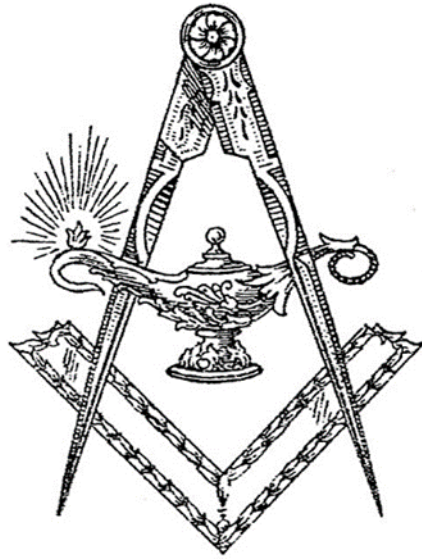


Grand Lodge of Mississippi F. & A. M.



**Promoting a deeper understanding
of the Investigative Committee in the Practice of Mississippi Masonry**

Grand Lodge of Mississippi Education Committee

February 2023

An Educated Mason is a Dedicated Mason

FOREWORD

The guidance offered in this booklet has been prepared after many hours of study and research, to the end that invaluable information might be made available for investigating committees to assist them in fully and completely performing the most important duty to which they have been assigned.

One of the first official duties of the Worshipful Master, after a petition for initiation, affiliation, or restoration is presented to the Lodge by the Secretary, is to appoint a committee to make an investigation and furnish a written report on the worthiness of the applicant. A Brother appointed to such a committee should feel that he has been singularly honored, through the Worshipful Master, to have been vested with the utmost confidence of his Brethren. Members should have a feeling of security in their belief that the committee appointed will pursue every avenue offered in the guidance contained in this booklet, and, that after doing so, they will then be better qualified to make a conscientious report, whether it be favorable or unfavorable.

By and large, the Lodge will also have the feeling that if there is any doubt as to the worthiness of the applicant, the Lodge will be given the benefit of such doubt. The fact that an applicant for initiation, restoration, or affiliation might be rejected does not mean that he is being condemned, but simply that he must wait six (6) months before offering a new petition, during which time he could very well be under observation.

We should never lose sight of the fact that a man seeks initiation into our Fraternity of his own free will and accord and never by invitation, which would obviously indicate that not everyone who would ask for admission is worthy of having the beauty and solemnity of our ritual imparted to him. Now, as never before, by their strict application and devotion to duty, our investigating committees could well be designated and relied upon as the "GUARDIANS OF THE WEST GATE." For instance, many petitioners arrive at our doors today via online Grandview referrals, with no one in the Lodge having any knowledge of their worthiness.

As some of this course material was developed in other Masonic Grand Jurisdictions, the topics and the details provided as discussion are general in nature, and it should be noted that in all cases the Williams Digest of Laws (2022) should be the rule and guide of your information and Masonic education on matters of Masonic law in the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi, Free and Accepted Masons, as this publication is **NOT** the final authority on any matters under review or discussion. The information contained herein is an aggregate of sources too numerous to note and the product of an accumulation of the material over time., As such, some original sources may be obscured to all but God above. However, we the Committee sincerely desire to pay homage to those who have made laudable efforts and toiled tirelessly to create portions in part or total, and we earnestly desire to express a heartfelt, "thank you" to each and every one that contributed. We further pray that the Great Architect of the Universe pay you ample wages for your labors.

MASONIC INVESTIGATIONS BACKGROUND

Out of their experience and notes over many years and gleanings from available resource materials, published by other Grand Jurisdictions, and in a review of the Williams Digest of Laws (2022), the Grand Lodge of Mississippi's Constitution, Rules and General Laws, and the Mississippi Blue Lodge Text Book, (2021) the following information contained herein is provided as guidance and direction for the local Lodge to incorporate into the best practices of the Lodge in ensuring that prospective members are of the character, reputation and good name that is so absolutely essential to having a Lodge membership comprised of good men and Masons in their local community.

The information herein contained applies to all petitions for initiation, affiliation, or restoration, as applicable. Appropriate references are cited as they are both available and pertinent, with exceptions noted as such. All information contained herein is accurate as to the date of publication (2023), and it is recommended that citations and references be checked as to correctness at the time of examination, as edicts of the Grandmaster, judicial decisions or the Annual Grand Lodge Proceedings may materially or substantively render the information null and void. Information on variations in the process will be explained in the appropriate section, if applicable. E.g., initiation, affiliation, or restoration.

It is further recommended that anyone serving on a Lodge investigation committee regularly make himself thoroughly familiar with the contents of the Williams Digest to be able to serve on this most important committee, particularly the citations as contained herein. The following information serves as a guidance document only and is **not** intended as a substitute for the study of the laws guiding the practice of Freemasonry, but merely an educational resource. In the words of St. Paul to Timothy, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" Holy Bible, 2 Timothy 2:15 KJV

REFERENCES

Hereinafter all uses of the term "Digest" are to the Williams Digest of Laws (2022), being the Constitution, Rules and General Laws of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi, Free and Accepted Masons, 2022 edition. All references hereinafter styled as "Text Book" are to the Blue Lodge Text Book, Mississippi, 2021, Thirtieth Edition. Citations to the aforementioned information are provided to allow Brethren to consult directly with the primary source information as practiced in Mississippi Freemasonry as of the date of this document. In **ALL** cases the Williams Digest and the Blue Lodge Text Book provide the most correct information to be followed and any other references are secondary in nature.

In instances where online references are utilized to further elucidate a point, it is our intent to provide the user of this document the most direct path to the information. However, hyperlinks do not always remain operational over time. As such, as much information as is reasonably possible is provided to assist in your search.

Additionally, due to the fact that the language of our Williams Digest and the Mississippi Blue Lodge Text Book reflect the meanings and definitions in use at the time of development and implementation, we highly suggest a dictionary be consulted with definitions from that era, as the meanings of some words have transitioned over time. E.g., Websters Dictionary, circa 1828.

IMPORTANT NOTE

The quality of initiates predetermines the future of Freemasonry. They are its very life blood. We do not and we cannot seek out and invite those whom we might like to have with us simply because we desire more members for our Lodges. It is paramount that candidates approach Freemasonry of their “own free will and accord,” and their association with our ancient Craft should not be solicited in an improper manner or be a product of idle curiosity. This is not a new phenomenon in Freemasonry, as illustrated by the words of Dr. Albert Mackey in the 1800s, “*It is a very general opinion among Freemasons that a candidate should not be actuated by curiosity in seeking admission into the Order. But, in fact, there is no regulation or landmark on the subject. An idle curiosity in, it is true, the characteristic of a weak mind. But to be influenced by a laudable curiosity to penetrate the mysteries of an Institution venerable for its antiquity and its universality, is to be controlled by a motive which is not reprehensible, an impulse to be esteemed and welcome...and is very different from the curiosity for knowledge which leads a profane to seek fairly and openly an acquaintance with mysteries which he has already learned to respect.*” Mackey’s Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences for reference, see: Curiosity, http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/mackeys_encyclopedia/c.htm

Our Williams Digest states that a candidate, “...must declare upon [sic] honor that he offers himself freely and voluntary, unbiased by improper solicitation and uninfluenced by mercenary motives, and that he is prompted to solicit the privilege of Masonry by a favorable opinion of the Institution, a desire for knowledge, a sincere wish of being serviceable to his fellow creatures...” (Digest, §17-1.1 QUALIFICATIONS, pg. 78)

Oftentimes, the question of what constitutes proper vs. improper solicitation arises and is an excellent starting point for examination of the issue involves determining what constitutes an “improper solicitation” versus a “proper” solicitation? Accordingly, we shall start with the Websters Dictionary, circa 1828 Edition, as it defines the term, “solicitation”:

SOLICITA'TION, *noun*

1. Earnest request; a seeking to obtain something from another with some degree of zeal and earnestness; sometimes perhaps, importunity. He obtained a grant by repeated solicitations.
2. Excitement; invitation; as the *solicitation* of the senses.

