

October - December 2000



Masonic Offenses

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The Committee on Masonic Education
The Grand Lodge of A.F. & A. M.
of
North Carolina

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Masonic Offenses

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This quarter we will look at certain Masonic Offenses as outlined in **Chapter 86 of the CODE. THIS IS NOT A COMPLETE LIST OF THE ITEMS CONTAINED IN THE CHAPTER** and we encourage every Mason to familiarize himself with Chapter 86 as well as the complete CODE.

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Are Masonic Offenses?

Every citizen of North Carolina is subject to the laws of the state and of the nation. As responsible citizens we abide by these laws, but in our obligations as Masons we agree to accept another set of laws not required of the average citizen. We take an oath to be bound by "Masonic" laws that are based on rules of morality and codes of conduct that the average man might find difficult if not impossible to accept. As Masons we agree to abide by these laws and we agree to live by each and every one of them.

The laws, rules and regulations contained in the CODE did not rise in a vacuum. Whether the rule originated from ancient Masonic law, rules of morality established by society, or a practical need within the jurisdiction of North Carolina is unimportant. What is important is that each and every item contained in the CODE was deemed necessary and approved by the majority of the representatives of the lodges which constitute the Grand Lodge of North Carolina.

The regulations contained in the CODE are ever-changing. Each year rules that are no longer considered practical or useful are removed, other rules are changed to make them more timely, and new rules are introduced to help guide the craft in North Carolina. Each change or addition begins with a suggestion by an individual Mason. Every change is submitted to the lodges and members throughout the state for review and every change or addition is approved by the majority of voting delegates at an annual communication. In every case, the laws, rules, and regulations of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina represent the desires of the majority of Masons in North Carolina.

1. A list of Masonic Offenses appears in Chapter 86 of the CODE. The first part of the chapter, [86-1](#), gives a general definition of a Masonic Offense:

A Masonic offense is the violation of the moral law, or the civil law, or of Masonic obligations, or a violation of the laws, usages, and customs of Masonry

Discussion

1. Give some examples of items in the CODE that have been DELETED over the years. Why do you believe these items were deleted?
2. Give examples of items that have been changed. How were they changed? Why?
3. Have any new rules been added in the past few years? If so, what are they?

2. Section [86-1](#) also states *Where the statute law permits but does not command*

certain conduct, and the Masonic law prohibits that conduct, then the Mason

must obey the Masonic law as to that course of conduct. In other words, even

when statute law permits something, but Masonic law prohibits it, a Mason

must obey the Masonic law.

Discussion

1. What are some examples of activities permitted by statute law that are not allowed by Masonic law?
2. Looking at each example above, why do you believe Masonic Law prohibits the activities?
3. Some Masons would state that they feel if statute law allows some action Masonic law should also. Do you agree? Why? Why not?

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Specific Masonic Offenses

Several items in [Chapter 86-2](#) restate and define parts of our obligations. Most well-versed Masons are familiar with these sections and they need little explanation. Other items which find their sources in Masonic customs, protocol and moral decency are sometimes less known . Our emphasis for discussion will be more on these later items.

A. We are not supposed to have illegal carnal communication with the wife, sister, mother, or daughter of a Master Mason. Section 86 repeats this and section 86-5 clearly states that we also shall not have illegal carnal intercourse with one who is NOT the wife, sister, mother, or daughter of a Master Mason. The penalty is expulsion.

Discussion:

1. Exactly what is “illegal carnal communication”? What are the statute laws dealing with this? The religious laws?

- 1. Many would say that modern American society tends to be very permissive. What are some examples of this?
- 2. Is there a difference between “intercourse” and “communication”? What is that difference? What could “carnal communication” include? Some now accept “living together” before marriage as permissible. Is this prohibited by section [86-5](#)?
- 3. Could the act of telling a sexually explicit joke to a woman be construed as a carnal communication? What about “making a pass”?

In section [86-6](#) and [86-7](#) the complete secrecy of the ballot is emphasized. A Mason can be expelled for divulging how he voted in a ballot, how someone else voted or how many white balls or cubes were in a secret ballot on a petition or application. It is also illegal to ask how someone else voted.

We all know that we cannot converse upon the secrets of Masonry with a non-Mason, but [86-7](#) also states that we cannot divulge lodge business, or to disclose the fact that any person has been rejected for any degree or any remarks made within the lodge or elsewhere concerning a petitioner or brother.

Discussion: Why would this information be considered so important? Is the “secrecy” aspect of a ballot vital? Why? Is it sufficient for a Mason to know that a ballot was “fair” or “cloudy”? Why? Why not? How could letting outsiders know about the business of a vote or a lodge harm a lodge or its members? Examples?

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ELECTIONEERING AND CLUBS

Masons in North Carolina cannot “electioneer”. It is considered “unmasonic” conduct to solicit votes from any other Mason for office in the Grand Lodge or in our own subordinate lodge for ourselves or for anyone else.

