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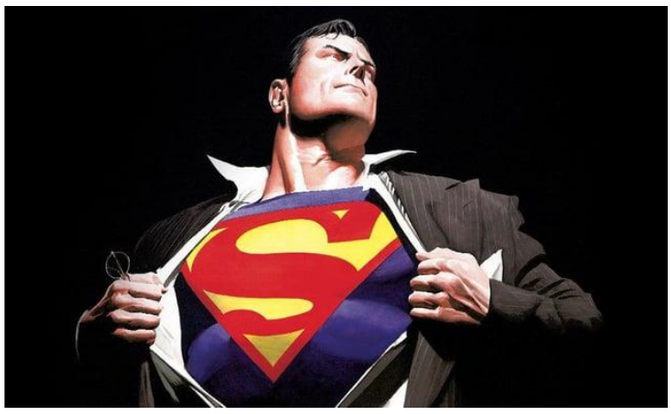
Masonic Legend and Hero: found!



By Jason D. Rees 32° KCCH

Throughout my life and travels, I have met so many brothers from all over the world. From small towns to the big city, young and old, from the new Master Mason to one with a lot of experience. And, I have found the Masonic Legend and Hero of our time. You are probably asking by what standard do I make this judgment and what qualifications do I use to make this brother the Anointed one?

First, what makes a hero? To answer this, we must look at the differences between evil and good, and it comes down to two words: selfishness and selflessness.

Selfishness, or Evil, will never sacrifice its goals nor itself for victory. Selfishness does not care who it hurts as it lacks empathy, love, and consideration for the feelings of others. Evil only looks to its own needs and puts itself first in all things. The lack of reciprocity for those around them openly mocks those who give of themselves. Evil always criticizes others for the purpose of elevating themselves. We have all seen the cold snickering and eye rolling from such as these at others or the total distain for those who have different opinions.

Selflessness, or Good, comforts the broken hearted and holds up those around them. Good returns kindness when attacked with evil, but is honest to those who need to hear the truth over what they want to hear. Good shows moral principles when no one is watching. Good seeks the wisdom of God and to shine his light for all to see. Good shows compassion – not just to those who do good but also to those who do evil – for light will always shine out the darkness of evil. Good does not back down from adversity no matter how painful. Good pushes through the fog of pain and ugliness and reaches out its hand to raise up others for the greater glory. Good is not afraid to apologize when harm has been done and is willing to admit when mistakes have been made.

I have now laid out the qualifications by which I have made in good faith to anoint this brother as a Masonic Legend and Hero. Let me next list the qualifications that I know exist in this person: the silent battles that he fights that no knows about and yet he still shows a warm smile, loving handshake, and a hug for those around him; he dedicates himself to his family and friends, even when sometimes it is not returned; he speaks to brothers in times of good and bad; he mourns with those who are hurting. This brother is always willing to lend his ear to those who need to vent. Now you might think this brother is without faults, but you would be completely wrong: he has many.

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The Devil's Checkmate

By Jason D. Rees 32° KCCH

"The Devil's Checkmate" is the nickname for the painting shown above, which was painted in 1831 by Friedrich August Moritz Retzsch, a German painter, draughtsman, and etcher. The painting depicts a man playing a chess game with the devil while an angel silently watches. The devil has taken most of the man's chess pieces, and it seems like he is doomed. Over the years the painting kept a secret known only to its creator and was labeled a painting of despair, until one day the world's greatest Chess Master by the name of Paul Morphy heard of this painting and wanted to see it himself.

Paul Morphy, born in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1837, was of Spanish and Irish ancestry. No one knows just how Morphy learned chess; a family member was once asked who taught him how to play and was told "by no one, he would watch people play as a child." News traveled fast through The Big Easy that a nine-year-old chess prodigy was among her citizens. It was 1846 and the war between Mexico and the United States was heating up fast at this time. The Commanding General for the United States, Brother Winfield Scott, a member of Charity Lodge No 190 in Norristown, Pennsylvania, was traveling through New Orleans. As a chess enthusiast, he wanted to play the strongest opponent in the city or state.

