



The Lodgeroom International Magazine

Volume 1 - Issue 1
January 2006

Rebuilding The Temple

Articles:

Between the Pillars
Rebuilding The Temple
Practicing Brotherly Love
Masons and Education
The Folded Napkin



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Between The Pillars

An Editorial



By R. Theron Dunn

The Lodgeroom International Magazine is dedicated to craft Masonry the world over. It is not a product of American or English Masonry. Rather, it is dedicated to the rebuilding of the Temple, the temple that freemasonry represents.

There are challenges ahead for Freemasons everywhere. These challenges are not outside the lodge, they are not the "antimasonic movement" or ignorance or religious fervor. Rather, the challenge that we face today comes from within.

It comes from brothers that have lost their way, not through malfeasance or lack of will, but through tiredness. The last fifty years have seen more changes for the worse in masonry than any time in masonic history prior to this period.

The end of WWII saw a vast influx of men into masonry, many of whom saw masonry not as a mystery school for learning to improve ones self, but a place for camaraderie and fellowship. Masonry IS those things, to be sure, but in the emphasizing of the one while ignoring the other, the true beauty of masonry has been set aside.

We are at a crossroads today. Young men want

more from their lives than simple material pleasures, they want meaning. And many are turning to masonry for that meaning. Unfortunately, we are now in a poor position to give them that meaning as it has all but been erased from our lodges.

There are brothers who truly represent the tenets of masonry in all its glory, but they face, we face, an uphill battle against the forces of "tradition", the men who have known nothing of masonry but the fellowship.

The Lodgeroom International Magazine is dedicated to all the men who want the more that masonry offers, who want to be all that masonry teaches us, and want to share that with their brothers.

We want to keep the fire lit and shedding its benignant rays as we rebuild the temple that is Freemasonry. We are under no illusions, however. This cannot be done by any magazine or forum, but only by the efforts of all masons, world wide. We therefore offer you, our brethren, this monthly forum.

Share with us you ideas, your understanding of masonry, our history and fellowship. Submit your articles to therondunn@dslextreme.com for publication, and join us at <http://lodgeroomuk.com/forum> and <http://www.lodgeroomuk.com/forum>.

Together we can rebuild the temple!



that kind attention, sincere affection, charitable nature, honest dealing and circumscription of our desires that exists between our brother masons.

We know that masonry is not about numbers. Most would agree that one honest mason is better than 700 half committed ring and pin masons. Over the years, we have all heard commentary about the state Freemasonry is in. Many have commented that we are not warding the west gate well enough, but that is a responsibility we each bear. Freemasonry is yours, and it is you that will decide what it will be and how it will look.

In the hundreds of years that freemasonry has existed, it has gone through many changes. For instance, when the first Grand Lodge was formed at the Goose and Gridiron in 1717, immediate controversy arose among the existing masons, and many lodges burned their records lest they "fall into cowan's hands". At that time, freemasonry consisted of two degrees. In 1728 the third degree was added, and later the fourth degree. Then we had two different groups of masons, the Antients and the Moderns, working different rituals and offering different teachings.

Yet, through this all, we remained masons, and continued to work for the betterment of Freemasonry. We were then, men among whom no contention should exist, except that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who can best work and best agree. Today, we are, for the most part, the same type of men. If we wish to see Freemasonry grow and flourish, we must continue to abide by those rules and regulations that are contained within it, to conform to and abide by the ancient rules and regulations.

Our obligation to our fellows was made pretty clear to us when we took that oath on the volume of sacred law. It is easy to keep true to those tenets of brotherly love and affection which link us all before god and our fellows. Now is the time to revitalize the fraternity, to renew our dedication to those tenets which have been inculcated

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Rebuilding The Temple

By Bill McElligott and R. Theron Dunn

I don't know about you but I oft listen to the Entered Apprentice ceremony and charge and my interpretation has been that freemasonry is an allegory about creating yourself around the moral superstructure, perfect in its parts and honourable to the builder. All of the degrees tell us that a mason is an upright man before god and man, acting upon the square on the level with all mankind.

