

An Ode to the Secretary

He never says “No”. The word “No” is not in his vocabulary. But is he any good and can he deliver you may ask?

Weeeell, if I examine the Summons very carefully I do find the odd typo. Also the formatting is occasionally a bit haywire and not always to my liking. But then I’m just the DC and tend to look for perfection. I used to be “the DC” but as of late, and being the oldest member, in masonic years, I believe I’m referred to now as “just the DC”. Time to move on I guess.

He’s a busy man in his private life as well as being the Lodge Almoner, District Rep (though there’s not a lot of competition for this) and universal stand-in when an officer is absent or late. As “just the DC” though, prompting him can prove challenging. When performing ritual he does so in his own inimitable style. That’s to say the sentiment, meanings and words are all there but not necessarily in the right order. Which is fine provided he doesn’t stop and look beseechingly for a prompt.

The festive board can be especially challenging. He doesn’t always remember all our dining preferences especially the brother who prefers a quenelle of steamed quinoa with a lime dressing while the rest of us make do with mashed potato (I made that last bit up but you get the gist). And now the Treasurer, collecting the dining fees, is whispering to the Secretary “W Bro A... says he’s a guest”. “And?” replies the secretary. “Well, W Bro A... says he therefore doesn’t think he should be paying.” “Who invited him?” asks the Secretary?” It turns out that Bro X had invited W Bro A but Bro X had had a personal problem at home and sent his apologies only that afternoon. So who will phone Bro X requesting he pay two dining fees? Over to you our worthy Secretary.

Being born on the right side of the Pennines I can appreciate that not everyone has the same passion for our national game of cricket as I do. In the secretary’s case he’s a fanatical supporter of rugby. Welsh rugby! Indeed he looks like a rugby player. You know the type. Round head with cauliflower ears plonked on top of broad shoulders. No neck. Looks fearsome but he’s really a gentle giant. President of his local rugby club. I can just visualise him now at Cardiff Arms Park wearing a red hat, leek in one hand, a pint in the other singing “Land of my Fathers”.

A gentle giant he may well be but he’s no push over. When dealing with lodge affairs he doesn’t always take the easy way out. Although he has a medical background he must have some mechanical engineering genes in his DNA for when encountering the occasional difficulty within our Order there is no one better at overcoming issues and oiling the wheels of masonic bureaucracy.

“It’s the secretary on the phone for you”, my wife calls out. Oh crickey what does he want now is my first, rather uncharitable, thought. After exchanging pleasantries and having dispensed with a few character assassinations of some prominent figures who have violated the Government’s lockdown recommendations, we get down to business. Really I feel flattered that he often bothers to consult “just the DC”. He’s not perfect. But then none of us is. Whatever would we do without him. As my mother would say, when observing someone striving for perfection but, despite their best efforts, not quite making it “bless his little cotton socks”. Red ones, of course!

Coming back to the initial question of “Is he any good and can he deliver”. Of course he b..... well can.

Keith Bridgett

University of Manchester Lodge 5683