

Most Worshipfuls, Rite Worshipfuls, Honorables, Worshipfuls, Honored Guests, Brethren; I want to thank all of you for the privilege speaking to you today.

Most of the time when I speak before my brethren the words are memorized and not my own, so if I seem a little nervous please bear with me.

It seems Freemasonry has been getting a lot of attention recently. I'm sure many of you have read Dan Brown's new novel *The Lost Symbol*, or watched on the Discovery channel, the program about the Secrets of Freemasons. Much of what has been recently said about Freemasons has been positive and well may peak a new interest in the Craft. This is a good thing!

Then of course there is Jesse Ventura's new conspiracy show that has one segment about secret societies that run the world, all of which, it is claimed, are tied to, or run by, the Freemasons.

Jesse Ventura's show talks about all those secret groups, which are all tied together and trying to bring about a new world order. It reports that in some way they are all connected with the Masons. You've got the Illuminati, the Trilateral Commission, the Bohemian Club, the Bilderberg Group and the Council on Foreign Relations, just to name a few.

Jesse didn't interview me for the show or accuse my fraternity of secretly running the world, but if he had I would have asked him, "How do you think we're doing?"

To us, these conspiracy theories might seem outright crazy, but when you consider it from the perspective of a non-mason it does tend to make sense.

We actually were once a secret society, up until the year 1717, and although we are no longer, we are a fraternity that is worldwide and a fraternity that transcends race, religion, color, politics or nationality.

It is outwardly obvious to anybody, that the fraternal bonds we share, are extremely strong. However, although there are approximately five million of us worldwide and just under two million Masons in the US, we are actually very few in number as a percentage of the population.

Most conspiracy theories center on the fact that our influence is hugely disproportional to our numbers. We can't argue with them there, because those are the facts of history.

Many of our founding fathers were Masons as was President George Washington. In fact, all down through American history there have been Masons who were US Presidents (14), members of congress (hundreds), supreme court justices (35), leaders in business and industry, along with many of great achievement in the arts and entertainment. For some reason Red Skelton comes to mind! Although with my physic it probably should be Ernest Borgnine!

It remains true today that there are a large number of Masons in positions of power, influence and leadership, in both the public and private sectors. Additionally, there can be no denying that Freemasonry is embedded in the fabric of American culture. Go to any American city and most towns and you will see a building in a prominent location that displays the square and compass on its cornerstone.

Masonic symbols are common, identified as such and although we didn't put them there, have even found a place on our money.

Masonic words and phrases have been inculcated in the American lexicon: "blackballed", "on the level", "on the square", or "give him the third degree" Although I'm not sure how that one became equated with interrogating criminals!

There can be no doubt at all, that Freemasonry has had an overwhelming effect on American culture, nor can there be any doubt that present day Masons have a huge influence all across the social, political and economic strata of our society. By the practice of our Craft and those sublime principles that guide us, most Masons tend not to be boastful, prideful, or self-aggrandizing. We tend to lead others, by the very same method with which we recruit new members; by quiet example.

If Jesse Ventura and other conspiracy theorists knew just a little bit more about the true nature of Freemasonry and would allow common sense to prevail they just may see things in a different light. They should begin with the purpose of Freemasonry, which is to take good men and make them better. They might start with the question of what makes a good man? It is commonly accepted that to be considered a good man you should be three things: A good husband, a good father and a good provider.

Considering an application and interview to enter the Craft, those very questions are asked. Freemasonry then endeavors to make that good man, even better.

And now the application of common sense!

If you were going to hire a man, what kind of man would you want to hire? What kind of man is worth training, promoting and trusting? What kind of man do you want for a neighbor, a friend or advisor? What kind of man would you select to give political or financial power to?

Those questions have been asked many times and many times the answer has been; A Mason.

And here's where all the conspiracies tend to fall apart.

Those questions are most often asked by non-masons. They select the man, not because he's a Mason, but because of the kind of man, Masonry has made him!

It has never really been as many suspect, one Mason promoting another. It has been most commonly the promotion of those who were worthy. Freemasonry, is simply, where that man's worth was built!

One of my brothers in Kona tells me that Masons in society are very much like the cream in pasteurized milk. There is very little cream in pasteurized milk, but no matter how hard you shake it, once you sit it down that cream will always rise to the top!

With over 300 million people in the United States there are less than two million Masons. That means we represent less than seven tenths of one percent of the population.

Thankfully, we've recently see an increase in young men joining the Craft. In Kona, in the past decade, our Lodge membership has increased by over ten percent. I am hoping that trend continues because if we are going to continue to run the world, as well as we have so far, we're going to need a lot more Masons!

It always amazes me that those conspiracy fellows are always trying to link us to the Illuminati, the Trilateral Commission, the Bohemian Club, the Bilderberg Group and the Council on Foreign Relations. There's no question that some of those groups were started by men who were masons.

David Rockefeller, a mason, attended the Bilderberg Group meetings, was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and founder of the Trilateral Commission, the purpose of which is to foster better and peaceful relations between countries. Hardly a malevolent purpose!

For all their weaving of suspicious links, most of these nut cases have no idea that all Shriners are Masons!

I want you to imagine a world run by Shriners. Now that would be one heck of a New World Order!

The upside of having masonry highlighted in novels, on TV and even by the conspiracy shows is that it is bringing a renewed interest to Freemasonry.

There are many men out there who have relatives and friends who are Masons and hopefully more and more of the good ones will think to ask about our unique fraternity.

I don't think there is anything wrong in talking up Freemasonry and letting men know that they have to ask. After all, in near three decades of being a Master Mason I have never once met a brother who is sorry he asked!

And, the next time someone notices that you're a Mason and asks you if Freemasons run the world, look them right in the eye and answer them honestly. Say:

Yes we do,
as we have always done

By example!