

HOW TO HAVE A SUCCESSFUL FESTIVAL

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Texas is greatly blessed in having the opportunity and the desire to host some 25 to 30 Festivals each year, however, even though with this large number of Festivals, there are still some who do not follow a plan of action which makes for great success. I know some of the Chapters which, technically might have charges preferred against them for embezzlement - - for taking money for Degrees and giving nothing in return. When a Master Mason gives you his petition and the fee for the Degrees see that he is given everything to which he is entitled and by that I mean good, true, Masonic Degree Work! With this thought in mind and with the birth of our Festival program during the mid-60's, our great Order has taken a giant step toward obtaining many good men in our ranks who would not be inclined to membership if required to spend many different days for Degree Work.

For this purpose, I have been asked to bring a few remarks as to what makes a Festival successful. No meeting of any kind can be very successful without advance preparation! Conferring Degrees in a Festival is certainly no exception. While there is no fixed rule that may be laid down for every Chapter in every Community, some of the following important steps will prove successful for all.

First of all, no Festival should be carried out in less than 60 days from its conception. A well planned and well executed Festival should require at least three meetings preparatory to the actual conferring of the Degrees, and the following is an agenda that should be followed at each meeting. The first meeting should be a "plan meeting" in which general features should be determined such as:

- A. The date of the Festival. It is very important that the calendar of events for the area as well as for the State be studied in order to prevent as many conflicts in dates as possible. It is most important, however, that a date be set.
- B. The name of the Class. Should you wish to name the class of candidates in honor of some distinguished Companion, it will be well to consult him and ascertain when it will be possible for him to be present. By setting a date and naming a class, you give the officers and active workers ample time to arrange their work and their schedules, and most important, to be prepared for whatever parts may be assigned to them. It also gives the prospective candidates something definite and affords them the opportunity to make their plans to be present.

Do not let the failure to have petitions in your hand hold up plans for a Festival. Many a successful Festival has been planned and carried out in instances where there was not a petition on the desk of the Secretary at the time a date was set. Unless you have a date fixed, and a class named, the size of the class will be small and very little interest will be aroused.

The second meeting should be "an organization meeting" in which the following should be carried out: Appointment of Committees. No Officer of a Chapter should attempt to carry on the burden of all the activities of his Chapter! He must "set the craft to work" and this involves every member. There must be work for all in carrying out a successful Festival. The more Companions work, the more interest; and the more petitions. I shall only suggest a few committees although there should be no limit to the number that could be appointed, governed only by the need.

- A. Petition Committee. This is an important Committee because the size of the class will depend largely upon how this committee will function. It is suggested that while this petition committee may be a large one, yet two or three very capable Companions should serve as a central committee to coordinate the work of the committee and to see that all members function. If the Chapter is located in an area which several Lodges exist, it is important to name one Companion to act in each of these Lodge areas. Most Important, let it be known that all members of the Chapter are ex-officio members of the Petition Committee, and encourage all to bring in petitions!

The central committee should furnish the other members with petitions and other literature and should have a list of those eligible for the degrees and a file of these names will be helpful for all of the members. A record should be kept of all who are contacted and it should show the results of the contact. All Master Masons should have the opportunity to become Royal Arch Masons and the records should be retained for future use of the Chapter.

- B. Publicity Committee. Do not under estimate the value of your publicity. A mere notice that degrees are to be conferred or that certain individuals will take certain parts, or that refreshments will be served, in not proper publicity, nor does it serve the ends of Royal Arch Masonry.

This committee should include at least one Companion who has some advertising ability, and who can place before the members and the candidates an inviting picture of Capitular Masonry. Do not complain that the newspaper will give no space. Newspapers publish news.... See that they have news!

Design an attractive program and see that it is placed in the hands of your members. Mail letters to all your members and tell them of your plans. By all means, try a "telephone committee". It brings results. Also important, let all the other Chapters, Councils and Commanderies in the area know of the planned activity and invite them to participate with their candidates and workers for the Degrees.

- C. Refreshment Committee. "He who works, must eat" is just as true in a Royal Arch Chapter as it is in everyday life. For this committee, try to have someone with a knowledge of food purchasing and preparation.
- D. Properties Committee. This committee is a most important one. Have this committee go over the needs of each Degree, locate the paraphernalia, and see that it is made available at the time needed. This committee should have ready all equipment and Lodge room/rooms prior to each Degree.
- E. Selection of Workers. Be sure to assign parts for the Degrees at these first meetings. No one likes to be called on at the last moment to take a heavy part without advance notice. After the cast is chosen, see that they are notified, and that they accept. If they do not, then another must be selected. Officers of the Chapter need not be those who are to confer the Degrees. Select the Companion who can best do the job and be a credit to the Festival. Try to make the Companion fit the part, in looks, in voice, in size, and in personality.

- F. Ritual Director/Pusher. A competent Companion must be appointed to see that each Degree is conferred properly, last minute changes in the Degree Teams are made and most important, that the Festival is kept on time. Even with a well-planned Festival, all is lost if it cannot be kept moving and on time.

- G. Master of Ceremonies. You may have a few or many guests and someone knowledgeable should be appointed to see that they are properly introduced and that they are made to feel at home. Too little attention is, as a rule, paid to the Candidate; after all, he is the most essential part of the Festival, for without him, there would be no Festival. Remember, that the Candidate is a stranger to your midst and he will not know which way to turn or what to do. He should be looked after from the first moment he arrives to the conclusion of the final Degree. The Secretary should furnish a list of the Candidates showing their names, Chapter, Council, and Commandery so that they may be properly checked in and records are kept. Every accommodation should be given the Candidate to inspire him in a desire to return later and visit the Chapter or to take part in future Degree work.

With all of the above items taken care of, you are now ready for the third meeting, the General Meeting. Because of the inspiration it may afford, it is suggested that as many as possible be urged to attend the final meeting of the Committees, Officers and Members.

This meeting will be an occasion for making final reports as to progress and cleaning up the odds and ends which always arise in carrying out a successful Festival. This meeting simply serves as a check on what has been accomplished and will enable you to locate the weak spots, and give you ample time to correct all such weaknesses.

You are now ready for the final day and the success of your Festival will depend on how all committees have functioned.

Companions, in concluding this discussion, I would like to say that there is no magic formula for conducting successful Festivals that I know of except serious planning and hard work! We just can't say "Let's have a Festival" and expect it to happen. Things just don't happen... they are made to happen and made to happen by hard and faithful work by all of our leaders as well as our total Memberships.

If I gather anything from that Sacred Book of Laws we so dearly love, it is that God says nowhere that we are to be successful... It says in plain language that we are to be faithful in whatever tasks are assigned. If we develop that faithfulness in all of our endeavors, we shall have no fear of failure and shall reap the rewards of success.