

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1980**

**Grand Orator
Glenn D. Woody
"You've Got To Have The Ball To Score!"**

Most Worshipful Grand Master and my Brethren of the Grand Lodge

"The best defense is a good offense". The next few minutes will be devoted to a discussion of why and how we must move to the offense as men and Masons; how and why we must become aggressive rather than remaining passive and defensive in our Masonic lives.

You see, in any game you play, "you've got to have the ball to score!"

The squad on the field has to consist of the quarterback, the receivers, the running backs and the blocking line to ever mount a sustained drive down the field or to throw the long bomb and put six points on the board. "You've got to have the ball to score!"

You have to have on the batting helmet, have the bat in your hand and be swinging away to ever put a run across the plate. You've got to be on the offensive to win the game!

Whether it's a soft finger roll, a driving lay-up, a long graceful arch from outside or a two-handed slam-dunk, it has to go in the basket on our end of the court to count for us. You have to head in the right direction to score!

And so it is in the game of life, my Brethren, and particularly in the life we live as Masons. You have to be charging to score!

It has become evident to me, as we have traveled the length and breadth of this tremendous state this year, that the Lodges which are going and growing are the ones which are aggressively making and meeting the challenges; and those which are faltering, withering, merging and dying are those which cringe from a good challenge, duck the responsibility and hide behind a defensive position and philosophy. The best defense in the world only serves to determine how widely or how narrowly you will lose. You have to take the ball and run with it to score!

The world today needs our Masonry more than it has at any other time in history, and it's up to us to deliver it, not to duck and cringe. We have reached the point where we can no longer afford to be defensive. We must once again assume the offensive. "You've got to have the ball to score!"

Specifically, we must assume the offensive in four areas: in our activities; with regard to our finances; with our youth groups; and as men, Masons and Americans.

"You've got to have the ball to score" in the area of activities! The leadership of our Lodges must realize their job is one of meeting challenges from without and challenges from within.

The world is always in a state of change; but now more than ever before. Thinking changes, fashion changes, fads come and go. the economy cycles, politics change, life styles get better and people change the way they spend their time. Our activities must reflect direct, aggressive planning to meet the changing world without giving an inch in what we stand for. That is the challenge from without.

From within, our membership is challenging us to accept them, even when we can't invite them to join; to make them feel welcome, even when they don't say "hello" first; to put them to work, even when they don't volunteer; to fit them into the right jobs, even when they don't tell us what their talents and interests are. They are challenging us to make and provide opportunities for them to grow as men and Masons. That is the challenge from within.

There isn't a Lodge in this Grand Jurisdiction which, with more good, solid, aggressive, dedicated leadership couldn't significantly multiply the level of Masonic activity in its community.

We should be providing more activities in the social, fellowship area. How about one good dinner-dance per year, then offset that with an arm load of good activities which don't require you to dress up and buy a ticket? Take a good look at the activities our members are

patronizing outside the Masonic family and then provide an array of the same kind inside the framework of the Lodge.

But they don't all have to be social. How about a step-up in activities just practicing our Masonic principles? Each Lodge could have a committee to visit the ill; another to call, write or visit every member of the Lodge personally; one to provide transportation to those who need it; one to call on the widows in your area; and still another to simply notice that a Brother was absent from Lodge last night and call to tell him he was missed.

And what about those major challenges; the challenges of building buildings, of changing meeting places, of sponsoring major events in the community; the challenges that always provoke a cry of "It can't be done" from the crowd? My Brethren, we must be meeting those challenges, not only to conquer them, but also for the transfusion of health and vigor the act of conquering provides.

I can't tell you how many times this year we have heard some Brother or his lady say, "The members of this Masonic family were never so close, the spirit of Masonic brotherhood never ran so high as when we were building the building or paying off the mortgage, etc."

IT CAN BE DONE

Author Unknown

The man who misses all the fun
Is he who says "It can't be done."
In solemn pride he stands aloof
And greets each venture with reproof.
Had he the power he'd efface
The history of the human race;
We'd have no radio or motorcars,
No streets lit by electric stars;
No telegraph nor telephone,
We'd linger in the age of stone.
The world would sleep if things were run
By men who say "It can't be done."

