

**Life's Working Tools Yesterday, Today And Tomorrow.**  
**by James E. Olmstead, Grand Master**

Each of our degrees instructs or informs the candidate that the working tools presented are to remind him of a system of morals and values that, when practiced in our daily activities, help us to better serve mankind and give more meaning to our lives. You could say that Freemasonry provides its members with working tools that help them to live better and fuller lives, in other words Life's Working Tools.

Looking back several generations, we can observe that Masonry was very well respected and the membership of the local lodge included the civic leaders of the community, the business and professional leaders of the community and yes, even the religious leaders of the community. The Masons were known for their charitable efforts within the local community. The lodge planned its yearly calendar of events so there were activities for the entire family. Masons were known for taking care of their own members when tragedy beset one of their brethren. It was common knowledge that if you were ever in trouble or in need, all you had to do was, "*Ask a Mason. He will help.*" The Lodge was a viable, contributing member of the community. The Lodge's presence in the community made a difference. Over the years, many Lodges have shifted their attention to performing ritual and have lost sight of the fact that Masonry is an organization that has three phases or three areas of responsibility; ritual, community service and service to our members. Perhaps we have been satisfied to let the governments social programs be the sole responsible provider of relief to the distressed. By de-emphasizing the service aspect of our Masonic work, the Ritual became the remaining item of importance in our activities. Inspection night has become the most important activity in the minds of the Worshipful Masters and the membership. The results of the shift in our emphasis are that many people in the community today don't even know where the Masonic temple is located. They don't know who the Masons are or what the Masons stand for. Why would busy people want to join an organization just to perform or watch ritual? I submit for your consideration that Masonry is much more than ritual. "*To relieve the distressed is a duty incumbent upon all men but particularly on Free Masons who are linked together by a chain of sincere affection.*" This familiar passage from the Entered Apprentice lecture means we are to serve mankind in general and our Brethren in particular.

The lessons of our beloved Masonic ritual have not changed over the years. It is still the same beautiful ritual lessons that made our fraternity so well respected that the community and civic leaders wanted to join and be part of this world wide Brotherhood of men. Looking back into our Masonic history, we can see that Freemasonry did provide life's working tools, yesterday, and if we each will make the commitment to observe and practice those Masonic lessons in our everyday lives today, then we can ensure that the fraternity will still have the strength and endurance for tomorrow. Remember that Masonry must be responsive to all three phases; ritual,

service to the community and service to our members. Then we can be assured that Freemasonry is “Life’s Working Tools - Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.”