

**Grand Lodge
Free & Accepted Masons
Of California
Grand Oration 1984**

**Grand Orator
Donald A. Nielsen
"YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF YOU BELIEVE"**

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Distinguished and Honored Members of the Fraternity, my fellow Grand Lodge Officers, our lovely ladies and members of our Concordant Bodies, especially you beautiful and hand-some members of our Youth Groups

What a beautiful sight you are! The whole Masonic Family is represented here this morning like one great team.

What do you think of when you hear the word "team"? For the next few minutes imagine yourself in your favorite football stadium. The teams are on the field, the fans are in the stands, the band is playing and the cheerleaders are at it again. "We've got spirit, yes we do. We've got spirit, how about you?"

What! There's no response! Is all your spirit gone? Is this why the score is so one-sided? Have we lost our desire to turn this game around and win?

—Whistle sound—

There it is, the two-minute warning. This game is about over. Will we win or lose? How much do you care? The players are all in place. The plays are in. The center snaps the ball. It's a long pass.

Well, my friends, the season is over. Have we won or lost? Let's go to the locker room and listen to the coaching staff's wrap up.

Four years ago in this very room we heard Worshipful Glenn Woody inspire us to go out onto the field and win. He reminded us all that we had to have the ball to score. Well, we've had the ball for four seasons and you know the score. We're still on a losing streak. In that same week we elected a new Assistant Captain of our team. His name was E. Arthur Haglund. He came to us like a mud puddle full of enthusiasm—a real geyser was he. He had a theme song that he said inspired him to set his goals and reach them. I can hear it right now —

Climb Ev'ry Mountain
Climb ev'ry mountain,
Search high and low
Follow ev'ry by-way,
Ev'ry path you know.
Climb ev'ry mountain,
Ford ev'ry stream,
Follow ev'ry rainbown,
Till you find your dream!
A dream that will need
All the love you can give,
Ev'ry day of your life
For as long as you live.
Climb ev'ry mountain,
Ford ev'ry stream,
Follow ev'ry rainbow
Till you find your dream!

He's been our Captain this year and led our team through many successful ventures, all of which you know very well. He called on every one of us to individually make a difference this year. Have we?

Let's examine some of the key "plays" we've been given to use. The first group is our basic "plays" we call working tools.

Take the twenty-four inch gauge, which we are taught to use to divide our time. Do you use your time effectively to serve your Blue Lodge? We constantly hear the cry to change our ritual work in order to encourage more men to be officers. "There's too much to memorize," we're told. But is that the real reason? What percent of our members set aside time to be active? It is less than 10 who attend Degree Meetings or Stated Meetings. When the call goes out for volunteers to work, few respond. How about you? Have you given the time you should? With the common gavel we are admonished to divest our hearts and consciences of all the vices and superfluities of life, but do we? Is your spiritual building sturdily constructed and ready for your arrival?

How about the Square? Sure, we all wear it proudly for all to see. But do you do to your Brothers and Sisters as, in similar cases, you would that they should do unto you? My friends, I am appalled at the way in which members of this team talk about each other. Sure, we believe Truth to be one of our tenets, but is there no hypocrisy and deceit known among us? Do we really join with heart and tongue in promoting each other's welfare and rejoice in each other's prosperity? Do we communicate to non-members a unique quality of sincerity and plain dealing to make them want to be a part of our team? Think about it and determine for yourself if we are winning or losing. Maybe we need to get the trowel busy spreading the cement which unites us into one sacred band or society of friends and Brothers among whom no contention should ever exist—I repeat, no contention should ever exist, but that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who best can work and best agree.

With a little effort we can all achieve a level of living worthy of recognition and truly tested by the plumb.

