



WISCONSIN MASONIC HANDBOOK

CHAPTER 18

PUBLIC RELATIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

Keeping Freemasonry in the news is very important to the Fraternity and to Masonic lodges regardless of size or location. It is through the news media and publications that men who are not Freemasons learn what Freemasons think and do.

The Worshipful Master or someone whom he delegates should consider it one of his most important duties to get quality news stories to the newspapers and to the television and radio stations.

Personal contact with representatives of the news media is highly desirable. If the Worshipful Master does not have such contact he should go to the editor or news director and ask for assistance.

Good public relations depend upon the individual Brother who demonstrates publicly his pride in the Fraternity and its ideals. Every member is a window through which the non-Mason has the opportunity to look at the institution. What they see in the individual Mason often determines their attitude toward the craft.

Freemasonry's reputation for benevolence, brotherly love, relief and truth has been earned without fanfare and publicity. It has been earned because brotherly love, conducting oneself with integrity and the desire to be of service to one's fellow man is still the best medium for developing and maintaining good public relations.

Each member should endeavor to teach by example and by faithful observance of his duties as a citizen, a churchman, and a Master Mason. By so doing he will establish good public relations, not only between himself and the community, but also between the Fraternity and the community.

The following suggestions for good publicity and good relations should serve as a guide upon which to build a sound public relations program.

B. LODGE TRESTLE BOARD

Most lodges publish a "Trestle board" or "Templegram" on a monthly or bimonthly basis, others on a quarterly or semi-annual basis. The membership of the lodge should be kept fully informed about lodge activities. Many lodges mail regular announcements to all members. These "Trestle boards" are invaluable as contacts with distant members as well as the local membership. These publications should be informative, regular and timely, and they should give special emphasis to coming events. In many cases it is the only communication with many members. In any case, its importance to the Worshipful Master cannot be understated. Because many men have commitments to family, church and other community activities, the "Trestle board" should tell them the lodge's "work and play" schedule. Major events should be listed at least two months in advance. A "Master's Message," which reports to the brethren what has happened or is about to happen, makes for a well rounded "Trestle board." Remember, the brother who can't be there for every meeting is still a brother and needs to know what the lodge is doing.

C. TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS

When personal and/or rapid communication with the brethren is needed, there are several methods, which can be employed.

- A prearranged telephone tree to call the brethren, which can be set up in B.L.I.S.
- Electronic Mail to brothers who like to communicate on-line
- An automatic telephone answering machine or voicemail service.
An automatic telephone answering machine whereby the brothers could learn what is going on at lodge or leave a message for the Worshipful Master at any time, 24 hours a day, simply by dialing an unlisted number (typed on the back of their dues card for example), would greatly improve lodge communications. The message can be changed at a moment's notice thereby helping to spread the word quickly. Those who want to know what is taking place can get the information quickly.

Chapter 89 of the Masonic Code of Wisconsin provides regulations for publication of names of members or candidates. It would appear, however, that an unlisted telephone number, which the members could call and receive a recorded message, would be a proper form in which to disclose a candidate's name and any other information such as deaths, memorials, funerals and other lodge functions. Telephone answering machines or

automatic voicemail services with 30 to 60 second tapes and multiple call capacity can be purchased.

A 30 second sample message:

"Greetings Brother! This Thursday we are conferring the Fellowcraft Degree on Brother James Bond - come and welcome this new brother to our lodge and to the Fraternity. The meeting will begin at 7:00 PM sharp. Refreshments and fellowship follow the Degree work Remember that Brother Gary Lee received his EA last week and could use your help on the lesson. See you Thursday! If you would like a ride to lodge leave your name and address after the tone. We'll be in touch to verify the time."

As you see, one can get across quite a bit of information in 30 seconds. Only rarely will you need a 60 second tape.

D. THE WISCONSIN MASONIC JOURNAL

The Wisconsin Masonic Journal is the authorized publication of the Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons. It is published each month except for the "summer issue" which combines the July and August publications.

Subscription Rates currently are Nonmembers: \$10.00 per year, payable in advance; Members: \$8.00 per year, included in Grand Lodge per capita. Every Master Mason should be receiving a copy monthly. If not, have the Lodge Secretary contact the Editor.

Address all correspondence to: Wisconsin Masonic Journal, 36275 Sunset Drive, Dousman, WI 53118, telephone: (414) 965-2200 or 1-800-242-2307 toll free in Wisconsin.

