steak and go to our lodges and ask "Why are we offering hamburgers when we promise steak dinners?" When we ask these questions, we are generally met with a baffled look. They say "hamburger was good enough for my dad, I've enjoyed for a lot of years, so why should we go to extra effort to prepare a steak dinner?"

We say "look around you. The restaurant is dilapidated, the seats are empty, and the youngest guy in the room is 65. Who will keep this restaurant going in 15 more years?" This leads to worry, finger-pointing, the gnashing of teeth, and renting of clothing. Discussions are held and ideas put forth about publicity, recruiting, and more charity. However, when we talk about going to the extra effort to offer steak dinners, we hear that it is a lot of work to raise the cow, butcher the meat, trim it carefully, build the fire, and take other necessary steps to offer a really good steak dinner. Besides, we don't have near enough money to fix up the old dilapidated restaurant.

Thus we have a standoff. The hamburger lovers see no reason to do anything different while the restaurant falls down around them. Meanwhile, those who have learned to love and enjoy steak are frustrated that the restaurant is falling down and people who want steak dinners can't get one there and have to raise their own cow, butcher their own meat, build their own fire, and cook their own steaks.

Some of us have built new restaurants. Good for us but it raises the question of what will happen to all those restaurants all over the country.

Let's hope that the existing restaurants will learn that to survive in a market where steaks are being sought that they ought to learn how to raise a cow, butcher the meat, treatment carefully, build the fire, and cook a really good steak.

Dan Hrinko, PM

Clark Lodge No. 101, 1983, 2005

Arts and Sciences Lodge No 792, Charter Master 2010, 2011