

Are the Clothes a Clue?

by Right Eminent Sir Knight **Philip G. Buchholz**, Grand Commander of Wyoming

Editor's Note: Every once in a while, one of our Grand Commanders includes in his state supplement a message that I think just begs to be shared with a greater audience. The article below is the second such article that Sir Knight Phil Buchholz of Wyoming has written this year, and so it is printed below for your consideration. The Ed.

Freemasonry was once the most respected and influential fraternity in this country, possibly in the world. We have, as a fraternity in this part of the world, lost much of that respect in today's society. Many Freemasons who are far better informed than I am have written volumes on the subject. I do, however, wonder if some of this decline is the result of the value of the fraternity we exhibit.

In the Entered Apprentice degree we are instructed that "Masonry regards no man for his worldly wealth or honors;" the Fellow Craft degree charge informs us that it is "The internal and not the external qualifications of a man that Freemasonry regards."

Upon serious consideration and reflection, I have come to the conclusion that these instructions are another reference to the quality of thought and action of the individual's heart and conscience. They have little to do with his personal hygiene or the neatness of his apparel. I remember distinctly when I became a member of this great fraternity noticing the level of "dress" of our membership, their obvious projection of pride in personal appearance. I have known members of our fraternity who I have never seen at a meeting attired in anything but blue jeans. Regardless of the brand of jeans, many of those individuals always looked neat and meticulously groomed. They exhibited more pride in their appearance than many I have observed decked out in a Tuxedo complete with patent leather shoes or those in a full Class A Templar uniform.

The ritualistic instruction regarding "internal and not the external qualifications" is not license to lower our level of personal appearance. It is however, far too often used as an excuse by individuals who apparently lack the internal motivation to look their very best at all times. Sir Knights, we represent the greatest Christian fraternity in the world all the time, not just at our meetings. There is no "time off." Our every word and action is carefully observed by those who know we are members of the fraternity. To those who know us to be Knights Templar and Freemasons, we are their definition of the fraternity. Our pride in appearance and the circumspect behavior we exhibit in our daily lives are direct reflections of the teachings of this great fraternity.

I remember being told as a new Master Mason by a Brother whom I greatly respected regarding what to wear to Lodge, "you should dress to reflect the level of

respect you have for the fraternity." Sound advice; I submit for your consideration, however, that it may be larger than that. Is it possible that we as individuals subconsciously communicate to the world through our outward appearance the level of respect we have for our fraternity and for ourselves? Do we reveal our "internal qualifications" through our outward appearance as well as in our behavior?

I confess, Sir Knights, that I struggle daily to exhibit a level of personal appearance and behavior fitting for a member of this great fraternity. It is the never-ending pursuit of an excellence which is probably unattainable but which I continue to pursue. I often fall short; I then reflect on my shortcomings, attempt to learn from them, and continue on, one day at a time.

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