The stage was set: a nine-year-old versus a seasoned general, and the two would begin the game right after dinner. There was a catch: no one had informed the General that the best in the state was a child and, once the two were face to face, the general initially took offence and thought he was being made fun of. After being assured his orders had been obeyed and that this was no ordinary child, the general agreed to play. In two games, Paul Morphy easily triumphed over General Scott, ending the second game by a forced checkmate after only six moves.

Back to the painting: as you can see, you could not find a more qualified person to examine a painting with the central focus being that of a chess match. Morphy took his time examining the painting and the chess board depicted in the work of art. He studied each chess piece and their locations. His mind ran through multiple scenarios and moves, then something started to come into focus: the game was not over! In fact, the white player's King has one more move, a move that would checkmate and claim victory over the devil and win the game for all time. This painting once thought to be that of despair and sadness, was now revealed to be one of eternal hope!

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Cont'd from front, "Masonic Legend and Hero"

In Japan there lived a legendary swordsman, strategist, and artist named Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645) who is quoted as saying, "It is better to be a warrior in a garden than to be a gardener in a war". What this means is that it is noble for a man to subdue his passions and to work on overcoming his faults. What honor would a man have if he has not overcome his darkness or inner warrior? This Masonic Legend and Hero is aware of this and works on himself constantly; even though he sometimes falls seven times, he still rises eight.

This Legend sometimes goes home to an empty house; he serves his lodge whenever needed without fanfare or celebration. He sits in the back of the lodge; you will sometimes find him in the kitchen or straightening up. He is not the top Masonic ritualist, nor does he have the talents of Plato or Albert Pike. Sometimes, in his weakest moments, he cries and prays for God to guide him in his ways and to forgive him of his transgressions. I believe a Legend and Hero must overcome great loss, go on a journey, and come back from such adversity to keep others from suffering from those same pains. He understands better than most how hard life can be and chooses light instead of darkness, even though the darkness can often be easier.

Who is this Masonic Legend and Hero that I speak of? Why, it is you! It is you who fight those battles, who have gone and still are going through pain, fighting the good fight and running your race. Your journey is not in vain. You are making a difference; keep going. We see you and you give us strength to keep going on and holding on just a second longer.

With all the Authority invested in me I hereby anoint you a Masonic Legend and Hero and charge you to continue fighting the good fight and being the example for others to follow, to continue to love your fellow man and be the light of the world, even when it seems all light has gone out, knowing that your light is what pushes back the darkness. So help me God.....

"A man's worth isn't in what he owns, but in what he gives away to others in love and grace."

"Journey Passport" Program
The Houston Valley is participating in the "Journey Passport" program which includes 33 challenges that allow participants to earn six unique Scottish Rite challenge coins. The passport program is designed to take brothers throughout the Valley of Houston and the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite. To learn more and get a passport, contact Brother Jason Rees 32° KCCH at: acompass@yahoo.com

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Scan the QR code for the Houston Valley Podcast

Cont'd from front, "The Devil's Checkmate"

No matter your faith, your adversary wants you to think that you have lost and have no more moves. Nothing makes victory more likely than convincing your opponent he has been defeated. The devil in the painting for some is the devil depicted in Judeo-Christian faiths; also the devil represents hardships in all of our lives.

No matter the way you view your adversary – be it hardships in your personal life such as bills, loss of a family member, divorce, depression, or the everyday issues that we all battle – remember one thing: the game is not over!! You have one more move and it is the King: God.

Do not fall into the easy trap of thinking all is lost and that there is nowhere to turn. Seek aid first in prayer and then from a true and trusted Brother/friend. Fight through the hard times: the game is not over; your race has not finished until God the father calls you home. Until then you are required to always fight the good fight, even if all hope seems to be lost. When no hope is seen you just need to take a step back and look at the game of life from a different perspective. You will then see that your *certain victory is just one move away*.

A Masonic Smile

Author unknown

SMILING is infectious!
You can catch it like the flu.
When someone SMILED at me today,
I started SMILING too.

As I passed around the Altar
and a Brother saw my grin,
when he SMILED I realized
that I'd passed it on to him.

I thought about that little smile,
realizing its true worth:
A simple SMILE just like mine
could travel 'round the earth.

The Houston Valley Herald wants to wish all of our readers from around the world a very Merry Christmas to you and your families.

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