Websters Dictionary: See: Solicitation, <http://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/solicitation>

Thus, it would appear difficult at best to determine, except by inference, what would be considered “improper” to push the issue of joining a Lodge by: a promise of anything of value, such as a material, social or economic benefit; use of a repeated, high-pressure approach; or, the giving of a petition for the Three Degrees to a person of casual acquaintance or unknown background. Upon review of our Williams Digest we can determine that this is an improper solicitation as a candidate, “...must be recommended by two members of the Lodge who vouch for his moral character and qualifications, based upon their own knowledge of the man;” (Digest, §17-1.1 QUALIFICATIONS, pg. 78 and §17-5.1 GENERAL RULES, pg. 83)

We therefore stand by and wait, as we must, for those who desire our companionship to seek us out and themselves petition for membership in our Fraternity at such time as it may suit their own good pleasure.

Or, do we have to do no more than stand by and wait, and they will come to us? Let us review a few considerations of relevance prior to answering this question.

The ban on what could be considered solicitation could be considered and debated by men of good will on both sides of the practice, and, in fact, it has been in a number of Grand jurisdictions over the last fifty years with varying levels of success on either side of the issue. The primary purpose of the sentiment against solicitation in any form has been that for almost three hundred years men of all classes, social standing, and convictions joined without any prompting or solicitation, other than the quiet words, actions, and deeds of men than for whom those individuals had respect and admiration based upon their observations and reports of others. However, the number of men in prominent positions of prestige and respect in the areas of industry, commerce, religion, and politics is now less visible or apparent with most certainly less visibility or at a much lower level of participation in due no part to the lack of their joining our ranks. *"Like begets like"* is the adage that comes to mind as one example. In biology it can refer to the traits that offspring display as a product of being the children of others of the same species. It was a common phrase in the 1850s as an ongoing discussion of evolutionary practices covered "On the Origin of the Species" by Charles Darwin.

One can readily argue that, beginning with the original practitioners of Freemasonry, many boys and men desired to join the Operative Craft guilds for the purpose of learning a skilled tradecraft such as the stone masons of old. Even now men approach trade unions, vocational-technical, and trade schools expressing an interest in the fact that they want to participate in a chosen skill and have a path to economic improvement. Thus, it would not be inconceivable that men would desire to find a means to participate in a path to self-improvement in our beloved Fraternity, particularly one with the slogan, *"We make good men better,"* if provided an opportunity. The opportunity for selection, therefore, is very limited and the area of selection is narrow - that of review or investigation and acceptance or rejection after voluntary application for membership in our order has been made.

Freemasonry is suffering from certain ills which have been generated by the admission of those who have come into it seeking ulterior benefits which it does not impart.

It is most important that when an application is before the Lodge for consideration that every member be mindful of that injunction in the charge in the Entered Apprentice degree: *"If, in the circle of your acquaintance, you find a person desirous of being initiated into Masonry, be particularly attentive not to recommend him unless you are convinced he will conform to our rules, that the honor, glory and reputation of the Institution may be firmly established and the world at large convinced of its good effects."* (TEXT BOOK, pg. 36). The purpose of a thorough investigation is to check out these characteristics, as perchance the recommending Brother overlooked something.

Nowhere in all the work of Masonry is there a more important service to be rendered to the Lodge than that to be performed by those appointed to investigate the petitioners for Masonry. All too often the members of this Committee are content with a superficial investigation, either because they do not fully realize the great importance of the service they have been called upon to render, they do not know how to make the proper kind of an investigation, or they are overcome by the desire for new members.

An appointment as a member of an investigating committee should not be accepted indifferently or lightly. Such an assignment given by the Worshipful Master implies very clearly that one has been selected to procure all available information to consider the worthiness of a profane to become a Master Mason.

In this, one becomes the eyes, the ears, and the brain of the Lodge. It is his duty to search out all of the facts concerning the applicant and then judge these facts so that he can advise the Lodge in the form of a favorable or unfavorable report, which report in practically every case, guides the action taken by the Lodge. Lodge members are not bound by the report of the investigating committee, and all members must be guided by his own conscience. (Digest, §17-1.1, Annotation 23, pg. 79)

This is a grave responsibility which requires diligent search from all angles, by way of every channel, to ascertain if the applicant is duly and truly prepared by precept, example, and reputation and in every other respect to become a Master Mason; if he will prove of strength and helpfulness to our Fraternity, its teachings, its purposes, its traditions, its principles, and its future.

The strength and power of Masonry is not so much in the quantity, as in the quality, of its membership, and, therefore, undesirables should be stopped before they reach the point of knocking on our door. Every applicant must be thoroughly and rigidly investigated to protect our Fraternity because it has been truly said: *"No member of a Lodge is ever merely useless to it - he is either beneficial or injurious, either aids its progress, or retards it. If ever in Freemasonry men become numerous who do not comply with their obligations, do neither appreciate nor understand the sublime truths it teaches, and only hold their membership as it inures to their personal benefit, then Masonry will be only a name and its God a word without meaning."* Author Unknown

Accordingly, we must be careful not to open our doors indiscriminately and admit with too lavish a hospitality the ignorant and the turbulent, the selfish and the indifferent. We must bear constantly in mind that membership in the Craft is too priceless to be shared without due consideration.

How essential then that not only investigators be chosen with care but that they be acquainted in some manner, with the nature of the assignment, its significance, its value to the Lodge. Further, it is most essential that they be given an outline telling them how they should go about this assignment, whom to contact, what facts to secure concerning the applicant, and many other leads on proper procedure in that connection.

Almost the last opportunity not to commit error in admitting a candidate to initiation is the initial investigation. Every member, therefore, should likewise be mindful of the injunction in the Charge in the Third Degree, that *"To preserve the reputation of the Fraternity unsullied must be your constant care..."* (TEXT BOOK, pg. 75-76). That the reputation of the Fraternity may be preserved unsullied our law requires that the character of the petitioner shall be fully investigated. From Williams Digest, "...be referred to a committee of three for investigation into his character and standing, to be reported at the next or some other Stated Communication, and until such report is made, it shall lie over for consideration. Such investigating committee shall satisfy itself whether all the facts stated in the petition are true, from the best available information," further that if, "...he is disqualified, the committee shall so report, and such petition shall be dismissed." (Digest §17-5.1, pg. 83).