Chapter 45 of the Wisconsin Masonic Code regulates the Wisconsin Masonic Journal.

WISCONSIN MASONIC JOURNAL POLICY

Deadline - Copy must be received on or before the 5th of the month for the following month's edition.

Obituaries - Only Grand Lodge Officers, Past Grand Masters and Worshipful Masters. Other obituaries will be accepted as paid advertising.

Years of Service Award Recipients – Only fifty-year and over members will receive coverage.

Advertising - No cigarette or liquor advertising is acceptable, also no advertising or copy featuring politicians seeking election to a public office.

Degrees - Only recipients of the Master Mason Degree will be published. The Grand Master must approve exceptions.

Photographs - All photos submitted must be in focus and not under or over exposed. Digital photos are acceptable subject to the same quality standards. Color photographs as well as black and white can be used. Proper identification of all persons in the photograph is required. Include full names, titles and where or when the event took place. Submit your identification in typewritten form. Any photographs submitted will be returned if a self-addressed stamped envelope is provided.

News Submissions - All submissions must be typewritten so that they can be scanned and electronically captured. If you are using a computer, please see that a laser printer or fresh ribbon cartridge is used. The WMJ uses the QuarkXPress page makeup program on an IBM-PC platform. The word processing program is WordPerfect or Microsoft Word for Windows. Please call to verify file compatibility. Since the scan ability of FAX submissions depends upon their clarity, please follow-up with the originals via mail or email. Email submissions are welcomed. Images or text files should be sent as attachments.

Complimentary Mailing - Members of the three Masonic youth organizations with no Masonic affiliation in their immediate family; widows of Master Masons on request by the widow or the late brother's lodge; Veterans Hospitals; Public and School Libraries; Exchange copies with Masonic publications; and requests by Grand Lodge Officers.

Special - News of statewide interest will be considered from all Masonic Associated Bodies.

E. LOCAL NEWSPAPERS, RADIO, AND TV

Many Masonic events are sufficiently important to warrant personal coverage by the news media. It is up to the lodge representative to keep newsmen informed of upcoming events. But in many instances Masonic activities will not warrant personal coverage by newsmen. Then it is up to the lodge representatives to prepare and deliver the information to the news media.

Given a good personal relationship, you may find you can deal with the newsmen by telephone. Remember to say "Thank You." Say it often. This can help you and pay big dividends in your contacts with them.

F. GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A NEWS RELEASE

1. Preparing the News Story

A good press release, no matter if it is for a newspaper, radio or television station, is written to give the news quickly and completely and to reduce the need for the editor or reporter to seek additional information.

The first paragraph should summarize the information in 50 words or less including:

- What is happening?
- Where it is happening?
- Who are the principals involved?
- When it is happening?
- Why is it happening?

Later paragraphs develop the information in the first paragraph and explain the implications of the story. Above all, stories must be readable. They are not meant to stand as literature for the ages; they are meant to impart information. A story about Freemasonry is of little use if only Masons understand it. A good example is many people do not know what F. & A.M. means.

2. Titles

Some titles have no meaning outside of the Fraternity and should not be used unless where necessary. Most readers would have no reference to such titles as Wardens, Deacons and Tilers, except as a "game warden," "church deacon," or "roof or bathroom tiler." The term "worshipful" should not be used with the title of "master." Often the simple title of "officer of the Main City Masonic Lodge" is sufficient.

Titles indicating hierarchical position or distinguished role should be capitalized when they precede the name, e.g., Grand Master James H. Olson. Titles should generally be lower case when they follow the name: James H. Olson, grand master of Masons in Wisconsin. Always capitalize the word Mason or Freemason; however, "craft" or "fraternity" should be lower case except when used in Masonic publications as a substitute word for "Freemasonry or Masonry."

3. How to Write Press Releases

Write the most important sentence at the beginning of the paragraph, and the most important paragraph at the top of the story. If a story is too long for the space an editor has available, he will cut from the bottom paragraphs to make it fit. So, put the least important information there. The lead of a story should include "who, what, when, where, why, and how" information.

After the leading paragraph, give details in order. Keep timeliness in mind. The location or proximity is also important. Remember who your audience is and where your readers are located before writing.

