

Ask Him These

FORTY STORY-QUESTION GROUPS • Robert W. Linn, PM

A free companion to Let Him Talk. Choose one part of one question; the whole list is not an assignment.

Before the lodge

Choose one prompt, not the whole list. Ask one part of a question, then wait.

Use another part only if wanted. He may skip any question.

Leave private ritual and confidential matters off the recording.

1. "Where did you grow up, and what did your folks do?"
2. "What brought you to this town, or kept you here?"
3. "What was the town like then? Where did men work?"
4. "What did you do for a living, and how did you come to it?"
5. "Were you in the service? Where did that take you?"

A prompt does not grant recording or sharing permission. Stop or change topic when asked. An ordinary, mixed, or quiet memory is welcome; do not seek a testimonial.

Finding the lodge

Choose one prompt, not the whole list. Ask one part of a question, then wait. Use another part only if wanted. He may skip any question. Leave private ritual and confidential matters off the recording. Ask about the person who helped, not private degree work.

6. "What first interested you in joining? Who did you talk with about it?"
7. "What did you know about Masons before that? What did your family think?"
8. "What do you remember about the night you were initiated, apart from the work itself? Who was there? How did you feel driving home?"
9. "Who taught you your proficiency? What was he like?"
10. "When did you first feel you belonged?"

If he never felt he belonged, accept that answer. Do not search for a positive ending. Stop or change topic when asked. These prompts grant no recording or sharing permission.

The people you remember

Choose one prompt, not the whole list. Ask one part of a question, then wait.

Use another part only if wanted. He may skip any question.

Leave private ritual and confidential matters off the recording.

11. "Who is the brother you miss most? Tell me about him."
12. "Who ran things when you came in? How?"
13. "Who was the character everybody has a story about? Tell me one."
14. "Who did the work nobody saw?"
15. "Who took you under his wing, and what did he teach you that was not in the book?"

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An ordinary night

Choose one prompt, not the whole list. Ask one part of a question, then wait.

Use another part only if wanted. He may skip any question.

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16. “Walk me through a stated meeting in [decade]. What time did you get there? Where did you park? Who was in the kitchen?”

17. “Where did you sit? Who sat next to you?”

18. “What did the building smell like? What was the light like?”

19. “What did you eat? Who cooked?”

20. “What happened after the meeting closed? Where did the visiting happen?”

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The big moments

Choose one prompt, not the whole list. Ask one part of a question, then wait.

Use another part only if wanted. He may skip any question.

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21. “Tell me about the building: when you came, what changed, what happened to it.”

22. “The fire, the flood, the sale, the merger, the move, the parade, the anniversary. Which of those did you live through? Start with one.”

23. “What was the best year the lodge ever had while you were in it? What made it that?”

24. “What was the worst? What got you through?”

25. “Was there a night you will never forget? What happened?”

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The lodge and the town

Choose one prompt, not the whole list. Ask one part of a question, then wait.

Use another part only if wanted. He may skip any question.

Leave private ritual and confidential matters off the recording.

26. “What did the lodge do in this town that people knew about? What did it do that nobody knew about? What did the town think of the Masons?”

27. “Without naming private circumstances, how did the lodge support people through difficulty?”

28. “How did the lodge fit with the church, the mill, the base, the Legion, the Elks?”

A prompt does not grant recording or sharing permission. Stop or change topic when asked. An ordinary, mixed, or quiet memory is welcome; do not seek a testimonial.

The hard parts

Choose one prompt, not the whole list. Ask one part of a question, then wait.

Use another part only if wanted. He may skip any question.

Leave private ritual and confidential matters off the recording.

29. “Tell me about a disagreement that mattered. How did it end?”

30. “Was there a time you nearly quit? What kept you, or brought you back?”

31. “What did the lodge get wrong, in your time?”

32. “Is there something you wish you had done differently?”

A prompt does not grant recording or sharing permission. Stop or change topic when asked. An ordinary, mixed, or quiet memory is welcome; do not seek a testimonial.

Carry it forward and close

Choose one prompt, not the whole list. Ask one part of a question, then wait.

Use another part only if wanted. He may skip any question.

Leave private ritual and confidential matters off the recording.

33. "What do you hope a brother fifty years from now understands about this lodge?"

34. "What would you say to the man being raised next month?"

35. "What would you want to stay the same here? What might change?"

36. "What did the lodge give you that nothing else did?"

37. "Spell for me the names you mentioned: [read your list]."

38. "Do you have photographs, programs, or papers the lodge might copy? May I come back with a camera?"

39. "Who else might I sit with?"

40. "May I call you if I have a question when I think about our conversation?"

These are requests, not permission. A photo, referral, or later call needs its own agreement. He may decline any question. A story need not praise the lodge.

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