The fact that many of our members have become inactive, are disinterested, and fail to attend their Lodges may be due in part to the way we have selected those admitted to the Fraternity in the past. It is often apparent that we have failed to make a careful evaluation of each of the individuals petitioning and analyze their motives before they were admitted. This is a task which cannot be properly handled by the applicant's vouchers alone but can only be performed by an investigating committee whose members appreciate their responsibilities and are familiar with their duties. Considering these facts, the members

of the investigating committee should be mindful of the investment of the Lodge's time, talent, and treasures that will be made in that man and that they are truly the gatekeepers of these valuable commodities. The committee should be aware that if they do not do their job properly, they may allow men to enter our Fraternity without having inquired of facts that could have easily been determined by a careful investigation. It should be imperative that careful inquiry be made into the physical, intellectual, and moral fitness of any man under consideration for membership in the local Lodge.

*****STANDING COMMITTEE.** The Education Committee offers that an investigating committee should be one of the standing committees with a cadre of trained members of the Lodge and would prove itself invaluable in the successful performance of its duties and responsibilities to the Lodge. It should be large enough not to impose all the work on a few. There are at least three very good reasons for making this a standing committee. First, every member of the Lodge ought to be active on some working committee. Second, the investigation of petitioners should not be by members haphazardly chosen, by the inexperienced or unknowledgeable in our processes or traditions, or by the careless or other members unappreciative of Masonry. Instead, the committee should consist of those who are well trained, who know that a complete investigation, fair to the applicant. The committee, which is necessary for Freemasonry, requires time, some degree of skill, much patience, an understanding of human nature and dedication to the principles of Masonry. Third, it could become the duty of the investigation committee to review a petition for not only initiation, but of affiliation, or restoration, in which both of these circumstances require a more thorough understanding of the laws and rules of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi, as will be seen later the material provided.

SEPARATE INVESTIGATION BY EACH MEMBER. The consensus seems to be, and it is our recommendation, that a separate and independent investigation by each member of the committee produces the best results. It avoids the impression by those persons being interviewed that they are being "ganged up on" or subject to a tribunal of sorts. One would be surprised to know how often this feeling exists. Separately, each investigator accommodates his task to his own convenience. The abilities and personalities of the committee members, with experience, are brought more fully into play when working separately, and a more complete picture of the candidate is obtained when they share their information. Notwithstanding, there is a benefit in inviting a prospective candidate to social events, such as dinners, so as to help shape his expectations, answer any questions, and allow the membership to generally learn about the candidate.

COMMITTEE SHOULD BE PROVIDED TRAINING UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER. While every committee appointed by the Master should be briefed on its duties, we feel that the investigating committee should receive the personal attention of the Worshipful Master as soon after appointment at a meeting can be arranged. This compilation should be used as a guide for discussions and serious study should be given the subject. No member of the committee should be given an assignment of investigation on a petition for the degrees or for affiliation until after he has attended at least one or more such briefing. It would also provide for a better outcome for the participating committee member and the applicant for there to be a better training program in each local Lodge and an informed training on the investigation process. An occasional meeting of the whole committee to exchange experiences and to restudy their duties is very productive of excellent results.

We could draw further inference from our own Williams Digest, in that it is a duty to not to be taken lightly as there are certain instances wherein a submission to the entire Grand Lodge to review is required, "The petition must be presented at a Stated Communication and be referred to a Committee of Investigation

to report at the next Stated Communication. The vote must be taken by secret ballot and must be unanimous before the Lodge can ask the Grand Lodge to restore one who has been expelled. (1898-65) (1902-130) DIGEST §25-11.5, pg. 157-158).

One can easily determine the possibilities that if we as a Fraternity give such oversight to one having previously been a member, that perhaps some would not be cavalier in the investigation of one who has never been a member of a Lodge? As a thought, would it have been possible to have ascertained in the initial investigation of a candidate certain circumstances that may have contributed to this unfortunate turn of events, had it been completed so thoroughly, so as to have prevented such an expenditure of time and talent as is required to get another re-instated?

OBJECTIVE - TWO-FOLD. While the primary duty of the investigator is to learn all he can about each applicant for membership in the Fraternity, he has a valid opportunity and consequently duty to tell them and their wives and families something about Freemasonry and its mission. The applicant should be informed about what he is expected to put into his Lodge as well as what he may get in return for his contribution of time and thought.

As the committee member goes about his investigation the guide questions set forth below should never be asked directly of an applicant for membership in Freemasonry. These are suggestions only for the investigator and some of the things to be borne in mind by him as his investigation will help determine the quality of the future of our Fraternity.

ON THE ART OF INTERVIEWING

Questions are like road signs. They point out a specific direction toward which we want the other person to walk. Each additional question changes the direction. A series of questions zigs and zags the person down the paths we want him to take rather than the paths he might take if left alone.

If we use only a few “open-ended” questions, and then let the other person talk along the directions of his own thinking, we will usually find he covers most of the things we should have asked him plus some important points we would not have thought about or known about. The conversation may wander back and forth, but, in the process, he will touch on our main interests.

Questions are “open-ended” when they are phrased so they cannot be answered “yes” or “no.” For example: “Who are his associates and how do they spend their spare time?” The person can say anything he wants. Your opinion or guess is not indicated. The question does not give any lead as to which way you might prefer to have it answered. Open-ended questions encourage discussion.

Open questions begin with the words: What, Where, When, How, Which, or Who.

The longer a question is the harder it is to follow. Each additional few word in the question adds another aspect or consideration. By the time we have finished a long question the listener is confused by the several aspects it presents and is likely not to remember the first part of it. Short questions are far easier to address than long ones.

Closed-ended questions are the tools of cross-examination. They force toward very short answers. A series of them closes conversation down to nothing but a deadly question-and-answer session. We can trap a person, we can maneuver him, we can back him into a corner with closed questions. To see this best read the cross- examination in a legal trial. It is loaded with closed questions. The lawyer wants only yes or no

answers and so he uses closed questions. They give him control over the witness's testimony; they allow him to maneuver and to trap. All of us instinctively recognize this and when we are given a series of closed questions, we shorten our answers and raise our defenses against being trapped.

Questions are "closed" when they are phrased so that they can be answered "yes" or "no." For example: "Did he lose it gambling?" The question so phrased tends to lead toward a "yes" or "no" answer. It tends to indicate your opinion or the way you might prefer the question to be answered. Closed-ended questions discourage discussion.

Closed-ended questions begin with the words: Is (Are, aren't, was, wasn't); Has (Have, Haven't); Do (Did, Didn't); Can (Could, Couldn't); Will (Would, Wouldn't); Shall (Should, Shouldn't).

If we are really interested in what the other person thinks, if we sincerely want to know their opinion or thoughts, we will have only one question in our mind: "What are your thoughts on this matter?" As soon as we go beyond that question, we are asking about things that strike us rather than things that strike them. The key to getting their full thinking lies in concentrating on listening to their conversation without introducing any thoughts or questions of our own. The one way we have of doing that is using Listening Responses instead of comments or questions.