We must get off the defensive and get on the offensive in meeting these challenges in the area of activities. "You've got to have the ball to score!"

"You've got to have the ball to score" with regard to finances.

My Brethren, the one place we have been the most defensive and passive, the one place we remain the most archaic in our thinking, in my opinion, is in the area of the finances of our Lodges.

We have been so preoccupied with the thought of avoiding increases in dues and fees that we are drastically underselling our Masonry. I visited with the recipient of the Golden Veterans Award one evening recently and asked him what he paid to join the Lodge in 1929. "One hundred dollars," he said. I turned to the Master and learned the present fees are one hundred and fifty dollars. The one hundred dollars compounded at just three percent, the one hundred year average rate of inflation, would have the fees at four hundred and thirty dollars in 1979.

We refuse to raise the dues in the face of inflation and wonder why our Lodges are going bankrupt. We believe if we hold a Stated Meeting dinner and don't lose money on it, we have charged our members too much and have thereby driven them away. We refuse to believe our members will pay ten, twelve or fifteen dollars per person for a once-a-year-banquet and dance at a beautiful hotel, when some Lodges are packing the room at such events. Moreover, our own members are paying those prices to attend such events with other organizations. Why wouldn't they for us?

We have built beautiful buildings, paid off the mortgages and then dusted off our hands and promptly dismissed any further thought of fiscal responsibility, setting up no reserves for maintenance and replacement. We then wonder, years later when the building is costing more to maintain than the Lodge can afford, why the Temple Association has an impossible financial task.

We have refused to address the conservative savings and investments policies for Lodge monies which are very much a part of the Grand Lodge investments and of our members' personal financial activities. We have ducked the idea of Life Memberships in our Lodges and the several benefits which result in providing future financial resources.

Solutions? Get off the defensive and get on the offensive! Attack the challenge rather than ducking and dodging it. Approach this area in your Lodge's administration in a business-like way and run it responsibly, but aggressively. Put businessmen in spots of financial responsibility just as you would call on the plumber in your Lodge to advise you about changing the fixtures in the kitchen or restrooms. The business of financing our activities and buildings is like rowing a boat upstream; you have no choice, you must go ahead or you will go back. You've got to have the ball to move forward!

"You've got to have the ball to score" regarding our Masonic youth groups.

There are three reasons why we must take an offensive, aggressive stance in support of our youth:

- 1) What it will do for them,
- 2) What it will do for our Lodges, and
- 3) What it will do for our country.

First, what it will do for them. Each of you knows the facts and could state the case as well as I. They are totally dependent upon us, in the long run, and we are letting them down. Problems of whatever size or nature in our youth groups are never traceable to the youth. They always stem from the adult area. They always come from having too few of the right kind of adults and/or not enough of the right kind of Masonic support.

But I did not come here to try to convince each of you to become youth group advisors. That sort of commitment comes from the heart and not the head. I would, however, suggest each of you select one young person, other than your own son or daughter, with whom to get personally acquainted, to whom to pay special attention. Give them jobs in your business; invite them into your homes; listen to their thoughts, their problems, their ambitions. They want, most of all, an adult who will just listen to them with genuine interest. You see, they don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care. You will be amazed at what such an association will do for you both.

Secondly, what supporting the youth groups will do for the Lodge.

Many Lodges find a significant number of their officers, in some cases more than half, are the direct result of the youth groups. They are either senior DeMolays or fathers or advisors of the groups. Many a Fellowship Night has had outstanding attendance by inviting the non-Masonic fathers of youth group members along with the youth.

Many Lodges are finding their members' ranks are swelling with young men due to a long program of active support for the youth groups. Take the ball and become aggressive in your support of the youth groups. Your efforts will be multiplied many times over in the benefits you will receive.

Finally, with regard to the benefit for our country.

Herbert Hoover said, "A nation is strong or weak, it thrives or perishes upon what it believes to be true. If our youth is rightly instructed in the faith of our fathers, in the traditions of our country, in the dignity of each individual man, then our power will be stronger than any weapon of destruction that man can devise."

Our youth must be instructed in faith, tradition, and the dignity of the individual. The most difficult job teenagers have today is learning good conduct, good principles, good morals, good convictions, and good thinking without seeing any. Who on earth should be better able and have more reason to provide that instruction and example than men who belong to an organization which believes and teaches as we do?

