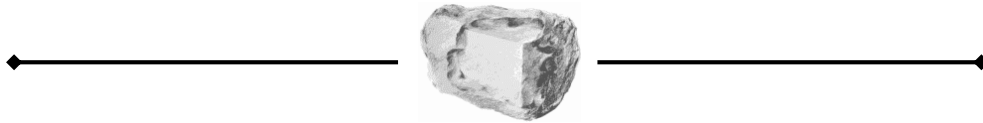


# THE STORY OF MR. READY



## A Masonic Education Piece

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Danny Fisher, PM

- A True Story -

## THE STORY OF MR. READY

This is the story of an old Black Gentleman called "Ready."

I never knew his real name, we just called him "Ready"

When I was 14, I went to work part time for a nearby grocery store called "Food Town" and saved up enough money to buy an old rusty 1932 Ford Coupe. The thing had no motor, just a body, frame and wheels.



Dad and I started on it, but never finished it for two reasons. One was because it was too rusty to save.

The second and main reason was that this pile of junk sat right in the middle of the front yard under our giant oak tree and mama threatened dad with his life if he didn't haul it out of the yard.

And haul it out of the yard we did one Saturday morning, right next door in the middle of a vacant lot that sat right next to our house.

The weeds in the lot at that time were taller than the car, so you couldn't tell the car was there.

Peace reigned again in the Fisher family.

From my first memories, cars were a fascination to my father, the sounds of car motors were fun to him.

Dad would ask me to get up and turn the Motorola TV knob until we saw car racing and heard the sounds of the old time drag race motors.

My father was a man who was devoted to his family. He changed his interests at will to suit those around him that he loved.



Mama once saw a TV program about antique vases. Even though Dad was working shifts at Humble Oil Co. (Or Esso, I forget what it was called then) at the time, he gladly took her to shops all across Louisiana to look at the treasures that she wanted.

Mama was smart as to what she thought a bargain was and some of the things that she bought my brother Larry and I still have today.

I walk by our China cabinet at times and I marvel at the few plates and vases that my Mama chose. To us, they are works of beauty.

They will never be worth more than what Mama paid for them, but they are to us.

The experts would say that they are of little value, but not for us who know the story that goes with them.

Miss Jackie and I have moved every one of her pieces to a bunch of different houses in several states. We never put a single scratch on her china cabinet, or any of her plates inside.

Our father's first love was our Mama, his second was his family and his third was cars.

One day, Dad drove us to the liquor store on Florida Blvd. in his old Chevy to buy himself a beer for home.

The windows were down in the old Chevy because it was August in South Louisiana and that meant that it was extremely hot and humid.

I heard my father's footsteps as he walked up to the liquor store. The sound of Humble Oil work boots made a distinctive click when the steel toe made contact with concrete. Tap, Tap, Tap.

It was enough to wake a sleeping boy to the sound of metal.

An old black man was sitting against the concrete wall of the store, sound asleep.

Daddy was a small man and the black man sleeping against the wall looked like a giant. My mother caught her breath as my Father walked up to him.

I can still remember the "Clap Clap" of his steel toe boots as my Dad approached the doorway to the liquor store.

It was dark, and the only light was behind the store. My father walked up to this man and spoke to him in a commanding voice "Wake up, you can't sleep here!"

The black man was quick to respond. He stood up and took a wild swing at midair. My father just stepped back.

The black man was clearly drunk and no match for a much smaller, but sober man.

His fist hit the solid concrete of the liquor store and his head followed as he fell back at Daddy's feet. He had knocked himself out cold.

As he fell to the ground, I watched my father look at him. The large black man was laying on his side and completely helpless.

My mother called to my father "Larry, take us out of here, you'll be arrested for beating this man up!"

My dad looked back at her and smiled. In an instant she knew that his mind was made up.

He drug this crazy black man towards the back of our car and yelled "Edna, open the back door."

All of the way back home, I heard my Mama scream "Larry Fisher, have you lost your mind? What are we going to do with this man?"

My Dad said, "I just don't know, Edna, but we've got to try to help him some kind of way"

My father and mother half pulled and half drug this giant of a man onto our front porch that night.

My mother allowed him to sleep there and brought him a blanket and an old pillow that she kept for his head.

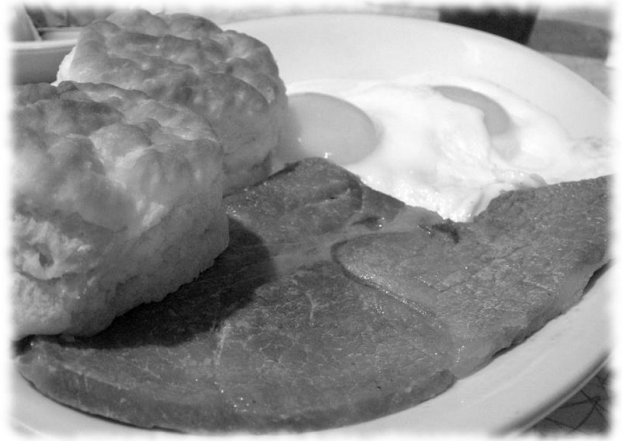
She carefully cleaned his cuts and wrapped gauze around them as he slept.

The next morning, she made us a breakfast of ham and eggs and made an extra plate for the old black man.

She handed it to me and told me to bring it out to him. Mama fixed eggs with butter and love.

Her biscuits would make a grown man cry. Her Breakfast meal could bring peace to the Middle East...

