

The Selection and Election of 33rd Degree Masons

Education is a most important component of Freemasonry - and it is something that we in Scottish Rite should always be aware of, particularly with our newer members. In that regard one thing that is often misunderstood, or not properly explained, is how our 33^o Masons attain that rank and honour.

The Statues and Regulations of Supreme Council state that any 32^o Mason, not less than 33 years of age, may be elected to receive the degree of Honorary Inspector-General of the Thirty-third Degree. The Statutes go on to state that this rank is not given as a right and no application is received for it.

So, how does the process work? Well, up until this year Valleys were allowed a defined number of Honorary Inspectors-General - called their entitlement - based on a formula equal to three percent of the membership of that Valley's Lodge of Perfection. Once an Honorary Inspector-General reached the age of 75, he no longer factored in the computation of the entitlement numbers for his Valley. With declining membership this system resulted in many Valleys being unable to submit names for consideration. At the 2015 Annual Session of Supreme Council in Windsor the entitlement factor was removed from the Statutes & Regulations. Valleys are now able to submit nominations without restriction, with the final decision on the number to be accepted made by the Deputies.

So, who qualifies for consideration of this honour at the Valley level? Consideration for the rank of Honorary Inspector-General is given to individuals for past services rendered to Scottish Rite and the community, and in recognition of services he will be willing and able to perform in the future.

So far so good, but who actually decides on the individuals who will be recommended for Honorary Inspector-General? The short answer is that it is up to each Valley, and that process varies across Canada.

Here in the Valley of Barrie - with members spread over such a large geographic area - we rely on our present Honorary Inspectors-General to put forth the names of worthy candidates. This is done at our annual Valley Supreme Council Meeting each May. Nominations (with biographical information) are forwarded in advance to a committee who examine the qualifications of each candidate. This committee also makes a recommendation on the number to be elected at our May meeting. The nominations are presented at our business meeting, followed by an election with each Honorary Inspector-General in attendance having an equal vote. It should be noted that being *nominated* is no guarantee of being *elected* in our Valley.

It should also be noted that just because an individual is elected at our May meeting doesn't mean they are automatically eligible for their 33°. All nominations must be voted upon by the Active Members in Ontario - this is done in July - and again by all Active Members of Supreme Council at the Annual Session in September. The final step in the process is for each candidate to be interviewed so that they are aware of the responsibilities of an Honorary Inspector-General. They then become eligible to receive their 33rd Degree at the following year's Annual Session.

While other Valleys select their Honorary Inspectors-General in different ways using various methods, the process we utilize in the Valley of Barrie seems to work well for us. Although only those nominations received are given consideration, it is certainly a democratic system. There is a wealth of talent and many worthy individuals spread across our jurisdiction - and the quality of candidates from our Valley speaks for itself.

All of our Honorary Inspectors-General are encouraged to submit the names of 32° Masons they feel would be worthy of the rank of 33°.