We have to pick up the fumble regarding our youth groups and score!

Now, before I turn to my final topic, I must insert a comment about membership.

Some will wonder why I haven't devoted equal time to our "membership problem", to the fact that our numbers continue to decline each year. Those statistics are not lost on me and I want you to know I am as concerned about declining membership as any one in the room today.

But, I sincerely believe if we tend to our aggressive posture in our activities, in our finances, and with our youth groups, our only "membership problem" will be to wonder where we're going to put them all!

Finally, my Brethren, we have to have the ball to score as Americans.

Listen again to these familiar words from the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it..."

Our forefathers found themselves ruled by a government which was intolerable to their way of life, which was interfering with their rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, which imposed a greater and greater burden of taxes. They believed, as we believe, that the Creator has endowed them with certain rights as human beings, and that governments should be instituted to protect those rights, not to usurp them.

They said when a government gets out of hand it is your right, it is your duty to do something about it, "to alter or abolish it". It seems they were talking to us.

They had no way of altering their government. Their only course of action was to abolish it, and abolish it they did! They pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor. They risked it all. Many gave their lives, many lost their fortunes, but none lost his sacred honor.

We find our lives, liberties and the pursuit of our happiness threatened by a government which has become the cause and not the cure, which has become the master no longer the servant, which has insisted on adopting policies to which the majority of the people are violently opposed; a government which has forgotten from whence it derives its just powers, which has become destructive of the ends for which our forefathers pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honor.

They have said to us, "You must do something about it," and because of the system they gave us we have a choice, we have a peaceful way of altering it.

If men of our conviction, philosophy, education, training and action do not take the ball and run with it, who in this wide land do you propose should? Name, if you can, any other group of people as well equipped and organized to do the job!

I am sure some will say this is politics and has no place in a Masonic meeting. My Brethren, there is no greater proof of the danger this country faces than that the defense of the very principles on which this country was founded should be thought of as "controversial!" It wasn't too controversial for those Masons who met that night at the Green Dragon Tavern in Boston. They didn't go down to the dining room for pie and coffee after their meeting. They went out and dumped some tea in Boston harbor!

We must take the offensive. Too long we have been on the defensive, sticking our heads in the sand. Edmund Burke said, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." We can't score without the ball.

The job has its costs, nothing in life is entirely free. Our forefathers pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor. Our sacred honor is at stake. We too must pledge our lives and our fortunes. Freedom can never be free! We must pay the price! Can we do less? Can we give less?

If not us, who?

If not now, when?

A talented, young, inspirational poet, James Bruce Joseph Sievers, has said it best, I think, in a poem he simply calls "America".

If you think you feel badly
You can be happy you are able to think.
When you are walking about sadly
How fortunate you are able to walk.

Or when you begin your meal
Think how many have no food at all.

Or complain how you feel
What a luxury your health really is.

In a country such as our's
With its trees and its flowers
And its days and its nights
Full of freedoms and rights

Can't we see what it means to be free?

There's no country on earth
Like the land of our birth
We're Americans. . .and we're proud to be.

But if you had a dollar
How you'd scream and you'd holler
If someone tried to take it away.

Listen to me stranger. . .
Your freedom's in danger
Look around at our country today.

The left is too left
And the right is too right
And the middle can't make up its mind.

It's not others we should fear
Look into your mirror
A traitor in there you might find.

It comes in many forms-
Dwells in offices and dorms
And forgets that American is his name.

He elects a man
Then does what he can
To put his representative to shame.

Or he feels that it's wrong
For a Nation to be strong
And a uniform is no way to be free.

If we complacently
Ignore America's plea
We'll lose her....and be unable to see

That our enemies, of course,
Won't need to use force
Because our enemies are already here.

And as with Greece and with Rome
We'll soon give up our home
If we don't realize that with every year

Our youth can't see
What it means to be

An American in love with his land.

So our example must show
That we're proud to know
We're American....
And we understand

That the bruises and scars
On our stripes and stars
Are proof for the youth to see
That Americans must strive
To keep America alive

For freedom can never be free.

MAY GOD BLESS US
IN THE WORK WE HAVE TO DO!