The symbols of masonry are those of the builder, and it is our charge to build ourselves as better men. To create a solid building, any craftsman will tell you requires us to "start with a solid foundation". That foundation is you. On your admission into a lodge as an Entered Apprentice, you are placed in the northeast corner thereof, that you might be near the Worshipful Master, to receive from him those necessary instructions whereby you might create your own foundation and make it strong. Strong enough support the load of another (worthy brother), as

and when it may be required of you.

To build that spiritual building, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens does not require the razing of all the buildings that came before. In fact, we all build upon the shoulders of those that have gone this way before. They have laid down the path and the pattern of the foundation as we learned the Entered Apprentice degree. To perfect our ashlar, we look and study, in the hope that one day we may be able to create something as good and as fine as they have created.

This metaphor, of erecting the building, is one that we can carry into our lives. Not only are we building a spiritual house, eternal in the heavens, but we are supporting and building the structure of freemasonry. This structure exists not only as a physical building, but as the indissoluble chains of sincere affection, which allow men of all stations to come together, who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance. The house of masonry exists as a spiritual house, in

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Cover: Ruined temple near Delphi, Greece

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though Masonic teachings.

There are no shortcuts in masonry. Yet there are some that claim to have the real secrets of masonry, and are turning their backs on the fraternity. There are some that have raised a call to arms to throw down the structure of freemasonry in favour of something else... instead of repairing the cracks and going back to what has worked. Some want it now, immediately, but anything worth having is worth working on, is worth patience and care, and with hundreds of years behind us, masonry has shown that it is the rock of morality

To the young Lions we should say: "Wait a time with patience. If we wait as long as the Old Guys have waited we will see the wisdom of patience, which is the happiness of knowing you worked for your goals. The contentment of knowing you did it without short cuts."

To the breakaway groups we should say: "Good luck I hope you find what you are looking for. I have found my peace in the face of an old man who knew I cared, in the eyes of a young man who knew I cared, in the eyes of a widow who knew I was sorry for her loss."

To the young and the eager I would ask them to remember those things you have heard in your Lodge.

"Drop a tear of sympathy over the failings of a Brother" and whisper good counsel in his ear, gently admonishing him of his errors and in a most friendly way, seek to bring about a reformation.

Does this mean: Kick him when he's down? Revile him for past indiscretions? Keep him down when he has problems? No, you bet your sweet bippy it does not, it means forgive them that trespass against us, as we forgive them. It means we should

"...pour the healing balm of consolation into the bosom of the afflicted..."

" help and assist a brother whenever you can..."

"What in them you find defective, you should in yourself amend."

I know a man who wrote a very good book on Freemasonry, I would urge everyone to read it at least once. "Everything I needed to know about Freemasonry I learned as an Entered Apprentice." His tagline, the motto by which he lives his life was the very true: "We do not need more men in Freemasonry, but more Masonry in men"

The author of this book, is Stephen Dafeo, who has worked tirelessly for the betterment of our gentle craft, and who has, for the time, laid down the trowel to rest from his endeavours and rest for a time. There are many that would use his name, as a talisman of what is great and good in masonry, but do not seem to understand how to inculcate his example in their life.

We all know the principle tenets, but they bear repeating. They are: Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

Today, we find ourselves in a storm of change. Outlets for Masonic education are vanishing while others are springing up. The flames of brotherly love, relief, and truth have not died out, all we have to do is look around at the good and honourable brothers to see it has not died.

We must cherish the flame, we should add kindling to it and breathe life into it lest it waver and die. Let us remember those words that sometimes are drowned out by the happy banter so well known in many lodges. Let us breathe life into the flame of freemasonry, and build it into a bonfire that will keep our hearts warm as we work on that spiritual house, perfect in all dimensions and plumb and true, a credit to the Great Architect. Of the Universe.