LISTENING RESPONSES

A listening response is a very brief comment or action made to another person which conveys the idea that you are interested, attentive and wish him to continue. It is made quietly and briefly so as not to interfere with the speaker's train of thought. It is usually used with the speaker's pauses.

There several types of listening responses:

Nod: Nodding the head slightly and waiting.

Pause: Looking at the speaker expectantly without doing or saying anything.

Casual Remark: "I see," "Uh-Huh," "Is that so," "That's interesting" etc.

Echo: Repeating back the last few words the speaker said.

Mirror: Reflecting to the speaker your understanding of what he has just said. ("You feel that.")

Listening responses keep us strictly with the other person's thoughts and conversation. When we pause, we are staying with their conversation. When we echo, we are saying back what they said, not our thoughts. When we mirror, we are reflecting the context of their thinking, not ours. When we use a quiet "Uh-Huh" or "I see" we are sticking with them. When we use these things in place of questions the other person soon sees that we are sincerely interested in their ideas and they warm up and really begin to talk to us.

To listen effectively requires that we concentrate fully on listening to anything the other person wants to say. At the points where he pauses, we respond with an appropriate "Listening Response" and wait a few seconds for him to continue. Should he not continue we can always ask an appropriate question which we have had time to think about during the 5 or 10 second pause.

An occasional 5 - 10 second pause in a conversation is like a cool beverage, it refreshes. None of us can talk steadily for an extended period on any subject. We need an occasional pause to regroup our thoughts

and consider what we may say next. When the other person gives us that chance, we invariably feel they are really interested in what we are saying.

A very interesting silent communication takes place between two people when a momentary pause occurs in a conversation. If you watch two people talking you will note that the moment the first one stops talking, he looks sharply at the other person. At that moment if the other fellow drops his eyes or shifts his gaze away it creates the impression that he is thinking of something to say. The first person catches this instinctively and you will see him continue to watch and wait. If, on the other hand, the second person does not shift his gaze at the pause but continues to look attentively at the first person without seeming to have any question or comment on his mind, the first person will look down or away and start talking again. In a pause, nine times out of ten, the first person to shift his gaze away will be the next to speak. So, if we want the pause to work it is important that during the pause we continue to look steadily at the other person.

A pause almost never bothers the person who is talking. It only bothers the person who is doing the listening. So, the key to working the pause successfully is to be relaxed and comfortable yourself in using it. When you do you will find it one of the most effective of the listening tools in your kit.

When an interview is conducted primarily with listening responses the reaction of the person interviewed is very favorable. They invariably say that it was a pleasant talk, that the other person seemed really interested in what they had to say, and that he is the sort of person to whom you can talk.

In social conversation we use listening responses a great deal. Just watch two people conversing at a dinner party or social hour and you will see the nod, the echo, the casual remark, or mirror used repeatedly. We seem to know that these responses show interest and help keep the other person talking. If we use them with equal skill in our Masonic Investigations, they will work equally well.

GUIDELINES/PREPARATIONS FOR INTERVIEWING

1. Know the Digest Requirements. The investigator should possess a copy of Williams Digest and should know thoroughly our requirements or qualifications for membership. (see Qualifications, Digest §17-1.1, pg. 78), many of these will be referred to hereafter; but the investigator must be well grounded in their provisions, particularly in consideration that these are labeled as, "The indispensable qualifications of a candidate for initiation into Masonry..." (Digest §17-1.1, pg. 78) and as it is stated that these qualifications are "indispensable" and as such, are immutable or unvarying. Also, he should be familiar with and in making his investigation bear in mind the questions set forth in the Entered Apprentice Degree, which are put to the candidate just before preparation. (Text Book, pg. 7-8)

2. Know Representations in The Petition. Each member of the investigating committee should read carefully and be familiar with the statements made by the applicant in his petition, see that every question is answered fully before reporting, be sure the representations are either true or false, be sure the candidate can read and write, and check both his marital status and criminal record.

3. Start with Recommenders. In the Entered Apprentice degree we are charged to be particularly attentive not to recommend a candidate unless we "*...are convinced he will conform to our rules, that the honor, glory and reputation of the institution may be firmly established, and the world at large convinced of its good effects.*" (Blue Lodge Text Book, pg. 36)

We often find, however, that our Brethren compromise with this principle and recommend men because of some pressure they are unable to withstand or are unwilling to face. It is logical therefore that the investigation begins by a personal conference with each of the two members that signed his petition.

How long has he been personally acquainted with the petitioner?

How well does he know him?

Is there any hesitancy in recommending him for the degree?

4. Visit Applicant in Home. In a casual way in the discussions seek to learn his motives for wanting to join Masonry, what influenced him to apply, etc.

Why does the Petitioner want to become a Freemason?

Where did he learn about becoming a Freemason?

What does he understand about the process of Petitioning and becoming a Freemason?

Why has the Petitioner sought membership in this Lodge and not another Lodge?

Has the committee explained the activities of the Lodge, and do they meet the expectations of the candidate just mentioned?

Are any members of his family Masons?

Based on his current knowledge, what does he believe that Freemasons do and the purpose of the Fraternity?

What does he hope to get out of joining our Fraternity?

We believe, in at least some cases, that the wife may be antagonistic to Freemasonry, in general and the Lodge in particular because of her lack of a simple knowledge of them.

What does his wife or girlfriend think about Freemasonry?

Will it create any issue with his relationship if he is out at night for Lodge activities?

A visit with the applicant in his home to observe his home life and to talk to members of his family is the only way to find out some things that ought to be known.

What is the family's attitude toward his joining a Masonic Lodge?

Does he or she have any family members that were active Masons?

A single visit by the members of the committee would impress a wife and members of the family that to become a Mason is no frivolous or trivial matter, at least not to Masons. The interview should be informal and in the presence of the family and the wife if married. Such a meeting should be scheduled in advance, and they should be made to feel at ease. In the conversation and casual questions which would be asked, the investigators may find impressions which need to be corrected concerning Freemasonry or some of the benefits the applicant or his family may expect to obtain from it. If married, at least a part of the interview should be with both husband and wife in order that the lady of the household may be given some idea of the type of organization with which her husband is seeking to affiliate and some of its

underlying principles. She should be informed that as a member of the Craft he will be expected to give some of his time to it each month. He should tell them also of the work with which Freemasonry is involved in Mississippi and elsewhere. However, it would be highly recommended that a follow-up visit by the applicant at the Lodge or another venue would allow for a more thorough investigation and allow the applicant an opportunity to ask any additional questions of the investigation committee.

5. Domestic and Financial.

One of the qualifications of a candidate is that he be “capable of earning a livelihood and not likely to become a charge upon the Lodge or community.” (Digest §17-1.1, pg. 78). While life circumstances unexpectedly fluctuate, a candidate should not enter the Lodge as one that is already in need of charity or expected to be a burden on the Lodge. Rather, a candidate is expected to not only be able to manage his affairs but to also be charitable. These concepts are relative, as Freemasonry regards no man on account of his worldly possessions. “We are taught to regard the whole human species as one family; the high and low, the rich and poor.” Blue Lodge Text Book, pg. 28.

