

Digest of Masonic Law

CHAPTER 37.

INITIATION AND ADVANCEMENT

INITIATION

Regulations

37.01 The E.A. Degree may be conferred upon one, two, three, four, or five candidates at the same time, except that portion of the second section which immediately precedes the lecture, should be conferred on candidates separately. In conferring the E.A. Degree when there are more than five candidates, the Lodge may confer the Degree upon groups of five or less at the same Communication.

37.02 When a ballot is taken on a petition of a candidate to receive the Symbolic Degrees of Masonry, and become a member of any Particular Lodge in this Jurisdiction, if the ballot is clear the petitioner shall be declared elected to receive the Three Degrees. *Provided*, that when a petitioner has been regularly elected to receive the Three Degrees and fails to present himself for the E.A. Degree within six months after election, or fails to qualify for advancement, or to present himself for advancement within six months after having received the preceding Degree, the Lodge shall cause investigation of the petitioner to be made and shall again spread the ballot, but without a new petition, and if the ballot is clear, the Degree for which the petitioner is then next in line may then be conferred, assuming he has passed a satisfactory examination in the preceding Degree, if any.

37.03 Articles of jewelry that cannot be removed from the person of the candidate shall not be considered in the matter of his preparation to receive any of the Degrees.

37.04 Mere affirmations are not to be accepted in taking solemn Masonic obligations.

Rulings and Decisions

It is improper to present a Monitor to an E.A. (1946 Proc. 34)

When a candidate fails to present himself within six months for the Degree for which he is eligible and the ballot is rejected, there is no required waiting time before the ballot may again be spread. (1954 Proc. 174)

Where progress of candidate was arrested by order of Worshipful Master and such order was later rescinded, delay in progress was not fault of candidate and ballot for next Degree is not required. (1965 Proc. 196, 199)

The provisions of Regulations 35.10 and 37.02 relating to failure of petitioner to present himself for E.A. Degree within six months are applicable also to Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft Masons who fail to present themselves within six months after receiving the preceding Degree. (1967 Proc. 74, 211)

In conferring the Entered Apprentice Degree when there are more than five candidates, the Lodge may confer the Degree upon groups of five or less at the same Communication. However, there will be no more than five candidates at the Altar at any one time to receive the obligation. (2012 Proc. 141)

The Lodge may confer the E.A. Degree upon a group of candidates no more than 5, through the obligation. At the conclusion of the obligation the Lodge will have the candidates take a seat in the North side of the Lodge, bring in the next group of candidates to be received into the Lodge Room at the conclusion of the obligation. And when all groups have concluded with the obligation the Lodge will join the groups into one and proceed with the Degree. (2012 Proc. 141)

The Grand Lodges of the United States use the Holy Bible as the Volume of Sacred Law on their Altars (Mentor's Manual, 3.14.) Therefore, the Holy Bible with the Square and Compasses displayed is the only Volume of Sacred Law authorized to be displayed upon the Altar during Lodge, except that a candidate

may seal his obligation upon the Volume of Sacred Law of his choice, e.g., a Muslim on the Koran or a Jew on the Torah. These other Volumes of Sacred Law may be present only during the Obligation and are to be removed immediately after the candidate has sealed his Obligation. At no time shall the Holy Bible, with the Square and Compasses displayed upon the Holy Bible, be absent from the Altar. (2008 Proc. 105)

ADVANCEMENT

Regulations

37.05 A Lodge of competent jurisdiction otherwise, may, upon a proper Certificate from the Grand Secretary, lawfully finish work begun by a Lodge which has become defunct, and advance an Entered Apprentice or Fellow Craft Mason.

37.06 One month must intervene between the conferring of any two Degrees, except in actual and meritorious emergency, which requires Dispensation from the Grand Master. The term “month” as used here shall be construed in harmony with the construction placed upon it by Regulation 33.01.

References

Grand Master may grant Dispensation to confer Degrees short of time. Reg. 6.10(b).
Grand Master may grant Dispensation to confer more than one Degree on candidate at same Communication. Reg. 6.10(d).