The salvation of freemasonry is in our hands We can rebuild the temple, glorious and monumental, or we can use the architect's tools on each other.

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PRACTICING BROTHERLY LOVE

From time to time we come across true stories that tell more about the meaning of living Freemasonry than any degree lecture or visiting speaker can ever do.

The following story was originally published in October 2003, about a year after the telling of the story to a California Mason. This story deserves to be shared with a wider audience.

A group of Masons were sitting around a hotel pool in following a banquet. They were discussing the various talks they had heard during the day's conference.

It was when I saw tears forming in his eyes barely visible in the dim light and heard a tremor in his voice that I began to pay closer attention to Mike. I'd never met him before this day. He seemed about to open his soul and had selected me to be his attentive ear.

"I was a car salesman then," he said. "Wasn't a great salesman but earned enough to provide for

my wife and children. My wife was unable to work because of her health condition."

"One day Julius, my manager, handed me a commission check. I read the check and said I could not accept it because I had not sold the car indicated in the paper accompanying the check. Julius said the company made this kind of mistake occasionally and they'd never find out about it. Again I refused. He asked why I could not take it. The check was good and made out in my name. Besides my family could probably use the extra money. I said we could but I could not receive wages for work not done. He asked where I had come up with such a notion. I told him it came from my Masonic teaching and also from the Holy Scriptures. He walked away shaking his head in disbelief. Clearly he did not understand."

"Even though our discussion was supposed to remain private, word of my decision spread quickly throughout the office. Salesmen with

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whom I had established good relations became cold and distant. Joe, our head mechanic, was different. He became friendlier. He asked about my decision and the reasons behind it. After giving him the story he said he'd heard about the Masons. He said if the organization taught such moral lessons he'd like to become a member. For a long time he was afraid to ask believing that as a native American Indian he would be disqualified. I assured him he wouldn't be. The next day I handed him a petition. I was happy to be his first line signer. As a Past Master I was able to give him a better understanding of Freemasonry and my enjoyable experience in the Lodge."

"Over the next few years his family and mine became close. We enjoyed many day trips and evening dinners together."

"A couple of years later the dealership went through difficult financial times. I was not the only one to be let go. Finding a job was nearly impossible. My savings were nearly depleted. After searching for several months there were no options and no job. There was no way I could afford to keep my house."

"Joe remained close and knew my situation. He came to my house one day and suggested my family move in with his. He said that they had room to spare. I tried to refuse but he insisted. He asked what kind of a Mason would he be if he could not aid and friend and worthy Brother in need. My family stayed with Joe's for nearly five months. During this time I was able to secure a job and move my family back into a decent home. There was no way I could ever repay Joe and his family for their kindness."

"One day my daughter's car needed an oil change. I suggested she take it to Joe's son Jake. He was a mechanic following in his Dad's footsteps. Late in the afternoon Joe came by for a chat. I asked if he had seen my daughter. He said that Jake had finished the job early, after which the two of them decided to spend an enjoyable drive in the country. Joe asked if I knew the two of them were seeing a lot of each other. I hadn't. Three months later Jake asked permission for my daughter's hand in marriage. Jake is a fine young man. I could not have been more proud and happy when the wedding day arrived."

"It was not long after the wedding that Jake petitioned the Lodge. As a Past Master I felt privileged to take part in his degree. When it came to the part in the ritual where the candidate is destitute I got rather emotional delivering the ritual."

"A year later Jake wanted to join the Royal Arch Chapter. I was High Priest that year and was able to confer upon him the Royal Arch degree. Once more I got a little emotional when Jake again found himself in a destitute condition. To symbolically give him a monetary token, no matter how small, was a confirmation of my personal pledge to assist him whenever he had need of my assistance."

"God only knows where I would be today had Joe not extended a helping hand to raise a brother who had fallen on difficult times."