Don't try to make news out of something that is not pertinent, truthful, newsworthy, helpful stories to editors. Where possible, give interpretive or technical support to your story and keep it factual.

Write in conversational tones, but don't discard good language usage and grammar. Most importantly, keep the interest of your audience in mind. Avoid overcomplicated technical language or difficult words, long sentences and long paragraphs. Write to express - not impress.

Key points to keep in mind.

- Tailor the release to the particular newspaper. Include information that would be of interest to the readers of that specific publication.
- Keep sentences short. Never make a release two pages long if one will do. Make sure information is accurate and free of puffs.
- At the end of each page, type "(more)" and center it. At the very end of the release type "End" and center it.
- Make sure second and subsequent pages have your name, article title and page number.
- Do not put more than one story on a page.
- Be timely in getting information to the respective newspapers (don't send them "old" news).
- When sending out the release, be sure to have obtained the editor's name. Never send the release out to the publication without a name.

- For distribution to several editors, duplicate the story on a photocopy machine or type originals for each media. Do not use carbon copies.
- **PROOF READ** carefully before distribution. Don't hesitate to check your copy with your sources. Spelling and grammar should be 100% correct and in today's world of technology is relatively easy. Double check spelling of names and phone numbers.

4. How to Prepare Copy

1. Double-space all copies. This allows the editor room to edit and also gives him a more accurate gauge for allotting space or broadcast time for the story.
2. Leave generous margins of at least one inch on both sides and bottom and three inches at the top. The editor needs this space to write typesetting instructions and headlines.
3. Type all copy, using only one side of a standard size sheet of typing paper.
4. Do not use lightweight or flimsy paper. This makes editing difficult.
5. If you are not using lodge letterhead, type your name, title, address, telephone number and date in the upper right hand corner of the first page. This makes it easy for the editor to contact you and identifies you as a legitimate news source.
6. Most releases should read "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" in the upper left hand corner, (above the headline, below the logo). If the release is to be in the future, type the words "FOR RELEASE" with the date next to it. This date tells the editor when he may print your release. Do not submit items for release more than one week in advance of the release date.
7. Opening sentence – CITY – Capitalized, - State (lower case), and then the release date.
8. The first paragraph should answer the five "w's" - who, what, where, when, why, and how. Details should follow.
9. No editor is under any compulsion to print your article no matter how good it is. Write it so that he will see the value and worth. Then, if it needs some editing for publication, he will take care of it.

10. Be objective in a straight news story. Stick to the facts. You abandon your objectivity and become an editorial writer when you say that a meeting was neither exciting nor dull. Editors of publications and news directors of broadcast stations want straightforward facts to present to their readers. Most news releases will have a better chance of being used if they come with a photograph. Whenever appropriate, include a glossy black and white photo with your article. A photo caption with relevant information should be attached to the photos.

5. Do's and Don'ts

- DO prepare your release far enough in advance to check for accuracy.
- DO double-check each spelling, age, date, statistic and other facts to assure they are absolutely correct.
- DO strive for short, snappy sentences and paragraphs. Keep quotes brief, informative and to the point.
- DO time your release and photos so they reach the press in time for use in the next edition.
- DO keep the news release brief (three pages maximum).
- DO double-space all releases.
- DO begin release halfway down the first page.
- DO allow ample margins.
- DON'T send out messy releases, illegible photos or releases where you have obviously filled in the blanks.
- DON'T ask the editor when he is going to use the item.
- DON'T ask the editor or reporter to send you a copy of the story or extra copies of the newspaper when the story runs. If the story is important enough to you, you should purchase the newspaper.
- DON'T refer to advertising or friends in high places as a means of influencing the editor.

- DON'T send releases to personal friends at the paper unless that friend is in charge of the section to which that release would apply.
- DON'T puff up the story with flowery adjectives. Let the facts speak for themselves.
- DON'T offer special favors for special treatment.
- DON'T call higher-ups each time a story is not used or is given poor treatment. There are times when a protest is called for - when there are errors in facts- but an editor will resent routine questioning of his news judgment.

