



A photo of the Delegates at the 48th Annual National M.E.B.A. Convention in Washington D.C. Doorkeeper John Eckert is in the front row second from left. President William S. Brown is at front sixth from left and the always handy Chaplain Harry Burr is at front all the way to the right. This shot appeared in the February 1923 edition of the American Marine Engineer. Incidentally, the same cover photo was used for six of the issues that year. An A.M.E. subscription cost \$1.50 a year in 1923. Today it's free! Who says it was better back then?

## Turn back the Chronometer...to 1923 Thank You Sir! May I Have Another?



*It wasn't fanatic like a secret society ceremony or indulgent like a fraternity initiation, but the recommended rituals the M.E.B.A. forefathers drew up seem a little kooky by today's standards. In 1923, the National M.E.B.A. issued its "Ritual and Ceremonials" book – 37 pages outlining extraneous meeting procedures peppered with the linguistic flavor of its era. Alas! It's a real time warp from the way membership meetings are conducted today. This prescribed ceremony is complete with a doorkeeper, passwords, secret signs and plenty of brotherly love oozing throughout. Other ceremonies detailed in the book include a funeral procession in which a "Marshall" wields "the badge of mourning" and carries a black wand covered with a black crepe rosette. Excerpts from the Opening, Closing and Initiation ceremonies follow:*

### OPENING CEREMONY

**PRESIDENT:** Brother Conductor, you will please advance and give the password. *(Conductor does so in a whisper.)*

**PRESIDENT:** Correct. Your next duty?

**CONDUCTOR:** To ascertain if all present are members of the Order, to introduce brethren, and perform such other duties as you may direct.

**PRESIDENT:** Brother Conductor, you will collect the password from the brethren and report to the Chair. *(Conductor proceeds to examine the brothers...)*

**PRESIDENT:** "Brethren, we meet to interchange opinions, and devise the best means to promote our Order. In our intercourse let us remember that cooperation is the foundation of strength, and forbearance the greatest of powers. These principles teach us to work together in harmony if we would prosper. Let us forget any personal ill feeling we entertain towards a brother, and let our intercourse be fraught with charity. We are not capable of thinking alike;

therefore, as freedom of speech is guaranteed each one, let us then be guarded in our utterances, that they be not unbrotherly. Brothers, you will please pay attention to the devotional exercise. Brother Chaplain, please proceed with the devotions..."

### CLOSING CEREMONY

**PRESIDENT:** Has any brother anything further to offer? If not, I shall proceed to close. (*Strikes the gavel three (3) times. All brothers rise to their feet.*) Brethren, before closing this Association, I feel it a duty to once again enjoin on you the necessity of exercising toward each other the sentiments of brotherly love. If there has been anything said or done, while in the heat of debate, that was unbrotherly, forgive it and take the offender by the hand in fraternal friendship. Please repeat our closing obligation. I do solemnly promise and swear that I will not reveal any of the business of this Association when out the door. I now declare this Association closed until \_\_\_\_.

### INITIATION

**DOORKEEPER:** Who knocks?

**CONDUCTOR:** Conductor, with candidate (*or candidates*).

**DOORKEEPER:** Is he (*or are they*) worthy?

**CONDUCTOR:** He is (*they are*.)

**DOORKEEPER:** Our doors are open to the worthy (opens door, President gives three raps, all members rise to their feet), the worthy are welcome. The Conductor shall conduct the candidate once around the room; directly in front of the Chair.

**PRESIDENT:** Self-preservation is the first law of nature. (The Conductor shall then pass in front of the Vice President and stop.)

**VICE PRESIDENT:** In union there is strength.

**ALL MEMBERS** (*together*): They who would be free must themselves strike the blow.

**VICE PRESIDENT:** Who have we here?

**CONDUCTOR:** Mr. \_\_\_\_ (*gives his name*), who wishes to become a member of this Association.

**VICE PRESIDENT:** What object has the candidate in becoming a member of this Association?

**CONDUCTOR:** That he may become educated in its mysteries and a worker in the cause.

**VICE PRESIDENT:** If this be the candidate's desire, you will conduct him to the Altar, where he

will receive the obligation (*Conductor does so*).

**CHAPLAIN:** Are you willing to assume our obligation, such as we all have taken? If so, you will place your left hand on the Bible, and raise your right hand. (*Candidate does so.*) You will now repeat after me, the obligation. (*Candidate recites obligation*).

**PRESIDENT:** You are now a member of the Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association. As a member, I will remind you that you have given us your solemn oath that you will keep the business and proceedings of this Association inviolate. We now urge you to use your best endeavors to advance the objects of this Association, and to further the interest and purposes of the order by use of all honorable and proper means.

We have a password, which is changed annually, by which we gain admittance to this room when in session. (*President gives the password in a whisper.*) This password must never be given by one member to another, except to the Conductor and Doorkeeper, and can be obtained only from the President. To gain admittance to this room when the Association is in session, you will advance to the door and give three (3) distinct raps, when the Doorkeeper will open the wicket, to whom you will give your name and the password. The Doorkeeper will report to the President, and if correct you will be admitted.

Upon entering the room, you will advance to the center, and facing the President, salute him, thus: (*Instructing the candidate in the sign of Friendship.*) He will acknowledge it by the same salute, thus: (*Shows him.*)

Should you at any time wish to retire from the room previous to the closing ceremony, you will secure permission from the President, and then present yourself in the center of the room, salute the Vice President in the same manner that you salute the President on entering. He will return the salutation, when you are at liberty to retire. (*Editor's note: This is quite an ordeal to go through for a bathroom break – but then again, those were the "good old days"...*)

I will now give you the grip of Unity (*Instructs him in the grip.*) Brother Conductor, you will conduct our brother to the Past President for further instruction.

**CONDUCTOR:** Brother Past President, I have the honor of introducing Brother \_\_\_\_ who has been obligated and instructed in the mysteries of our Order, and is referred to you for further instructions..."

## At Anchor Recent Retirees

James C. Barnes  
John D. Bates  
Gerald E. Bellows  
Marc A. Brunelle  
Keth A. Bruton  
William A. Bundren  
Jeffrey L. Cimmarusti  
John H. Cole  
Brian R. Collagan  
Roger E. Collinsworth  
Thomas Cunniff  
George Danner III

Frederick J. Dean  
Joseph M. DiBenedetto  
Dennis L. Driscoll  
William J. Duffy, Sr.  
Harold K. Evans, Jr.  
Craig L. Feldmann  
Ray D. Fullerton  
Wayne T. Garner  
Gary M. Gersten  
Nim V. Golightly  
Greg A. Hands  
Kent R. Harding

Louis R. Holter  
Raymond Ivers  
Louie "Bud" Jacque  
Gerald C. Johnson  
Peter D. Kahl  
Charles B. Kellett  
Mark K. Lane  
Stephen L. Leary  
Stephen R. Lyons  
Dale H. Malmberg  
William F. Martin  
Mieczyslaw Mscichowski

James S. Nightingale  
Thomas E. O'Brian  
Paul V. Petersen  
Obrey E. Pope  
William H. Powers, II  
John K. Price  
Patrick D. Reynolds  
Steven D. Roberts  
Rene B. Sanders  
Michael W. Schmitt  
John A. Shannon  
John W. Simonse

Thomas M. Siwarski  
Gordon S. Smith  
David C. Stride  
Jacob P. Thomas  
John F. Timmins  
James R. Turner  
John T. Vandiver  
Mark A. Vietz  
Bryan T. Winter  
Daniel S. Wyman  
Edward L. Zych