1. [86-14](#) through 16 makes it illegal to directly or indirectly solicit votes for oneself or another. If asked you may state that you believe a person is qualified or not qualified for a particular office and why. But it is considered Masonically illegal to ask someone to vote for or against someone else.

Discussion:

1. Why is electioneering prohibited? Why is asking someone to vote for you considered unmasonic?
2. How is a person to know you are available for an office? At Grand Lodge how do we know who is running for office?
3. If you would like to hold a particular office or position what would be the proper way to make it known? Is there a proper way? Do you have to wait for someone to approach you and ask if you would be interested?

2. Section [86-26](#). Prohibits forming a club for social or for non Masonic purposes and adopting Masonic Club, or any other name which would identify it with Masonry in the minds of the public or with other Masons, or to participate in forming any club within the membership of a lodge.

Discussion:

1. Why do you believe such clubs are prohibited?
2. Would a Degree Team or Cooking Squad be prohibited? Why? Why not?

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ALCOHOL AND GAMBLING

Sections [86-29](#) through 31 deal with the use, and misuse, of alcohol. [86-29](#) simply states that drunkenness is a serious Masonic offense. 86-30 states that it is illegal to manufacture, transport, sell, or possess intoxicating liquor in violation of the laws of the State of North Carolina or of the United States of America and the penalty is expulsion.

1. [86-32](#) goes on to say it is Masonically illegal to own, operate, or work at a place where the main business is the sale of intoxicating liquors to be consumed on the premises. It does not prohibit operation of a restaurant where alcoholic beverages are sold with food in accordance with state law.

Discussion:

1. 1. All liquor stores in North Carolina are owned and operated by the state. Would this rule prohibit employment in these "ABC" stores? Why? Why not?
2. 2. Would [86-32](#) prohibit a Mason who is living in North Carolina from working in a privately owned liquor store or bar in another state? What about in a brewery?
3. 3. Would use of illegal drugs fall into this category? How would it be the same? How would it be different?
3. 4. The Junior Warden is supposed to keep us from converting our means to purposes of intemperance or excess. Does this imply that we should totally abstain from alcohol? Why? Why not?

2. Prior to 1999 Masons were prohibited from participating in the name or in behalf of Masonry, in any game of chance, lottery raffle, or door prize, even if permitted by statute law. At the 1999 Grand Lodge communication this rule was relaxed to permit raffles of non-cash prizes with prior approval by the Grand Lodge Committee on Special Activities. Even though state law permits some forms of cash prizes, they remain prohibited by the CODE.

A Mason is not supposed to be a professional gambler or to keep a gambling establishment or permit gambling in any form in any place under his control. Lodges will not be used for lotteries, raffles, games of chance, card parties, dances, gambling, or other purposes which would discredit Masonry.

Discussion:

1. More states are legalizing gambling. What are your thoughts on the issue? Is gambling a justified way to raise money? Many Masons in North Carolina do not condone gambling. Should we be more liberal on the matter? Why? Why not?

The impression held by the religious moral community of gambling continues to be negative. Discuss the financial rewards compared to any potential negative impression.

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THE MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

1. Much is said about the sanctity of the marriage and family. [Chapter 86](#) outlines the following offenses:
 37. To abuse or injure his wife or a member of his family.
 38. To abandon or desert his wife or family.
 39. To fail to observe and preserve the sanctity of the marital relation.
 40. To fail to provide for his wife and family when capable of doing so.
 41. To refuse willfully and persistently to meet pecuniary obligations which he is able to discharge. This is an infraction of the moral law.

Discussion:

1. How would you approach a brother who was not treating his marriage or family properly? What would you say? What would you say when he informed you it was none of your business?
2. Is it your duty to concern yourself with the sanctity of your brother's marriage? Why? Why not?

2. Several sections of the CODE deal with the improper use of the Masonic name and emblems including the Square and Compass. We are not permitted to use the Masonic name or emblems for business or political purposes; or on business or political cards, signs, letterheads, stationery, or advertisements.

Discussion:

1. Many misinterpret "In order to gain more wages..." as an open invitation to use our Masonic membership as a drawing card, or advertisement. How does this section change that impression?
2. Should a Mason be obligated to conduct business with a fellow Mason in any differently than with any other customer? Why? How?

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CHAIN LETTERS

Masonic membership lists are tempting to those who want to send chain letters and other chain-type operations, but such items are considered illegal..

1. Chapter [86-51](#) states that it is a Masonic offense for any brother or any lodge to issue, promote, or to be voluntarily a party to the issuing or to the circulating of a chain letter containing
 - 1.. a promise of personal reward or gain,
 2. a threat of any nature or
 3. a solicitation of any kind.

Discussion:

1. Why would chain letters be considered unmasonic or improper?
2. How could a chain letter be misused?

Other Reading

The CODE of The Grand Lodge of North Carolina

Chapter 86

Pamphlets, Short Talk Bulletins, and videos are available from:

The Masonic Service Association of North America

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Silver Spring, MD 20910-4785

Tel: (301) 588-4010

Website: <http://www.msana.com>

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