This is the Freemasonry we are taught by the ritual to apply to our every day lives. One man extends the helping hand of friendship and brotherly love to another in a demonstration of natural respect, no questions asked or motives questioned. Joe was practicing applied Freemasonry.

And recall how Joe came to become a Mason—

by observing Mike's practice of honesty and good dealings with other men in the business world. Joe came to the Fraternity after forming a favorable opinion of the institution. In turn, his son Jake became a Mason surely because of what he learned from his father and from Mike by precept and example. Jake was a boy when Mike and his family came to live with Joe's family. Jake learned by example from his father what it meant instinctively to do the right thing.

This story also contains an important lesson about how it is the internal and not the external qualifications which make a Mason. Because Joe was a native American Indian he did not think he was qualified to become a Mason. Mike, a practicing Mason, knew otherwise, and opened the door of Freemasonry to a man who might otherwise never have thought to join. And his Lodge would have been the poorer if he had not joined.

It is by our exemplary conduct as Masons in raising our families and in our business and professional relationships, that we will attract new men to our Fraternity. When we speak of the moral and ethical principles of Freemasonry only within the Lodge, they can become stale and routine recitations of ritual. But when we begin to live by these precepts and apply them in our dealings with our families, friends, and the society at large, not only will we have an effect on those around us, but also we will attract new members and Masons to our Lodges.

Actions have always spoken louder than words. It is by our deeds that people will know us. And when we practice true Brotherhood, as Mike and Joe and Jake did, the world will be a better place.

NOTE: The central story told here was related by William N. Wine, PM, in an article published in *The Philalethes Magazine*.



FREEMASONRY AND EDUCATION

Traditionally, throughout its long history, Freemasonry has taken a leading role in the promotion of learning and education. From its early beginnings, in the 18th century in England and Scotland, Masons were among the founders of learned academies. Masons have been active in education at every level from grammar school through university.

The Charge of the Fellowcraft Degree reminds the candidate that the impressive ceremonies of the degree are calculated to inculcate in his mind the importance of studying the liberal arts and sciences. He is particularly reminded to study the noble science of Geometry, which forms the basis of Freemasonry. Not only does Geometry explain the properties of nature, it demonstrates the more important truths of morality.

If Freemasonry is "about" anything, it is about the education of the individual to become a

knowledgeable, informed, and moral human being within society. Education is valued above ignorance. Seeking further Light in Masonry means more than learning more about the Craft. It also means that Freemasons and non-Masons alike must discipline themselves to seek knowledge through whatever means available—by studying at colleges and universities or by self-directed reading and study.

Because Freemasonry places such great importance on education, we have become steadfast supporters of the Public Schools. Horace Mann, the father of our present system of public schools, wrote that the object of a free public schools system is "to give every child a free, straight, solid pathway by which he can walk directly up from the ignorance of an infant to a knowledge of the primary duties of a man." The same can, of course, be said about the progress of a candidate through the three Masonic Degrees, from Appren-

tice, to Fellowcraft, to Master Mason.

Freemasonry and the public schools share several important values. Basic to each is the concept of the dignity of the individual. Every man, in every condition, is great. The grandeur of each man's unique nature makes insignificant all external distinctions. It is the internal and not the external qualifications that make a man who he is, and entitles him to be treated with respect and dignity.

Respect for the dignity of the individual is essential in a free society. Human rights rest on human dignity. Man's minimum needs must be met if he is to live at all, but men and women cannot live a human life "unless they have the chance" to satisfy the needs of their rational and spiritual nature. Democracy is the only form of government founded on the dignity of man.

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Education

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Equality and justice, so important to Freemasons, are the two distinguishing characteristics of democracy. Democracy enables us to enjoy the freedom to live human lives. We must be free in order to exercise those talents wherewith God has blessed us, as well to His glory as to the welfare of our fellow creatures.

Freedom, security and well-being can only be attained in society through an educated population. James Madison wrote that "Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power that knowledge gives." And Thomas Jefferson said: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be."