She was an expert cook and she never divulged quite all of her secrets to any living being.



When I opened the front door, the black giant woke up. He was still bleeding from a small cut on his forehead that mama had forgot to bandage.

I went back inside and told Daddy that the man was still bleeding some, but that he was finally awake.

Dad took one of our best wash rags, wet it down and went out with me to see about him.

I still had the plate of food in my hands when we opened the front door again.

Every word of this is quite true.

He was standing now and will never forget how big he was. Dad's head was only slightly taller than the man's waist, but for some reason, neither of us was afraid of him.



Without a word, Dad reached way up and used the moist rag to wipe the giant's forehead.

The man's brown eyes looked down at the both of us as he spoke.

"I is ready to go to work for you. You is good white people."

"Ready" came into our lives because of my father's kindness.

He was a black man known only to me as "Mr. Ready" in those days.

"Ready" was at our house at least three days per week in those days.

He cleaned fish for dad when he caught them, he trimmed bushes, he cut grass, and he did anything that was required of him by Dad.

And he did it very well.

In the fall when the old oak shed its leaves, Ready would rake our yard until not one single leaf was left and the bare ground had perfectly straight rake marks that looked as if someone had drawn them into the dirt with a ruler.

Dad tried for years to get grass to grow under that tree. He would give ol' Ready money to get grass seed and in about an hour,

Ready would come walking back with a big sack of seed on his shoulder.

"Jus ain't no use, Mista Larry, ain't no grass go grow up where it don't get no sun."

Dad finally listened to Ready and gave up trying.

When Mr. Ready washed our car, you had to look twice to make sure that it had not just rolled off the showroom floor.

The tire whitewalls were spotless and you could eat off the carpets. When he cleaned fish, they were trimmed in pieces as filet and some were left whole, just as mama wanted. Dad never ate fish, he just caught them.

Not a scale was ever left on a single one of those fish. Once Ready finished whatever job he was doing for the day, he would go and sit on the back steps and wait for one of us to come out to him.

Not once did Mr. Ready ever knock on our door.



He always wanted to drink his water or tea from a one-quart Mason jar, never a glass or cup.

He always left it on the steps, carefully washed and dried so mama wouldn't have to do it.

I never saw him touch another drop of alcohol.

Ready was a gentle soul. Saturdays and Sunday evenings when Ready would come by to do his work, it was a special treat for me to get to help him.

If Mr. Ready was trimming bushes, I took the branches and carried them away.

If Mr. Ready was crawling under our house to fix a pipe that had leaked, I got to help him fix it.

His hands were so strong that he could crush two walnuts between them. He would then rip out the core and lay them gently in the hands of a young white boy to taste.

Daddy never told me to call him "Mr. Ready", I just did. When I called him that, his old eyes would light up and he would hold his head just a little higher.

Mr. Ready had the sweetest Black Lady that God ever made as a wife. I never knew her name, she would only come to our house when she was invited, but I remember her as if it was yesterday.

This old fat Black Lady would hug me with the power of a Bull. She was old, and very black, with dark but peaceful eyes.

After she hugged me, I promise you that I felt the gentle nature of her heart and the sweetness of her intentions as she prayed for me to her God.

To this day, I cannot explain why. I just did. One day she told me "Yo daddy saved Ready. Ready thought he wasn't worth nothin' till he went to work for Mista Larry. We loves that man for what he done did fo us. If Ready don't do a good job, you jus tell me and I'll fix his big ol wagon."

I bet she could too.

I'm sure that "Ready" was not the man's real name, but he was an Old Black Gentleman, he worked for my dad and I loved him.

That was enough for me.

One Saturday Ready didn't show up for work.

Daddy and I drove the 8 blocks to North Blvd and turned into Mr. Ready's driveway.

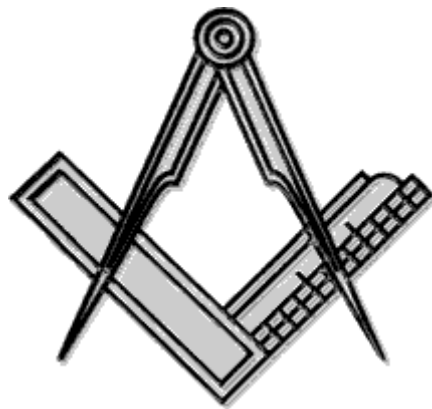
The old house had a huge front porch and as we climbed the steps, the front door opened and Mr. Ready's wife stood in the doorway.

She had her usual flowered cotton dress on, but this time she had an old black hat on.

With not a word passing between them, my Dad and this old sweet lady hugged for what seemed like five minutes and together, they cried.

It was the first and last time that I had ever seen my father cry. I remember the funeral as if it happened yesterday. I had my turn to walk up to his casket and say goodbye.

There, right in the middle of the blue velvet lid, sat the silver Square and Compasses.



Not long after Mr. Ready passed on, the city cut all the weeds out of that old vacant lot next to us.

There, in the middle of that field, sat an almost perfect 1932 Ford. All the rust was gone and the old grey paint primer had been shined to within an inch of its life.

Mr. Ready left that gift to us, but he also left a very special gift to me.

Almost every day that Mr. Ready and I worked together, he would talk about how much that he loved the Lord.

He would sing praises to Him and he would talk to Him sometimes, just like he was talking to an old friend.

Perhaps that is the greatest gift that Mr. Ready left to me.

I can still see him my memory to this very day.



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