

His Memory Honored

Final Authority On Meetings Is Robert's Rules of Order

By ARTHUR EDSON

WASHINGTON, Aug. 26 (AP)—Many people go to Arlington Cemetery to lay wreaths on the tomb of the unknown soldier. But today a little band of pilgrims made its way to the grave of another American hero buried in Arlington, Brig. Gen. Henry M. Robert, and gratefully placed a wreath there.

Robert was the man who wrote "Robert's Rules of Order," for more than 75 years the final authority on how to conduct a meeting.

The pilgrims were members of Toastmasters International, an or-

ganization which specializes in teaching how to conduct meetings and make speeches. It's holding its annual convention here.

Great Service

Dr. Ralph C. Smedley, who founded the Toastmasters, said of Robert:

"He probably has done more for public minded people who are interested in orderly meetings than anyone in the world."

Funny thing about Robert. He's now remembered chiefly because of an embarrassing moment he had when he was 25. Called upon to conduct a meeting, Robert didn't know how to go about it, nor could he find a handy manual to help him.

So, he wrote one.

It would be pleasant to report that publishers realized they had a sure winner the moment they saw Robert's work. But they didn't. He was turned down by both New York and Chicago publishers, and finally got the "rules" published by agreeing to (A) stand financially responsible for it and (B) give away the first 1,000 copies to stimulate interest.

The book came out Feb. 19,

1876. Since then it has sold 1,300,000 copies, and has aided untold numbers of flustered presiding officers who have been confronted with the cry, "point of order, Mr. Chairman! point of order!"

But being a parliamentarian was a sideline with Robert, who was a soldier, mathematician and engineer, all rolled into one.

He was a Robert of Robertville, S. C., an old Southern family. A brilliant mathematician at West Point, he went into the Corps of Engineers after his graduation.

He stayed with the North during the War Between the States, and helped plan the defenses of Washington, Philadelphia and New Bedford, Mass.

For years he specialized in work on rivers and harbors. And after he retired he helped in the plans for a seawall to protect Galveston, Tex., from hurricanes.

Yet for all his distinguished military career, it's that little book on proper parliamentary procedure that he's remembered by.

Dr. Smedley put it this way:

"Wherever meetings are held throughout the English speaking world, they know of Robert's Rules of Order."