Our Founding Fathers, Freemason and non-Mason alike, understood that eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. And vigilance requires an educated population equipped with the skills to learn about and discuss the great issues. The Northwest Ordinance of 1787 was one of the greatest accomplishments of the infant United States. Under its regulations, Congress set aside a section in each township in the old Northwest Territory (Ohio, Indiana, etc) for the support of public schools. This was the first time in history that a government had the foresight to plan for the education of its people. Since that time, the individual States and now the Federal Government have supported and developed our system of free public education.

The California State public school system was started in the 1850's, and the first State Superintendent of Public Instruction was John Swett, a

transplanted Mason who had come west in the years following the Gold Rush.

The public schools have always been a special concern of California Masons. Charles Albert Adams, Grand Master in 1920, wrote that as Masons "we subscribe to the belief that an enlightened citizenship is the first great care of a progressive State." He believed that the future of our free democracy depended on the quality of our public schools. His Proclamation of the first Public Schools Week in 1920 sounds eerily familiar when we consider the conditions of our public schools in 2005. Here is what he had to say:

"A crisis is now confronting the Public School System in America. There is a dearth of competent teachers; schools are being closed; children, particularly in the rural communities, are being denied the education to which they are entitled and there is apparently a deplorable apathy concerning remedial measures which have been proposed."

While the details may be different than they were 84 years ago, but the problems in our public schools still remain. A crisis is confronting our public schools once again. And it is our Masonic responsibility to do something about improving the conditions in our schools so that our children can receive a quality and useful education.

Under the California Masonic Code, matters concerning the public schools are the sole exception to our Lodges becoming involved in political issues in our communities. The Lodge is a proper forum for discussing problems in the schools in our local communities.

It is proper for a Lodge or a group of Masons to act publicly in support of school bond issues and

similar matters before the electorate. And individual Masons are encouraged to assist their local schools to make policy, by volunteering to serve on advisory committees or even seeking election as a member of the school board. These are only a few of the ways Freemasons can influence public policy pertaining to our free public schools.

Freemasonry and education remain closely related in the world at large as well. The modern world is confronted with poverty and its effects; religious and political fundamentalism; and overpopulation. The fight against bigotry and fanaticism must be fought in the minds of men. Education is the key to the solution of the world's problems in these present circumstances. An educated man learns to appreciate the wide range of opinions on any subject. Freemasonry, in addition, allows men of many different professions and backgrounds to meet together in a spirit of cooperation and understanding.

All of Freemasonry's principles and ideals are worthless, unless they are inculcated in the minds of each Mason by education within our Lodges. Our fundamental principles are called "landmarks" because they are signposts. They are not constraints. Freemasonry is not restricted to what goes on in the Lodge room. It has to become a way of life in order for the new Mason to become a true and full-fledged Mason. The three-fold orientation of Masonic work for the candidate is toward himself, toward his Brethren, and toward the world at large.

A Mason cannot do Masonic work in isolation. He needs to be within the Lodge's framework. This interaction with his fellow Masons will lead the suitably prepared and educated Mason to the practice of tolerance himself, and spreading the message of tolerance everywhere.



Valuable Links To Masonic Works

If you have any links to masonic works, please send them to us and we will publish them here every month.

Morals and Dogma by Albert Pike

<http://www.deltaforceone.com/ebooks/freemasons/moralsanddogma/fMnD.html>

The Lost Keys Of Freemasonry by Manly P. Hall

<http://www.deltaforceone.com/ebooks/freemasons/LostKeysOfFreemasonry/Flkof.html>

The Secret Teachings Of All Ages by Manly P. Hall

<http://www.deltaforceone.com/ebooks/freemasons/SecretTeachingsOfAllAges/tstoa.html>

The Meaning Of Masonry by W.L. Wilmshurst

<http://www.deltaforceone.com/ebooks/freemasons/TheMeaningOfMasonry/Fthmeaningofmasonry.html>

The Dionysian Artificers

<http://www.nazorean.com/MysteryTeachings/Freemasonry.html>

Is It True What They Say About Freemasonry?