Rulings and Decisions

E.A. initiated twenty-six (26) years ago in another Jurisdiction after careful investigation and waiver of jurisdiction or dimit, may petition Florida Lodge for F.C. Degree. (1943 Proc. 74)

E.A. initiated in another Jurisdiction twenty-five (25) years ago must secure dimit or equivalent before petitioning for advancement in Florida Lodge. (1944 Proc. 30)

It is not necessary to have a Dispensation to pass seven E.A. Brothers to F.C. Degrees. (1947 Proc. 34)

It is not permissible to raise twin brothers at the same time with two (2) separate Degree Teams. (1947 Proc. 32)

When a Florida Lodge requests a Lodge of another Grand Jurisdiction to confer Degrees by courtesy, and through error the Degrees are conferred without required intervening time of one month, the conferring of such Degrees is binding upon the Florida Lodge and the candidate is a Mason of the Florida Lodge in accordance with Degrees conferred upon him by courtesy. (1964 Proc. 64, 268)

OBJECTION AND ARREST OF PROGRESS

Constitutional Provisions

Every candidate for Initiation should read and approve the By-Laws of the Lodge, and must present his petition in writing vouched for by two members of the Lodge at a Stated Communication, which must lie over at least one month for the Brethren to make due inquiry into the character and standing of the candidate. And a petition thus presented cannot be withdrawn, but must be acted upon, and if rejected, cannot again be presented within six months. But rejections for Passing and Raising,

and for membership shall not be required to lie over six months but may be renewed again at any subsequent Stated Communication of the Lodge. (Art. X, Sec. 14) (1995)

Regulations

37.07 The progress of a candidate may be arrested at any time for good cause shown, even in the midst of conferring any Degree. However, after a candidate has received the Entered Apprentice Degree he should not be stopped for light reasons and the Worshipful Master, on his own motion or at the request of any member shall require the Brother making the objection to state his reasons therefor that the Lodge may consider such reasons and decide whether or not they are sufficient. The Lodge may, however, refer the matter to a committee which shall report whether or not the objections are well-founded and whether or not they should be made known in the body of the Lodge, which report shall be subject to the action of the Lodge. The Lodge shall determine by a majority vote on ball ballot whether the objection be of sufficient merit to justify the arrest of the progress of the candidate and shall determine whether the arrest of such progress shall be: (1) in accordance with Regulation 36.01 or (2) for a period sufficient to permit investigation before final action by the Lodge, or the Lodge may proceed pursuant to Regulation 44.15.

37.08 Objection to the advancement of either an Entered Apprentice or a Fellow Craft can be made verbally or in writing.

37.09 Pending the settlement of a dispute between two Lodges as to territorial jurisdiction over a petitioner who has received the Entered Apprentice Degree in one of them, the progress of the candidate must be arrested until the jurisdictional question shall be finally determined.

37.10 When a Brother presents his petition for advancement he must abide the result of the ballot without appeal; but when a charge is preferred to a Lodge against a Brother for the purpose of arresting his advancement, the Mason preferring such a charge and refusing to give specifications, shall be himself liable to discipline.

37.11 When, after a candidate has been duly elected to receive the Entered Apprentice Degree, objection arises against conferring the Degree upon him, the Master shall cause an order arresting the progress of the candidate to be spread upon the minutes, which shall have the same force and effect as rejection at the ballot box, and the fee accompanying the petition shall be returned.

