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# JOURNAL AND SENTINEL

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## 'Pop' Morgan and Masonry-- 'Helping a Man Live Right'

By Chester S. Davis

THIS thing we call success is funny. We measure it in terms of accomplishment. A man who makes a large pile of money, or a man who runs the mile faster than it has ever been run before, or a man who substantially contributes to the well being of society—these are the men we customarily describe as being successful.

But many such men, despite their brilliant achievements, are so poorly adjusted they find it difficult to get along pleasantly with their wives, their children, their neighbors or, for that matter, with themselves.

Those men, like the specialists in football, play a part of the game with extraordinary brilliance. But is that a reason why they should have the crown of laurel? What of the man who plays the full 60 minutes, offense and defense, with quiet competence? What of his success?

In that mysterious organization known as the Masonic order such a man would rank high. Modern Masonry seeks to build character where the ancient Masons built temples. Successful living, no matter how un spectacular, is the best possible test of character.

'Pop' Morgan would agree with that general principle. "Masonry," he says, "takes good men and makes better men of them." But "Pop" would be the last to claim that he is an outstanding example of the process. His friends make that claim for him.

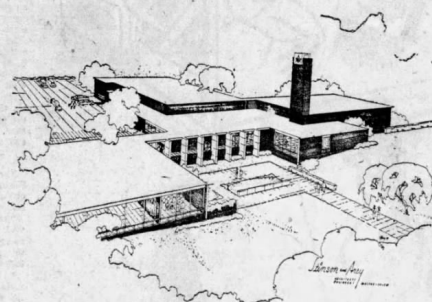
"Pop" was born in Missouri and raised—under the impressive handle, Thomas Jefferson Morgan—in Oklahoma. Back at the turn of the century the Southwest was a raw land and the families who tamed it had little time and less money for refinements such as school. Young Tom Morgan got as far as third grade and he didn't get there all at one time either.

As he drifted from place to place in the fiddle-footed way of young men looking over a new land Tom Morgan found a trade—bulter making—that fitted his big hands and powerful arms. That kept him busy and presumably, out of trouble.

When there was shooting along the border Tom joined up with Company B of the 16th Infantry Division—"Black Jack" Pershing's old outfit—and put in a hot year or so chasing Mexican bandits through the mesquite. After that there was France, the Argonne, Belleau Wood and three other massive, brutal blood lettings. But by the summer of 1920 T. J. Morgan was back in a civilian suit, unmarked by the war unless you looked deep into his mind and encountered the memories lodged there.

FOR a time it was easy enough going. There was work for bulter makers and the silk-shirt wages of war time still were paid to a good man. But even then the acetyle torch was cutting a hole in the bottom of the bulter maker's trade. Welding didn't appeal to Tom Morgan and so he looked outside the shipyards for a new trade. He picked law enforcement.

In 1922 Tom Morgan came to Winston-Salem and accepted the badge. They made him a patrolman and for the 2½ years he spent on the force "Pop" Morgan remained a pa-



A PROPER TEMPLE—Architect's design of the new temple on Cloverdale Hill.

troelman. He walked the bricks with men like Bill Burke and C. M. Stutts.

There were times when the entire force didn't number 30 men and there also were times during the depression when you couldn't find a nickel in the pants pockets of those men. But they stayed on the bricks and did their job.

Tom Morgan earned the name "Pop" during those years. It's hard enough to make friends — in any business. In law enforcement a warm nickname like "Pop" gives the measure of a man whose gift for friendship borders on genius.

"Pop" Morgan didn't become a Mason until 1938. He was 48 years old at the time and that's a late hour for a man to tie up with an order that is loaded with enough ritual to cause a man to spend half a lifetime at memory work.

He joined the Masons because he liked what he knew of the organization. "I noticed," he says, "that the Masons I met were a cut above the average fellow you met in habbit, character and station in life."

On the face of it "Pop" was singularly ill equipped to tackle the mass of traditional ritual that is a part of Masonry. Three grades in the common schools don't prepare a man for Freemasonry.

But T. J. Morgan tackled his assignments with a single-minded purpose that astonished the brethren. It wasn't long before he had put all 32 degrees of the York Rite behind him. He went on to become master of the Winston Blue Lodge, Shepherd of the White Shrine and to claim half a dozen other high Masonic honors.

Perhaps his top accomplishment came when he was named a certified lecturer of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina. He earned that honor by committing 60,000 words to memory—and doing the job in such

a way that not one of those words was mispronounced or spoken out of its proper place.

When tested, "Pop" stood on his feet and for six hours recited the 60,000-word ritual in letter-perfect fashion. Since that initial test he has had to repeat the same ordeal four times on re-examination.

TO BEGIN WITH, The Masonic Order gave "Pop" a place in what probably is the oldest fraternal order of them all. Some aspects of Masonry trace back to the ancient Egyptians. Many of its practices unquestionably do go back into early times. Many more of them are known to date back at least as far as the 14th century.

Since the beginnings of time men have banded together for reasons of friendship and protection. Masonry is an ancient expression of that human characteristic.

Masonry gave Tom Morgan a place in an historical tradition. The Masons of America were an active—some said "subversive"—force in the American Revolution. The hell-raising Sons of Liberty oftentimes were Masonic brothers.

In North Carolina the first Masonic lodge was formed in Wilmington in 1753. The Grand Lodge of North Carolina was chartered in 1787. When the cornerstone was laid for the first building at the state university at Chapel Hill the trowels were waved by Masons in the traditional Masonic manner.

Those traditions—international, national and state—carried right down to the local level. The Winston lodge that Tom Morgan joined was organized in 1854.