<http://www.nazorean.com/MysteryTeachings/anti-Mason/chap1.htm>

The Truth About Freemasonry

<http://www.nazorean.com/MysteryTeachings/The%20Truth%20About%20Freemasonry.htm>

David vs. Goliath?

<http://www.nazorean.com/MysteryTeachings/David.vs.Golaith/dvg.pdf>

Initiation, Mystery and Salvation

<http://www.nazorean.com/MysteryTeachings/Initiation-MysteryAndSalvation/chomenky.html>

Landmarks and Old Charges

<http://www.nazorean.com/MysteryTeachings/LandmarksAndOldCharges/doron.html>

Mysticism of The Royal Arch

<http://www.nazorean.com/MysteryTeachings/MysticismOfTheRoyalArch/manasseh.html>

Masonry CAPT. WILLIAM. MORGAN'S

<http://www.utlm.org/onlinebooks/captmorganfreemasonrycontents.htm>

Book of the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry (1884)

http://www.freemasonry101.org.uk/the_book/default.htm

Webb's Freemason's Monitor; Thomas Webb Smith; 1865

<http://www.bti.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?sid=F946c80123cb490fa21f32c79b418de8&c=moa&idno=AHK6853.0001.001&view=toc>

The Folded Napkin ...

An example of the masonic virute of brotherly love, relief and charity.

I try not to be biased, but I had my doubts about hiring Stevie. His placement counselor assured me that he would be a good, reliable busboy. But I had never had a mentally handicapped employee and wasn't sure I wanted one. I wasn't sure how my customers would react to Stevie.

He was short, a little dumpy with the smooth facial features and thick-tongued speech of Downs Syndrome. I wasn't worried about most of my trucker customers because truckers don't generally care who buses tables as long as the meatloaf platter is good and the pies are home-made.

The four-wheeler drivers were the ones who concerned me; the mouthy college kids traveling to school; the yuppie snobs who secretly polish their silverware with their napkins for fear of catching some dreaded "truck stop germ" the pairs of white-shirted business men on expense accounts who think every truck stop waitress wants to be flirted with. I knew those people would be uncomfortable around Stevie so I closely watched him for the first few weeks.

I shouldn't have worried. After the first week, Stevie had my staff wrapped around his stubby little finger, and within a month my truck regulars had adopted him as their official truck stop mascot.

After that, I really didn't care what the rest of the customers thought of him. He was like a 21-year-old in blue jeans and Nikes, eager to laugh and eager to please, but fierce in his attention to his duties. Every salt and pepper shaker was exactly in its place, not a bread crumb or coffee spill was visible when Stevie got done with the table. Our only problem was persuading him to wait to clean a table until after the customers were finished. He would hover in the background, shifting his weight from one foot to the other, scanning the dining room until a table was empty. Then he would scurry to the empty table and carefully bus dishes and glasses onto his cart and meticulously wipe the table up with a practiced flourish of his rag.

If he thought a customer was watching, his brow would pucker with added concentration. He took pride in doing his job exactly right, and you had to love how hard he tried to please each and every person he met.

Over time, we learned that he lived with his mother, a widow who was disabled after repeated surgeries for cancer. They lived on their Social Security benefits in public housing two miles from the truck stop. Their social worker, who stopped to check on him every so often, admitted they had fallen between the cracks. Money was tight, and what I paid him was probably the difference between them being able to live together and Stevie being sent to a group home.

That's why the restaurant was a gloomy place that morning last August, the first morning in three years that Stevie missed work.

He was at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester getting a new valve or something put in his heart. His social worker said that people with Downs Syndrome often have heart problems at an early age so this wasn't unexpected, and there was a good chance he would come through the surgery in good shape and be back at work in a few months.