Is his home life happy?

What seems to be his attitude toward his wife and children and their attitude toward him?

Has he been previously married? How many prior marriages has he had?

If divorced, did he or his former wife secure the divorce and upon what grounds? Does he object to your seeing the record?

If previously married, did any of the prior marriages end as a result of cause on the part of the Petitioner (e.g. adultery, substance use, domestic violence)?

If the answer to previous question is yes, are those reasons an active reflection of the Petitioner's character and/or how were they addressed?

If children by previous marriage, is he contributing to their support according to their needs?

How does he spend his spare time?

Is he adequately caring for his family at the present time and is he making adequate provision for the future care of his family if something should happen?

Is he prompt in meeting his bills?

Is he considered an A-plus man in his business dealings, or does he cut corners?

Do his appearance and surroundings indicate that he can afford financially the degrees in Masonry?

Is the Petitioner subject to paying Court ordered child support, and, if so, is he current?

Has the Petitioner ever been the subject of a civil lawsuit, whether as a plaintiff or defendant, and what was the nature of the case?

Has the Petitioner ever been the subject of a judgment of any kind?

Has the Petitioner ever filed bankruptcy? If yes, how recently and what steps has the Petitioner taken to alleviate future financial issues?

Has the Petitioner ever been subject to a garnishment proceeding?

Has the Petitioner ever had an asset seized (eg. car repossession)?

Does the Petitioner have reliable transportation to participate in Lodge functions?

No man should deprive himself or his family of the necessities that he might enjoy membership in the Masonic Fraternity. We desire to add to our working force; do not handicap us with an added burden.

Does he understand there are certain yearly dues required from each member, and will he be able to promptly meet these and any other obligations of a similar nature?

Can he afford the Initiation Fee?

Does he understand that the Initiation Fee is nonrefundable and must be paid in full prior to being Initiated and that it is unlawful to confer the degrees on credit, or to take a note, or security, for any part thereof? (Digest §19-21.1, pg. 122)

Can he afford the dues and any assessments which may be voted by the Lodge?

Do his wife and family approve?

Are either he or his family likely to become a charge upon the generosity of the Fraternity in the foreseeable future?

Do he and his family clearly understand that although as a Mason he would have the right to ask for relief upon need thereof, neither the Lodge nor any member is compelled to give relief when and as requested?

What provisions has he made for his family and himself in the event of disability, recognizing Masonry is not actually or morally obligated to assume such burdens?

6. Disposition.

Is he of a charitable disposition?

What examples can he give of his prior charitable activity?

Does he contribute financially to charitable causes as far as his ability permits?

Is he charitable in thought and action toward his fellowman, or is he bigoted and prejudiced, considering all men in error who do not view life through his particular line of vision?

Is his attitude generally one of cheerful compliance with required regulations?

As a Mason, what service does he think he can render to his fellowman, and to what extent is he prepared to do so - with his time, his efforts, and his money?

What does the Petitioner believe he brings to the table to help our Fraternity and this Lodge specifically?

7. Moral Standards.

Is he profane or foul-mouthed in speech?

Does he have any criminal record or has he at any time been engaged in any illegal or questionable activity?

Does he endeavor to deal with his fellowman according to the "Golden Rule"?

If a veteran, how was he discharged from service?

What is the Petitioner's greatest weakness or struggle?

Does the Petitioner have any family members that he is not on a "speaking basis"?

Does the Petitioner understand that our Fraternity requires all Brothers to extend fellowship with one another?

Does he have any addictions?

Has the Petitioner ever been the subject to any professional disciplinary proceeding, such as a proceeding before a complaint tribunal of a licensing board)(e.g. complaint before Mississippi Board of Contractors of Mississippi State Board of Medical Licensure, Mississippi Bar)?

Does the Petitioner have any potentially controversial tattoos (eg. hate speech/slurs, lude sexual innuendos). If yes, do they reflect his current beliefs?

Does the Petitioner have any bumper stickers on his vehicle, and what does it reflect?

8. Belief in God.

Is he a member of a church?

Which one?

Does he attend regularly?

His wife's faith?

His parent's faith?

Does he believe in the sanctity of an oath and would an oath of secrecy conflict with the teachings of his faith?

Is he willing to swear an oath? Does he understand that as a candidate he cannot be permitted to substitute the word "affirm?" One who thinks that the word "swears" as we use it is blasphemy, cannot be made a Mason. (Digest §9-1.1, pg. 46)

Does he believe in a Supreme Being?

Does he believe in some revelation of His Will?

Does he believe in the immortality of the soul?

Does he believe in the resurrection of the body?

No man can become a Mason unless he believes in God. No atheist may be made a Mason. (Digest §17-1.1, pg. 78)

Masonry is nonsectarian and requires no specific belief about God, for there are many good Masons throughout the world who are of various beliefs, creeds, and religions. But, to be a Mason, one must acknowledge the sovereignty of God over all life, the priority of the claim of God upon all life, and our duty to do the will of God in all Life.

How does the Petitioner feel about men of different faiths?

Beyond a belief in one ever living and true God, Masonry is not concerned with a man's faith or creed, except when his faith or his wife's faith is diametrically opposed to membership in the Masonic Fraternity. In every other case, being a good church member is very much in his favor.

9. Perception of Masonry.

What is his perception of the Masonic Institution?

What is it based on?

What does he think it is, and why, in his opinion, do Masons congregate. What do they endeavor to accomplish by their associations one with another?

Does he and/or his family understand that Masonry is not a financial institution and that no insurance benefits or financial returns are to be expected by either the applicant or his family?

Does he consider Masonry merely as a social organization and does he wish to become connected with it merely that he may have the social fellowship connected with it, or has he a sincere desire to become a Mason that he may help himself and help others?

What is his perception of the ancient usages and regulations he expects to conform to - as stated in his petition?

What is his desire for knowledge and just what knowledge does he expect to obtain?

Does he understand that Freemasonry is a Moral Science, not a Dogmatic Creed, a Religion, or a path to Salvation?

Does he understand that membership in the Masonic Fraternity is predicated on a desire for knowledge and a sincere wish to be serviceable to one's fellow creatures?

Does he understand that there is a strict Masonic law and that, "Every chartered Lodge has authority to call before it and punish, according to Masonic usage, and in the manner and to the extent prescribed by the Grand Lodge, all Masons, including Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts, offending against Masonry, good morals and society, residing or sojourning within its Jurisdiction, wherever the act may be committed"? (Digest §23-1.1, pgs. 134 and §17-5.11, pg. 85)

10. Motive.

Why does he desire membership in Freemasonry?

Why did he petition your Lodge?

What are his ideas of the character of the Craft?

What were his motives?

What influenced him to apply?

What does he expect to get from membership in Freemasonry?

What does he expect to give as a member of Freemasonry?

What pressures, if any, caused him to apply for membership?

Do his motives seem mercenary?

What is his understanding of and level of commitment to finish what he starts?