Down the years its roster of members has included the names of men who built—and now are building—Winston-Salem. Thumbing through the old records you come across such names as R. J. Reynolds, P. R. "Pies"

Hanes, W. A. Whitaker, J. C. Spach and Hugh G. Chatham, to list only a few.

A few of the old time Masons like Ed. W. O'Hanlon bridge that time with the present and link fathers with sons such as John C. Whitaker, P. Huber Hanes Sr., and many others.

In selecting names of such distinction there is a danger you may lose sight of the important fact that Masonry is not a brotherhood of the socially and financially prominent. Quite the contrary.

Humble men like E. Spough (blacksmith), M. L. Osburn and Sam Alsbaugh (farmers), Irving Blum (tinner), J. S. White (carriage maker) and Jesse Riggs (shoemaker) come nearer giving the order its proper flavor. It's the flavor of men like Tom Morgan.

"The teachings of Masonry," "Pop" says, "help a man to live the right kind of life—how to treat his fellow man—how to behave before the public. It's teachings are wonderful."

When you press the point and mention the last time you chanced to be involved on the outskirts of a Shrine convention (the stream in the Oasis was running 100 proof that day) "Pop" is saddened. Of the Shriner's and their conventions he simply says, "They are getting better."

But for the less-exalted Masons he is more positive. He tells of the convention held by the North Carolina Masons in Raleigh a few years ago. It happened that the State Federation of Woman's Clubs was meeting in Raleigh at the same time. "You know," he says, "we Masons couldn't get any sleep that night because of the goings on of those women."

Perhaps that's unjust to both the ladies and to Masons less single-minded than "Pop" Morgan. But the anecdote expresses "Pop's" unshakable conviction that Masonry provides a path to better and more meaningful living. The belief is grounded in "Pop's" personal experience.

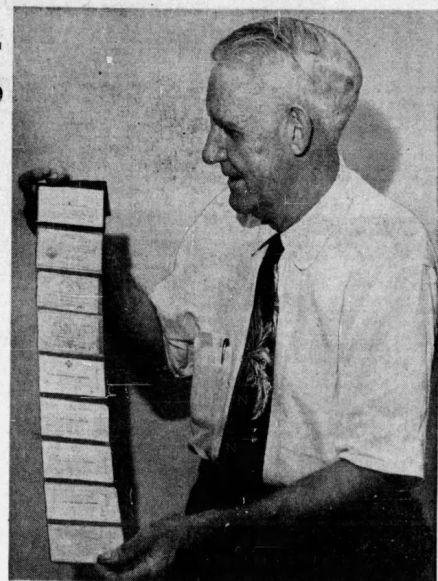
WHEN you sit with him in the living room of his modest, well-kept home you are impressed by the numbers of men who drop by just to sit and chat with "Pop" and by the steady ringing of his telephone.

The living room has no sofa. In its place there are chairs ringed about "Pop's" chair. He sits in that chair as a teacher and those who come sit before him as students of Masonry. He has worked as long as three months—without missing a single day—helping one man master a bit of Masonic ritual that didn't take 15 minutes to recite.

They all provide men the Blue Lodges and the Scottish and York Rite Bodies), women (the Eastern Star and White Shrine) and youngsters (DeMolay) the means for building a better life. "Pop" Morgan believes that as sincerely as he is capable of believing anything.

"Masonry," he says, "has meant everything to me. If I were offered \$100,000 right now for what Masonry has meant to me I wouldn't take it. Not for a minute."

But like most of the older Masons "Pop" is disturbed by the way Masonry has been gradually drifting downhill here in Winston-Salem. There are eight Masonic bodies in the city and they have a membership of just over



J. C. "POP" MORGAN . . . a path to better living.

Photo by Jim Keith

2,500. However, since many individuals belong to more than one of these bodies ("Pop" is a member of most of them) the actual Masonic nose count would not run nearly so high.

For a city of this size the membership is low and most of those members are only mildly active at best. "The reason for that," "Pop" says, "is because we have not had a proper temple where all the Masonic bodies could meet."

The first meeting place of the Winston lodge seems to have been a frame temple located near the site of the old Carnegie library. Since then this one lodge has met in at least 11 different places. In all that time—100 years—the Masons have owned only one of their temples. The rest have been rented and they have been progressively less satisfactory.

The present temple, located on Moomouth Street in the Woughtown section, is only a cut or two above no meeting place at all.

Since 1933 "Pop" Morgan and all the leading Masons of this city have concentrated on plans for a new temple. Those plans—illustrated on this page—are now complete. Work has begun on the site the Masons selected high on Cloverdale Hill hard by the WAIR radio tower.

It is estimated that this beautiful temple will cost \$10,000. The Masons have some thing over \$75,000 on hand to invest in the project. They have assured income enough to make it possible to borrow an additional \$50,-

000. But that still leaves a large amount—a shade under \$18,000—to be raised.

JOHN C. WHITAKER, Chairman of the Board of the Reynolds Tobacco Company, has been saddled with the sizable job of going out in the city with his hat in his hand to raise that money.

John Whitaker isn't disturbed by that challenge. He knows that the Masons will do their part and he is convinced that many men and women who are not Masons will join him in making this temple a reality.

Perhaps to a Mason, a fraternity with an ancient tradition of temple building, optimism of that sort is justified. But outsiders, ignorant and sometimes skeptical of the mumbo jumbo of any secret order, require something more than handsome plans before they will dig down into their pockets for a dime or dollar.

In the case of Masonry that something more is there. You see it in men like "Pop" Morgan . . . the gravely warm and soft-spoken man who has given so much of his life to the Masonic order and who, in turn, has profited so greatly from the gift.

There are other men and women in this community who have shared this same experience with "Pop." Through them Masonry exists as a powerful moral force in the community.

When you begin with character as a footing it is not difficult, as John Whitaker knows, to build temples.

Pop Morgan 1954

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