

When I took my degrees in 1967 and 1968 and through my year as Master in 1980, it was common to have 3 to 5 first or second degrees in an evening. Lodge would start promptly at 7:30 with the conferral of the first section of each degree on each candidate. We would then have a break with light refreshments before the second section. At this time, members were allowed to smoke in the foyer and dining room, but not in the lodge room. This break between the first and second sections gave the members a chance to go to the bathroom, have a smoke, a cup of coffee (there was no bottled water at this time in history) a light snack and stretch their legs.

We then returned to the Lodge room for the second section or lecture and closing of lodge. During the closing process the Jr. Warden would always announce that refreshments would be served in the dining room as soon as Lodge closed. Even though the formal provisions for refreshments was the duty of the Jr. Warden, the actual job was done by another member.

We then assembled in the dining room for more heavy refreshments and a chance to chat with the candidates and other members. If we were lucky, we were able to leave for home around 11:00. On the evenings when we had 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> degrees, we never asked the candidates to stand up and talk about themselves or their experiences with Masonry. However, when there was a 3<sup>rd</sup> degree, the candid was normally told by the Master that now was his time to talk and we normally allocate 30 minutes for him to talk about anything he so desired. Naturally, most newly raised members only talked for a minute or two. Although this occurred before I was a Mason, I have been told by several members who were present when Leon Peters got his 3<sup>rd</sup> degree that after the Master told Brother Leon that he had 30 minutes to talk, he actually talked for 30 minutes.

Over time things changed at Las Palmas-Ponderosa and refreshments before the second section or lecture and after Lodge closed were eliminated. Dinner was served before Lodge opened and when Lodge closed a few members might hang around under our car port canopy to chat and have a smoke. Most just went home. Several months ago, a newly obligated Entered Apprentice walked out of Lodge and went directly to his car and then drove home. Some of us wondered what happened. It was simple, he left without talking to any of our members because he thought Lodge was over for the night.

What we do in the Lodge room is ritual and does not give us an opportunity to get to know our new members and practice out of the Lodge what we are taught in the Lodge. One reason that so many of our Entered Apprentice Masons never advance is that they never get to see what goes on outside of the ritual.

While I was coaching Bro Freddy Alcorta in his work, I asked if had any problems with us having a cake for him after his 3<sup>rd</sup> degree so the brothers could get together and converse after Lodge closed. He liked the suggestion and WM Lyons and I purchased a cake. Before Lodge closed, I announced that after Lodge closed and pictures were taken, cake would be served in the card room so that we could all get together and congratulate Bro Freddy on being raised a Master Mason.

After refreshments were completed, I asked Bro Freddy what he thought of having the cake. He said he liked it, but suggested that it would be equally, if not more important, to have these types of refreshments after a first degree. After I thought about his comment, I agreed with him.

After the first degree for Bro Travis Nolan on April 25<sup>th</sup>, we had cake for refreshments in the card room. I was amazed how many of the brethren stood and talked to Bro Nolan about Masonry and other things. And yes, there was still a dinner before Lodge.