Is he of sufficient character to complete the Three Degrees?

Does he understand, generally speaking, the learning requirements he will have to complete to achieve advancement to Master Mason, and is he capable of achieving them?

11. Can he Read and Write? In Mississippi, a candidate must be able to both read and write. One who can read but cannot write, except to sign his name, is not eligible for admission. If one such should be initiated through inadvertence, he may not advance until he shall have learned to read and write. (Digest §17-1.1, pg. 78)

12. Does He Have All of His Physical and Mental Faculties? It is required that he meet all of the qualifications as contained and enumerated in the Williams Digest (Digest § 17-1.1, pgs. 78), without exception, and that he be capable of transacting the ordinary affairs of life and memorizing our lectures and ceremonies, be able to perform all the duties of Masonry, whether intellectual or physical and learning the art of Freemasonry, have sufficient vision and hearing to fully understand the forms and ceremonies.

Does he understand that there will be a time commitment to learn and prove suitable proficiency in the catechisms or Lectures of the Three Degrees? (Digest §9-1.5, pg. 46)

Does he reflect the mental capabilities and intellectual capacity to devote time in study, reflection, and contemplation of the deeper meanings of Freemasonry?

13. Age and Dotage.

The petitioner must be at least eighteen (18) years of age and must not be in his dotage. "Dotage" means when one has lost possession of his physical and mental faculties and does not mean old age of itself - of which "...The Lodge is the sole judge..." (Digest §17-1.1, pg. 78)

14. What is His Occupation? A candidate's occupation is frequently a guide to his character, i.e., one emerged in an unsavory or illegal business, occupation or trade is not proper material for Masonry and pertaining to those areas of employment which prohibit a man from becoming a Mason). (Digest §23-3.1, pg. 137)

How many places of employment has he worked in the last five years?

Has he been terminated, fired, or let go from employment, and, if so, what was the reason?

Would he be willing to allow you to interview his employer?

15. Personal References.

Has he any Masonic relatives?

Does he have close acquaintance with any member of the Fraternity?

Will he furnish you the names of several references so that you might interview them?

As further references, will he give you the names of any organization or civic clubs of which he may be a member, his pastor, his banker, and his business acquaintances so that you might also interview them?

Questions by the petitioner should be encouraged and should be answered as completely as possible, consistent with our obligation.

The applicant can doubtless refer you to men of standing who can furnish reliable information regarding him. These references need not necessarily be Masons, for often non-Masons are more open in their expression of opinions.

16. Past History.

Where and when born?

How long has he lived in the State and in the investigator's Lodge jurisdiction?

At what addresses has he lived since birth?

Where did he attend school - Grade School - High School - College?

What have been his various occupations in chronological order and by years and months?

What are the names of his various employers?

In what manner was each employment terminated and for what reason?

If in business for himself, at any time, has he failed or gone into bankruptcy?

In every case, where possible, the Committee should check the petitioner's answers to these questions against other sources of information, such as the references given, former employers, or any other investigative lead which may have been developed. This is particularly important where the applicant has lived a comparatively short part of his life in the jurisdiction of the Lodge. Simple google searches and social medial checks should be standard parts of the investigative committee's work. Local court dockets should also be screened, if accessible.

17. Was He Ever in Trouble? It should be determined if the applicant has ever been in trouble with the civil authorities, or convicted of a crime, or been in court - domestic relations or otherwise - and the answers to the questions in the petition on this subject should not be taken as true; they are often false and the failure of the Lodge to properly investigate these matters is a too frequent cause of conflict between the Lodge and the Grand Lodge.

Has the Petitioner ever been charged with a crime other than a simple traffic infraction (note this is different from conviction of a felony and would also include misdemeanor DUI)?

Has the Petitioner ever been non-adjudicated, had a criminal charge of any kind dismissed or had a charge or conviction expunged?

Has the Petitioner ever had his driver's license suspended?

In some Grand Jurisdictions there is a requirement for a formal background investigation to be performed before a petition can be received by the Lodge or Grand Lodge., This is not currently the practice in Mississippi., However, there is currently no admonition against using such a method. Even in those Grand Jurisdictions that do have this requirement, there are issues with some law enforcement and judicial jurisdictions not sharing the information that would allow a comprehensive review to be performed due to there not being a requirement for those entities to share the information.

Suffice it to state, there is simply no replacement for the investigation committee's performing their prescribed duties even if this were an available option.

18. Of What Other Organizations Is He A Member? It is essential for the Lodge to know if he is a member of any group or organization whose views are not compatible with Freemasonry and concerning this he should be asked pointedly by the members of the committee. It can and should be done without offense.

There are certain religions, for example, that strictly forbid their members to become Masons; if a petitioner is a member of such a church you must at least inquire if he is aware of the attitude of such organization toward Masonry and, if he knows or learns of it, inquire into his motives and sincerity. This is not a religious test for membership, but it is designed only to prevent future mental or religious conflict to the applicant and confusion among the Craft.

Although politics is not be considered a test, membership in certain political parties would be incompatible because of the lack of moral and ethical concepts of such political parties. For example, one world-wide political party preaches struggle between classes and over-throw of governments by force and violence, and is therefore incompatible with Freemasonry which teaches the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man.

19. Loyalty to Country.

Disregarding political party lines, does he declare himself to be loyal to his government?

Will he willingly swear that he never has been nor ever will be affiliated with any subversive group or organization?

Is he a citizen of the United States of America?

If not a natural born citizen, where and when was he naturalized?

If not a citizen, why has he not applied for his naturalization papers? (Failure to apply for his naturalization papers as soon as permitted by law, may indicate that he has something in his life that he wants to keep hidden or that he has little or no sense of responsibility or duty).

20. Has He Filed A Prior Petition? If this is not the first petition, communication should be had with the Lodge or Lodges previously petitioned, whether for the degrees or affiliation. The result of such prior

petition or petitions should be carefully checked. Questions of character, time between the filing of the petitions, and jurisdiction over the candidate should be cleared. (Digest §17-5.1 and §17-5.3, pgs. 83-84)

GENERAL RULES

A petition for the three Degrees must be presented at a Stated Communication; be signed by the candidate, and state his residence, age, and occupation, and whether he has been rejected by any other Lodge; be recommended by two members of the Lodge, based upon their personal knowledge of him; be referred to a committee of three for investigation into his character and standing, to be reported at the next or some other Stated Communication, and until such report is made, it shall lie over for consideration. A common error occurs when petitions are received and assigned to a committee for investigation in vacation between stated meetings, and then they are balloted on at the next stated communication. A petition must be read at one stated communication and be held over until at least the following stated meeting prior to balloting. Thus, a minimum of one month prior to balloting is required.

Such investigating committee shall satisfy itself whether all the facts stated in the petition are true, from the best available information, and, if it shall be found that the Lodge has no Jurisdiction over the candidate or that he is disqualified, the committee shall so report, and such petition shall be dismissed. A petition for the three Degrees may be withdrawn by consent of two-thirds of the members present, when the report of the committee is read, but not otherwise. (Digest §17-5.1, pg. 83) A Lodge may also decline to entertain a petition. (Digest §17-1.1, Annotation 19, pg. 79; Digest §17-5.1, Annotation 8) Said committee shall not make known what the character of their report is to be, until it is read to the Lodge, and every such report, after being acted upon by the Lodge shall be at once effectually destroyed, the only record made in the minutes being whether the report was favorable or unfavorable, as the case may be, but nothing more.

