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I would argue on three levels.

First level is the silly grips etc. They no more prove that a man is a Mason in face of exposure than a typewritten sheet of paper or a bald faced claim. Our test fee card or Diplomas and our shared experiences are what really prove we are Masons. We have all met the man in a group that claims to be a Mason, but five minutes of conversation with him shows him to be a pretender. All that without the grips, handshakes or posturing!

Second, the grips, words, signs are not really the secrets of Masonry. Of course on a superficial level they are the secrets, but as Speculative Masons, we all know, or should all know, that the secrets of Masonry go much deeper than those. The REAL mysteries of Masonry require contemplation, study and experience.

Third, the real secrets of Masonry ARE NOT SECRETS. And that, my brothers, is the REAL secret. As Edgar Allen Poe so elegantly put it; "To hide something, place it in the open". So what are these hidden/public secrets? Well, every Mason knows them. He learned them at his parent's knee, in his church, at work and play and in his life in general. Masonry reinforces those lessons, re-teaches us those valuable lessons

by dressing them up in allegory and illustrating them with symbols. “A peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols” We’ve all heard that description pertaining to Freemasonry!

So, why does Masonry teach us what we already know? Well, by presenting it in a manner that requires contemplation, and by showing it to us in a manner that reinforces what we know by speaking to our subconscious mind, by clothing it in MYSTERY, we re-learn those lessons, and face them afresh. Masonry offers us brotherhood in the sharing of a common history and that indissoluble chain ties us together into one sacred band or society!

Contemplating the symbols and lessons of Masonry, we are reminded that what we know is right, fit and proper for our lives. Further, the lessons of Masonry are reinforced by peer pressure and by role modelling.

Okay, so WHY do we keep the secrets?

Like the secrets themselves, the reasons we keep them is multi-tiered. We keep them because we have given our words that we will do so. At its most basic, that is why we keep secrets.

But the reason goes deeper even than that, of course.

Given that the secrets really aren’t secret, why do we keep them inviolate in the repository of faithful breasts? Well because doing so reinforces our integrity and honour. If you can keep your word in the face of overwhelming exposure simply because you promised to do so, you will demonstrate that you have a higher level of integrity and that you are a man of honour. Also a man’s word, his integrity, is all that he has. Generally money can be replaced, things can be repaired or

replaced, but your honour and your integrity are all you have that cannot be replaced or mended.

But there is, of course, a deeper level. Most religions dictate that you do not bear false witness against your neighbours, and prescribe brotherly love and affection. Part of our Obligation is to keep the secrets of a brother as your own. A brother must be able to trust that if he has a problem, or needs help, that he can not only go to a brother to receive it, but also know that his problem will not become the subject of idle chatter.

Now, gossip is a vicious crime. It is a crime against a person's good name and honour and integrity. But even more than that, it is a crime against yourself, your honour and your integrity.

Keeping the problems of a brother inviolate drives home the lesson that we should be temperate, prudent and just in all our dealings, not just with our brothers in Masonry, but with ALL men.

So, if a brother shares something private we keep that inviolate because it is the RIGHT thing to do. Keeping other secrets is simply practice and reinforcement; and keeping close in your heart those things that are not yours to reveal make a Mason a better man. All the lessons of Masonry are intertwined and reinforce each other, so in a sense, none of them could exist without all of the others.

What is temperance without prudence? What is prudence without fortitude? What is fortitude without justice? And moreover, what is justice without brotherly love and charity to your fellow man? Keeping the secrets of Masonry, or a brother, therefore, even in the face of outside knowledge, serves to strengthen our obligations in all areas.

So, when someone asks you why you will not acknowledge the secrets of a Mason, even when they are demonstrated for you,

tell them its because of your obligation, and because as a man, freeborn and under the tongue of good report, it is about integrity, and keeping your word. That will confuse those cowans, but potential Masons will understand.

What is it that man can give and keep at the same time?
Answer? His word!

THIS is why we keep the secrets. Because we swore an oath to do so. If a real man gives his word and he keeps it, it is worth all the gold there is. There should not need to be any other reason than that.

So when asked the question “Why do we keep the secrets?”
The answer is “Because we are MASONSI!”