A ripple of excitement ran through the staff later that morning when word came that he was out of surgery, in recovery, and doing fine.

Frannie, the head waitress, let out a war hoop and did a little dance in the aisle when she heard the good news.

Belle Ringer, one of our regular trucker customers, stared at the sight of this 50-year-old grandmother of four doing a victory shimmy beside his table.

Frannie blushed, smoothed her apron and shot Belle Ringer a withering look. He grinned. "OK, Frannie, what was that all about?" he asked.

"We just got word that Stevie is out of surgery and going to be okay."

"I was wondering where he was. I had a new joke to tell him. What was the surgery about?"

Frannie quickly told Belle Ringer and the other two drivers sitting at his booth about Stevie's surgery, then sighed: "Yeah, I'm glad he is going to be OK," she said. "But I don't know how he and his Mom are going to handle all the bills. From what I hear, they're barely getting by as it is." Belle Ringer nodded thoughtfully, and Frannie hurried off to wait on the rest of her tables. Since I hadn't had time to round up a busboy to replace Stevie and really didn't want to replace him, the girls were busing their own tables that day until we decided what to do.

After the morning rush, Frannie walked into my office. She had a couple of paper napkins in her hand and a funny look on her face.

"What's up?" I asked.

"I didn't get that table where Belle Ringer and his friends were sitting cleared off after they left, and Pony Pete and Tony Tipper were sitting there when I got back to clean it off," she said. "This was folded and tucked under a coffee cup."

She handed the napkin to me, and three \$20 bills fell onto my desk when I opened it. On the outside, in big, bold letters, was printed "Something For Stevie".

"Pony Pete asked me what that was all about," she said, "so I told him about Stevie and his Mom and everything, and Pete looked at Tony and Tony

looked at Pete, and they ended up giving me this." She handed me another paper napkin that had "Something For Stevie" scrawled on its outside. Two \$50 bills were tucked within its folds. Frannie looked at me with wet, shiny eyes, shook her head and said simply: "truckers."

That was three months ago. Today is Thanksgiving, the first day Stevie is supposed to be back to work.

His placement worker said he's been counting the days until the doctor said he could work, and it didn't matter at all that it was a holiday. He called 10 times in the past week, making sure we knew he was coming, fearful that we had forgotten him or that his job was in jeopardy. I arranged to have his mother bring him to work. I then met them in the parking lot and invited them both to celebrate his day back.

Stevie was thinner and paler, but couldn't stop grinning as he pushed through the doors and headed for the back room where his apron and busing cart were waiting.

"Hold up there, Stevie, not so fast," I said. I took him and his mother by their arms. "Work can wait for a minute. To celebrate you coming back, breakfast for you and your mother is on me!" I led them toward a large corner booth at the rear of the room.

I could feel and hear the rest of the staff following behind as we marched through the dining room. Glancing over my shoulder, I saw booth after booth of grinning truckers empty and join the procession. We stopped in front of the big table. Its surface was covered with coffee cups, saucers and dinner plates, all sitting slightly crooked on dozens of folded paper napkins. "First thing you have to do, Stevie, is clean up this mess," I said. I tried to sound stern.

Stevie looked at me, and then at his mother, then pulled out one of the napkins. It had "Something for Stevie" printed on the outside. As he picked it up, two \$10 bills fell onto the table.

Stevie stared at the money, then at all the napkins peeking from beneath the tableware, each with his name printed or scrawled on it. I turned to his mother. "There's more than \$10,000 in cash and checks on that table, all from truckers and trucking companies that heard about your problems. "Welcome back."

Well, it got real noisy about that time, with everybody hollering and shouting, and there were a few tears, as well. But you know what's funny? While everybody else was busy shaking hands and hugging each other, Stevie, with a big, big smile on his face, was busy clearing all the cups and dishes from the table.

Best worker I ever hired.

Plant a seed and watch it grow.

THAT'S Freemasonry!