Rulings and Decisions

Objection to candidate by Mason not a member of the Lodge to which application for membership has been made has no effect. (1944 Proc. 28)

A Brother Mason who is not a member of a Florida Lodge does not have right of objection to candidates accepted for the Degrees by a Florida Lodge. (1950 Proc. 54, 164)

Objection to progress of candidate can only be made by a member of the Lodge to which candidate has been elected to receive the Degrees. (1959 Proc. 62, 164)

Member of Lodge stated to Worshipful Master that he objected to candidate receiving E.A. Degree but gave no reason. Candidate was rejected. (1944 Proc. 29)

After candidate has been elected and received E.A. Degree, member of Committee reported new information that candidate was unfit to be made a Mason. Progress should be arrested, a Committee appointed, and Lodge, by majority vote, determine worthiness of candidate. 37.07 provides the procedure in the case of the arrest of the progress of a candidate. (1948 Proc. 52)

Regulations 37.02 Section 14 of Article X of the Constitution apply to Entered Apprentice Brother who fails to present himself for Fellow Craft Degree within six months. Petition for advancement may be presented at any Stated Communication of the Lodge, and if ballot is unfavorable may be reviewed at any subsequent Stated Communication of the Lodge. Regulation 37.07 applies only to oral objection made to advancement. (1973 Proc. 58, 344)

The proper procedure is for the Worshipful Master to immediately arrest the progress of an Entered Apprentice who confessed to stealing money from employer, and appoint a Committee to investigate. Upon report of Committee, ballot should again be spread. (1962 Proc. 82, 296)

When a dispute as to jurisdiction arises in regard to an Entered Apprentice Brother who has passed his proficiency test and presented himself for further Degrees, and the dispute requires six months or more for settlement, Regulations 37.02 and 37.09 do not require a ballot on further progress of the Entered Apprentice Brother if the Entered Apprentice Brother has done all required of him and the delay was due only to the dispute over jurisdiction. (1959 Proc. 51, 164)

Member of Lodge who desires to stop the progress of a candidate by objection must do so personally. Objection may not be made by member in attendance at Lodge Communication for or in behalf of an absent Brother. An objection stated by a proxy has no validity whatever. (1964 Proc. 65, 268)

Entered Apprentice Mason initiated after valid objection by member of the Lodge is Entered Apprentice Mason of the Lodge into which he was initiated, but objection of member remains as continuing objection

to the further progress of such Entered Apprentice until objection is withdrawn or objector dies or ceases to be a member of the Lodge. (1965 Proc. 196, 199-200)

PROFICIENCY

Regulations

37.12 No candidate shall receive the Fellow Craft or Master Mason Degree unless and until he shall have passed a satisfactory examination in open Lodge upon the catechism of the preceding Degree. No Degree shall be conferred until the candidate has received instruction in the "Lodge System of Masonic Education" as prescribed in Regulation 37.18. (Amended 1979)

37.13 A candidate should be examined in open Lodge, opened in the highest Degree to which he has been advanced. No person should be admitted to a Lodge open in the Master Mason Degree, except those who have received that Degree.

37.14 The golden rule which should govern the advancement of applicants to the second and third Degrees, is "suitable proficiency" to be demonstrated on examination in open Lodge, and which nothing but a most extraordinary and meritorious case of emergency should ever waive.

37.15 In voting on the proficiency of a candidate, a majority vote governs. Examination and voting on proficiency of an Entered Apprentice Brother shall be conducted in an Entered Apprentice Lodge; examination and voting on proficiency of a Fellow Craft Brother shall be conducted in a Lodge of Fellow Craft Masons, and examination and voting on proficiency of a Master Mason shall be conducted in a Lodge of Master Masons. The Brother or Brothers being examined as to proficiency shall be excused from the Lodge room while the vote on their proficiency is being taken.

37.16 (a) The Grand Lodge Committee on Work shall issue card certificates of proficiency to qualified Master Masons, who are members in good standing of regular Lodges, when in the judgment of the committee the proficiency of such Masons, in the official Form and Ceremonies, is such as to meet the standards set up by said Committee, and when otherwise qualified.

(b) The Committee on Work shall issue a white card certificate of proficiency to a Master Mason when proficient in the ceremonies of opening and closing the Three Degrees of Freemasonry and in the esoteric work of the Entered Apprentice Degree.

(c) The Committee on Work shall issue a green card certificate of proficiency to a Master Mason when proficient in the ceremonies of opening and closing the Three Degrees of Freemasonry and in the esoteric work of the Entered Apprentice Degree and the Fellow Craft Degree.