It would be beneficial at some future date to review the possibility for the Grand Lodge to maintain a database of all persons rejected by a Lodge for a period of time for two reasons: 1) the mobility of individuals and the inability for a Lodge to maintain a “quarry” area; 2) technology exists today that would allow for a more satisfactory system of coordinating the recording of rejections from a Lodge.

21. Jurisdiction. How long has he resided within the jurisdiction of his Lodge?

If he has not always lived in the jurisdiction of the Lodge petitioned, you should write to the Lodge or Lodges in the jurisdiction of his former residence or residences for verification of his qualifications. An applicant for the degrees must have resided in the jurisdiction of the Lodge applied to for six (6) months before petitioning (Digest §17-1.1, pg. 78 and §17-3.1, pg. 80). A non-affiliated Mason may apply for membership in any Lodge at any time (Digest §19-13.19, pg. 107 and §19-13.5, pg. 101), making it imperative that all former applications and places of residence be checked for verifications of his qualifications. If so, have you communicated with persons of the Lodge having previous jurisdiction? (*This would be a Grand Lodge of Mississippi Grand Secretary function as no one can communicate across Grand Jurisdictional Lines except through the Grand Lodge Office.* (DIGEST, ARTICLE II, Section 7, pg. 28)

Additionally, “Lodges do not hold perpetual Jurisdiction, over rejected candidates for initiation. In every petition for initiation the petitioner shall be required to state whether he has been rejected by a Masonic Lodge and if he has, then to state the name and location of such Lodge. R&R §6 (1960-101; 1994-57)

DIGEST AND JUDICIAL DECISIONS 1. A man who has been rejected by a Lodge in another state, later moving to Mississippi, was held to be entitled to petition a Mississippi Lodge within whose Jurisdiction he has resided for more than six months regardless of the jurisdictional laws of the Grand Lodge of the state where he had been rejected. (1948-29) (1994-56)" (Digest §17-3.7, pg. 81)

22. Does He Know of Any Reason Why He Should Not Become A Mason? This question is to ascertain whether the petitioner has any mental reservations regarding the Craft.

This line of investigation is intended to be merely suggestive and is very general. It is not intended that the candidate be asked these questions, but that the investigator know the answer to these questions when he makes his report. They are suggested guide questions to impress upon Masons the necessity of a thorough investigation. No set rule can be followed literally in every case, though the information should be obtained. The nature of the case will suggest what information is most required and after a few experiences how best to obtain it, so that the report may be made with certainty, accuracy, and fairness - both to the petitioner and to the Lodge.

Do not be content with a list of names furnished by the applicant, but seek out and interview others who know him. Remember, while most of the petitioners who come to us do so with clean hands, we ever should be on guard against an attempt to conceal information from us to which we are entitled. We, therefore, should not rest the investigation here, but should seek diligently for further information by consulting the petitioner's employer, fellow employees, business associates, and with others who might know his personal as well as his business habits. You may find his next-door neighbor, his grocer, or his fishing companion a much better source of information than those on his list of references.

Is he a good father, a considerate husband, a good provider, a member of the church and a good citizen? These are a few of the things the investigator should know. These inquiries should be confidential and discreet and should not either excite unnecessarily the minds of those with whom the investigator comes in contact nor excite the enmity of the petitioner himself.

Any rumor casting discredit on his integrity should be investigated thoroughly.

In discharging the duties as a member of this important Committee, one will perform a real service for both his Lodge and the Fraternity as a whole. Remember, the Institution of Freemasonry needs every good man in the community who is interested in the establishment of the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God in accordance with the sublime principles of our Order.

PREPARING THE REPORT

Your investigation should be completed promptly, but never hurriedly. If more time is required the Master will gladly grant it, provided, of course, you ask for it. The petition should be reported on at the next or some other Stated Communication, and until such report is made, it shall lie over for consideration, that the character of the candidate may be fully investigated. (Digest §17-5.1, pg. 83)

After the facts have been determined each member of the committee makes a report, filing same with the secretary of the Lodge as a part of its permanent records. The usual form of report to secretaries of Lodges in Mississippi is merely to indicate the committee report, "Favorable," or "Unfavorable." This form is set forth in the form section of our Masonic Digest. (Digest §17-5.1, pg. 83)

The Grand Lodge of Mississippi currently does not require its investigation reports to indicate the facts upon which the conclusion is based and to provide details of the investigation. However, the Grand Lodge website offers an excellent resource at its official web site, [Investigation On Petition For The Three Degrees](https://www.msgrandlodge.org/wp-content/uploads/Subordinate-Lodge-Investigation-Committee-Form.pdf) at <https://www.msgrandlodge.org/wp-content/uploads/Subordinate-Lodge-Investigation-Committee-Form.pdf>

However, other Grand Jurisdictions require a few of the following as suggestions and they are offered only as educational in this offering:

Did you personally see and talk with the applicant?

Why does he desire to become a Freemason?

Why did he petition this particular Lodge?

If married, is he living with his wife?

Has he lived in this jurisdiction less than six months? If so, have you communicated with persons of the Lodge having previous jurisdiction? *(This would be a Grand Lodge of Mississippi Grand Secretary function as no one can communicate across Grand Jurisdictional Lines except through the Grand Lodge Office. (DIGEST, ARTICLE II, Section 7, pg. 28)*

If so, what was his reputation there?

Is he apparently successful in his occupation?

Has he ever been in serious trouble or convicted of any crime? If yes, give particulars.

What is his reputation in this community for Honesty, Integrity, and Morality?

How does he spend his leisure time?

What is the condition of his health?

Does he have the reputation for meeting his financial obligations?

How many persons did you interview regarding applicant?

Give additional information or circumstances of importance.

This questionnaire to be filled out and filed by the members of the investigating committee is a very good guide, and doubtless has greatly improved and will enhance the quality of any Lodge's investigation.

Whatever the form of the report, before it can be conscientiously made, the investigating committee member must be able to answer affirmatively for himself the following questions about the petitioner:

Were his natural reactions to the matters discussed with the visiting committee member ones of friendliness and fairness toward life and his fellowman?

Were his views on charity compatible with those of the Craft?

Did he appear to have the desirable characteristics of a candidate for the Masonic degrees?

Did he appear to be a man who would attend with reasonable regularity upon the communications of the Lodge and endeavor to educate and better himself by a more extensive study of Masonry than that contained in the catechism and lectures of the Three Degrees?

Did he appear to be one who would LIVE Masonry and endeavor to bring into his life the actual practice of the tenets of our profession?

SPECIFIC APPLICABLE LAW TO INITIATION, AFFILIATION, DUAL MEMBERSHIP, AND RESTORATION

INITIATION (See Digest Section 17 - THE THREE DEGREES, beginning pg. 78) Review Digest for any applicable Law.

