

When I took my degrees in 1967 and 1968, as well as when I was a line officer starting in 1973, we had so many brothers learning their proficiencies that their coaches had to attend special meetings with our District Inspector. Then, before a brother could give his proficiency in open Lodge, there would be a run through with all of the other brothers giving their proficiencies (in that degree). You had to be able to give a satisfactory proficiency to the head candidate's coach before you were allowed to give it in open Lodge.

The candidate's proficiency is a series of questions by a coach and answers by the candidate. It has to be given in open Lodge. Up to 5 brothers can give their proficiency at the same time. If there is more than one candidate giving proficiency, all of the candidates are seated in chairs and the first question is asked the candidate on the end and the second question is asked of the candidate next to him and so forth. After the last candidate answers, the first candidate is asked the next question. In order for this to work efficiently, there needs to be a rehearsal. All goes well in open Lodge unless one of the candidates is absent. Then the question you expect to get as a candidate is given to another candidate and there can be lots of confusion.

Several years ago, our Grand Lodge adopted "short form" proficiency for the first and second degree. While it was intended to make it easier on candidates, it deprives the candidate from spending time with a coach who can impart Masonic knowledge. Since there is no short form for the Master Mason's proficiency, and all elected officers of a lodge must have passed the Master Mason proficiency, it makes it very hard to learn the Master Mason proficiency and may even stop an otherwise qualified person from becoming a senior officer of a Lodge. It has been many years since I have witnessed more than one candidate give his standard form proficiency at the same time. I have not given up hope; perhaps I will witness this sometime this year.