(d) The Committee on Work shall issue a blue card certificate of proficiency to a Master Mason when proficient in the ceremonies of opening and closing the Three Degrees of Freemasonry, and the esoteric work of the Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason Degree including the questions and answers of the Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason Catechisms. (2010)

(e) The Committee on Work shall issue to a Master Mason Proficient in one (1) or two (2) of the lectures of the Degrees on an orange card with blue stripe, on which stripe shall be imprinted and impressed the lecture or lectures in which the holder is proficient. An orange card without the blue stripe shall be issued for proficiency in the lectures of the Three Degrees.

(f) The Committee on Work shall issue a gold card of proficiency together with a certificate suitable for framing to a Master Mason when proficient in all Three Degrees and lectures of Freemasonry.

(g) All proficiency cards except the brown and gold cards shall only be in force for three (3) years unless renewed by the Committee upon examination of such and holder, or unless the holder of such cards has qualified to receive an extra card for proficiency; provided, that when any Master Mason is proficient in the esoteric work of all Three Degrees and the lectures thereof and receives a gold card, it shall be good for life, unless revoked by the Grand Lodge. The brown card shall be in force for ten (10) years. (2003)

(h) The Committee on Work shall issue a silver card for proficiency in the Catechism of the Three Degrees in accordance with adopted Forms and Ceremonies. (Amended 1979)

(i) The Committee on Work shall issue a brown card for proficiency in all the following portions or parts of the esoteric (monitorial) Forms and Ceremonies: (a) All the Chaplain's parts in the conferring of the Three Degrees, an opening prayer, a closing prayer, the Flag prayer and the prayers for the 25, 40, and 50 year membership presentation awards; and (b) The three regular Charges at Initiation, Passing, and Raising; and (c) All the parts in one or more Funeral/Memorial service; and (d) The Presentation of the Lambskin Apron. (1989)

37.17 The Committee on Work shall examine and issue proficiency cards in accordance with these Regulations. The Committee shall certify the names of all Brethren to whom has been issued a Certificate of Qualification, to the Grand Secretary, who shall record the same and maintain as permanent records of the Grand Lodge.

EDUCATION INSTRUCTION

Regulations

37.18 The Grand Lodge has promulgated a "Lodge System of Masonic Education" which is described in 1954 Proceedings on pages 165 through 168. A candidate receiving the Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, or Master Mason Degree shall receive the instruction prescribed to be given either before or after the conferring of each such Degree. Prior to the conferring of a Degree, the Worshipful Master or a majority of the Lodge Committee on Masonic Education shall certify to the Lodge Secretary that the Candidate has received the prescribed instruction, which certification shall be recorded in the Lodge minutes. (1991)

The Worshipful Master and the Lodge Secretary shall be directly and personally responsible to the Grand Master and to the Grand Lodge for full compliance with this Regulation. (Amended 1979)

Rulings and Decisions

A Candidate for advancement must be examined as to his proficiency in the preceding Degree in open Lodge at either a Called or Stated Communication. (1948 Proc. 58)

Proficiency test of E. A. & F. C. Degrees must be conducted in open Lodge. (1947 Proc. 32)

The Lodge may decide whether or not to present a Lambskin Apron to a Brother Raised in another Lodge and dimitting to present Lodge and taking examination. (1946 Proc. 84)

Voting on the proficiency of a candidate is a part of the work of the Degree and must be taken immediately following the examination and in the same Degree in which the Lodge is then open for the examination. If the vote is upon proficiency in the Entered Apprentice Degree, all Entered Apprentice Masons present are entitled to vote, and if the vote is upon proficiency in the Fellow Craft Degree, all Fellow Craft Masons present are entitled to vote. (1954 Proc. 66)

When a brother has been initiated an Entered Apprentice and fails to become proficient within six months, a new investigation and ballot must be had, without necessity, however, of a new petition. Since the Brother is an Entered Apprentice Mason he is entitled to continue instruction in that Degree pending the reinvestigation and ballot before progressing to the Fellow Craft Degree. (1959 Proc. 54-55, 164)