Lanny M. Covey, Past Master of Snyder Lodge No. 706 in Texas, summed it up beautifully as follows:

Do you measure how you act in life?
With the twenty-four inch gauge?
Do you use the common gavel,
To get rid of hate and rage?
Do you plumb your own existence,
With God's pure Holy Word?
Do you square things with Him daily,
Are your prayers ever heard?
Do you level your sights humbly,
With the light He's given thee?
Do you trowel in good intentions,
With the cement of charity?
If you do these things, my Brother
And use the compass as your guide;
Then the meaning of the working tools,
Forever will abide.
Do you keep your thought pure,
Like the beautiful Lambskin?
Do you go the length of your cable tow,
When dealing with a friend?
Do you follow the winding staircase,
And make each step your duty?
Do you support the Masonic Lodge,
With wisdom, strength and beauty?
Do you know you're always under,
The all-seeing Eye?
Do you realize His majesty,
As you look at the night sky?
When your life on earth is over,

And God calls you to His side;
As he checks your use of the working tools,
May He smile on you with pride.

To these basic "plays" we added others called tenets - Brotherly Love and Relief. To succeed as a strong team we must aid, support and protect each other.

Our Youth Groups are crying for our aid and support. They need us as advisors and active participants in their activities. Yet every year more and more Bethels, Assemblies and Chapters relinquish their charters because there is no interest on the part of adults. We are supposed to be men of vision, but I fear our sight is growing dim when it comes to the future of our team, if not the whole nation. Just look at these great young leaders. Can you honestly stand idly by and let them fail?

Our final group of "plays" we call charges. As citizens we are enjoined to be exemplary in the discharge of our civil duties. We must become more active in our community governments as leaders. We must make our precepts known by using the ballot wisely. Remember, one vote can make a difference just as one Mason can make a difference. As individuals who are charged to practice the domestic and public virtues, we must not forget the warning sent out in a recent Carnegie Annual Report which said,

"No nation, and especially not this one at this stage in its history, can afford to neglect its children.

Whatever importance we attach as people to expenditure on armaments, to programs for older Americans, to maintaining high levels of consumption and to a hundred other purposes, the welfare of the children has to be our highest priority. Not only are they our future security, but their dreams and ideals can provide a much-needed renaissance of spirit in what is becoming an aging, tired, and disillusioned society. In the end, the only thing we have is our young people; if we fail them, all else is in vain."

Former President Dwight D. Eisenhower put our dedication to youth through our support of public schools this way,

"Because our schools help shape the mind and character of our youth, the strength or weakness of our educational system today will go far to determine the strength or weakness of our national wisdom and our national morality tomorrow. That is why it is essential to our nation that we have good schools and their quality depends on all of us."

Horace Mann, the founder of public education wrote,

"Remember the child. Pour out light and truth as God pours sunshine and rain. No longer seek knowledge as the luxury of a few, but dispense it amongst all as the bread of life. Summon the mightiest intellects.

Collect whatever talent or erudition or eloquence the broad land can supply, and go forth and teach this people?"

Well, this season is over. We've reviewed many of our "plays". Now it's time for each of you to evaluate yourself.

Suppose every Mason did what you did?

Suppose every Mason attended meetings with the regularity you do?

Suppose every Mason served on as many Committees as you do?

Suppose every Mason brought in as many petitions as you do?

Suppose every Mason was as friendly, thoughtful and considerate as you are?

Suppose every Mason was as dependable, conscientious, enthusiastic and willing as you are?

Suppose every Mason had as many, or few excuses as you do?

Suppose every Mason followed your example?

What kind of a Fraternity would we have?

As for me there is only one answer. It can be great, it must be great; it will be great if you add this final ingredient:

I BELIEVE

I believe for ev'ry drop of rain that falls,
A flower grows.
I believe that somewhere in the darkest night,
A candle glows.
I believe for ev'ryone who goes astray,
Someone will come to show the way.
I believe, I believe.
I believe above the storm the smallest pray'r
Will still be heard.
I believe that someone in the great somewhere
Hears ev'ry word.
Ev'ry time I hear a newborn baby cry,
Or touch a leaf, or see the sky,
Then I know why I believe.

My Brethren and friends—you and you and you and you can make a difference. Yes, you can make a difference, if you believe.
Thank you.