6. Checklist for Press Releases

The form for press releases was designed to facilitate the newsman's job and is fairly standard around the country. Following the form will help you call attention to your story. A sample press release can be found in the Chapter 26 or 27 of this HANDBOOK. You'll note it observes the following rules:

- The letterhead identifies your organization and a name, address and telephone number to call for additional information are listed at the top of the page.
- It has a release date, which tells the newsman when the material can be released for publication. (This device permits distribution of releases in advance so that all competing media can have equal timeliness in covering the news.) Generally, it should read: "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE" or the appropriate release date.
- The news begins well down on the first page, leaving room for a headline to be written onto the copy by the editor.
- It is double-spaced, leaving room for legible editorial changes without retyping.
- The essential news is told in the first paragraph. Thus the basic information will be printed even if the publication carries only part of the release.
- There are no unnecessary adjectives or immodest statements.
- The information is accurate in every respect.

- The news value is obvious to the editor at a glance.
- It is typed neatly and cleanly.
- Only one side of each page is used for the message. (Never use both sides of a release page to tell your story.)
- When delivered in an envelope, the envelope is clearly marked: "Press Release." This also applies to e-mails.
- Keep a master file of all your releases by date.
- If you answer a question or are interviewed by phone, keep a record what you said, who you talked to, and day and time.
- Keep a clipping file of stories that have appeared.

7. Pictures

You can submit black and white, color or electronic prints depending on the newspaper. The majority of newspapers demand all individuals on photographs be identified. Newspapers prefer 5" x 7" or 8" x 10" size photographs. They must be sharp prints (a rule of thumb, if the eyes are sharp it's a good photograph).

Captions; the caption is the text beneath the picture. It should give the editor and reader additional information needed to fully understand the picture. Make it easy to read by using short and to the point sentences.

If you plan a picture release only with no story - your captions will likely be longer than if you sent the picture with a story. If an editor doesn't have room to run your whole story, he may run, just the picture and caption. Give enough information to make that possible. Use the given name or initials and surname of all people in the picture, plus correct titles.

People in the picture are always named left to right as shown in the photo unless otherwise indicated. It's often best to name the most prominent person first, regardless of position in the photo. Double-check the caption against people in the picture.

Say when and where the photo was taken. Do not assume the location is obvious or the date irrelevant.

Get your photo and caption to the editor in the most usable form. As with the news release, captions should be typed, double-spaced and identified with your name, address and phone number.

Each caption should be attached to the back of the photo with cellophane tape. It should then be folded over the front of the photo to protect it.

Do not write on the back of photos except for putting names on the backs of headshots. Then use typed labels or write with a soft pencil lightly on the back lower margin. Every headshot sent out should be identified.

8. Press Contact File

A master list covering every newspaper, radio and television outlet in your area should be prepared. The list should contain:

- Publication's name or station call letters, street address and telephone number.
- Names of those responsible at each outlet for your news:
- Editors, managing editors, or news editors for weekly newspapers.
- Sports editors, writers, photo editors, feature editors, city editors and lifestyle editors for large dailies.
- News and sports editors or directors for TV stations.
- News and sports editors for radio stations.
- Names of writers or editors who have contacted you previously or have written or aired your programs.
- Bureau chiefs of wire services.
- Deadlines for news and photos, including those for evening TV newscasts.
- Delivery should be by hand to dailies and stations, or to weeklies when the newspaper is being prepared or by telephone on late breaking news and emergencies.

9. Radio and Television

Your news may fit in with live or transcribed interviews, a music program laced with local news, panel or group discussion, news item in form of community bulletin board or editorials that present the station's support of community wide programs or projects

Choose your talent with care. Your representative should have a pleasant speaking voice and not given to nervousness, well informed on your subject. Be certain that person will follow exactly the directions given by the program director. (He will advise him how to handle copy, speak into microphone, and how to avoid unnecessary noise while on the air).

For television add the following:

- a) Suits of soft medium colors, pastels are best.
- b) Do not wear sparkling or highly polished jewelry.
- c) Go lightly on makeup and don't worry about glasses.

Keep a record of your releases and say "thank you" to the news media for their cooperation.

G. THE MASONIC EXHIBIT BOOTH

The Masonic Exhibit Booth is available on a first come first serve basis and is suitable for fairs, banks, shopping malls and any Masonic function. This booth is easily sent to you via parcel post. For further details, contact the Grand Lodge Office at 1-800-242-2307, via mail at Grand Lodge F. & A.M. of Wisconsin, 36275 Sunset Drive, Dousman, WI 53118. Use the form provided found in Chapter 26 or 27 of this HANDBOOK.