AFFILIATION (See Digest §19-13.5 MEMBERSHIP, pgs. 101-102). Review Digest for any applicable Law.

DUAL MEMBERSHIP (See Digest §19-13.7 DUAL MEMBERSHIP, pgs. 102-103) Review Digest for any applicable Law.

RESTORATION (See Digest §25-11.5 RESTORATION, pgs. 157-158) Review Digest for any applicable Law.

There are several different cases under which a member may have been expelled or suspended from membership, and each are unique. The following information is offered as a basic overview and is not to be considered prescriptive or proscriptive in nature and it would be in the best interest of the Lodge to contact the Grand Lodge Law and Jurisprudence Committee for guidance and direction before beginning the process.

Suspension-Time Definite

If a member desires to return from a suspension that was imposed by the Lodge, "...Suspension takes effect upon the date of its infliction by the Lodge, and if for a definite period, terminates with the expiration of that period, without any further action by the Lodge, unless sooner terminated by it." And "...Suspension begins to run from the time when the Lodge passes sentence. Suspension for a definite period terminates ipso facto at the expiration of that period. Indefinite suspension terminates at the pleasure of the Lodge by a two-thirds majority vote. (1854-169) (1856-56) (1871-55) (1872-65)"

Suspension-Time Indefinite If a member desires to return from a suspension that was imposed by the Lodge for an indefinite period,

"If indefinite, it continues until the Lodge shall by the same ballot by which it was inflicted, remove it,..." and "Except for penalties imposed under Section 25-9.17, the petition for reinstatement from an indefinite suspension may not be presented until one (1) year after the imposition of the sentence."

Restoration-Indefinite and Definite

"Restoration from indefinite suspension and restoration from definite suspension, if made before the end of the term thereof, shall only be made on petition in writing, signed by the petitioner, setting forth the grounds on which he petitions for restoration. The petition must be presented at a Stated Communication and referred to a committee of investigation to report at a subsequent

Stated Communication. When the report of the committee is received, the ballot must be spread. He may be restored by the same majority ballot that suspended him.

Expulsion

“Expulsion continues in force until removed by the Grand Lodge itself, but before the Grand Lodge has confirmed a sense ice (sic) of expulsion, the person is regarded as suspended, and all of his Masonic rights are in abeyance. At any time before confirmation of a sentence of expulsion by the Grand Lodge, the Lodge may, by a two-thirds ballot, rescind its action and substitute suspension, definite or indefinite, except in those cases where expulsion is mandatory, provided that there be no appeal pending...”

“...Restoration from expulsion shall only be made on petition in writing, of the petitioner, setting forth the grounds on which he petitions for restoration. The petition must be presented at a Stated Communication and be referred to a committee of investigation to report at the next Stated Communication. When the report of the committee is received, the ballot must be spread. If unanimous, the Lodge shall recommend to the Grand Lodge the restoration of the expelled Mason. If concurred in by the Grand Lodge, the recommendation of the Lodge takes effect as of the day of said concurrence and not otherwise. “...and the petition for reinstatement from expulsion may not be presented until three (3) years after the Grand Lodge confirms the sentence of expulsion. If a petition for reinstatement is rejected, no other petition shall be filed until one year after the date of the prior rejection. Rules of Discipline Rule 29 (1925-143, 1934-64, 1985-65); (2013-62) Cross References: Const. Art. I, Secs. 2, 3, 5; Gen. Laws §25-1.1

DIGEST AND JUDICIAL DECISIONS 1. An expelled Mason can only be restored to membership in his Lodge by the Grand Lodge on the unanimous recommendation of the Lodge that expelled him. He must petition in writing, setting forth the reasons for making such a request. The petition must be presented at a Stated Communication and be referred to a Committee of Investigation to report at the next Stated Communication. The vote must be taken by secret ballot and must be unanimous before the Lodge can ask the Grand Lodge to restore one who has been expelled. (1898-65) (1902- 130) 2. The Grand Lodge possesses power to reverse or abrogate the decision of a Lodge expelling or suspending a Mason, but it cannot restore an expelled or suspended Mason to membership in the Lodge that expelled or suspended him, no matter how far the Proceedings may be tainted with illegality, unfairness, or Masonic impropriety. (1875-92) (1884-56) So far as his Lodge membership is concerned, he is entirely without a remedy and must submit to the verdict of his Lodge. On reversal the Grand Secretary gives him a certificate which operates as a demit. (Digest 1958-72) When the Grand Lodge sets aside a sentence of expulsion, the expelled Mason does not thereby become a member of the Lodge from which he was expelled. His status is that of a non-affiliate. If he pays his dues to the Lodge under whose Jurisdiction he resides, he has the right of visitation. (1902-130) 3. Expulsion continues in force until removed by the Grand Lodge itself, but before the Grand Lodge has confirmed a sentence of expulsion, the person is regarded as suspended, and all his Masonic rights are in abeyance. (1883-55) (1891-59) 5.

CONCLUSION

When a Brother is selected to serve on an investigating committee he is entrusted with a very real challenge and a most important Masonic duty. While all Masons must protect it, he becomes the special guardian of our very lifeline. This duty well done is a distinct service to the petitioner, to the Lodge, and to the whole Craft as he has exercised care *“To preserve the reputation of the Fraternity unsullied...”* (TEXT BOOK ,pg. 75-76).

For one to be of real service to his fellow man he should be sufficiently interested to work on the solution and not merely become a part of the problem. The members of the Committee are the “Guardians of the West Gate.” As such they are charged to admit those honorable men of high moral character who are good citizens and are filled with a desire to build a better world, believing that Freemasonry possesses the tools with which to do this. In like manner the Committee should endeavor to keep without the portals of Freemasonry all those who do not meet its high standards, or who are not willing to become interested in the aims and objectives of our Fraternity as these deal with the improvements of the individual man and his character. The final decision rests with the Lodge itself (DIGEST §17-1.1, pg. 78) and the investigators’ work will enable them to make that decision both wise and just and is the only means the Committee can assist the Lodge in making that decision is by putting forth the time, talent, and effort to do a good job in the performance of its assigned duties.

If the Investigation Committee performs its duty creditably it may be the means of preventing unfair, unreasonable, or prejudicial treatment of the candidate at the ballot box. The opposite is equally true, namely, it is a medium which prevents the unworthy from taking advantage of the future of the Lodge and our Fraternity which we as Masons are charged to protect and cherish. In fact, if the Committee performs its duty in an honorable and creditable manner, even the Master of the Lodge will be restricted from criticizing the recommendation of the Committee in making its report to the Lodge “A Master cannot criticize the investigating committee for making a favorable report on a petitioner; cannot be tried by his Lodge while in office. He can, however, be impeached. (1926-46)” (DIGEST, §25-5.7, pg. 143)

The structure of our Institution will be as strong or weak as the individual member of the investigating committee and the individual committee member must bear in mind that he is selecting the quality of the men that represent Masonry’s future- its life blood; always remembering that he is a “Guardian of the West Gate” to the Lodge!

So Mote It Be.