

Dear Worshipful Brother,

Thank you for accepting the appointment as District Deputy Grand Master for your District. It is one of the most important jobs in Oklahoma Masonry. I am honored to have you as a part of our team.

My major program for 2014 is called **Hand to Back**. There are 3 primary elements:

**The Western Gate**  
**The Masonic Trail**  
**Alas, My Brother**



**The Western Gate** deals with investigating the petitions we receive. Nothing is more important than that investigation, because it is only in that way we can protect the reputation of Freemasonry. The great majority of those who petition for the Degrees are “good men and true,” but there are always some who see the Fraternity as a way of hiding their activities or as a way to exploit others.

We don't insist that a man be perfect, but we do insist that he be a good man. Each of us places his honor and his reputation on the line every time we admit a man into Masonry. We are judged by his actions and reputation. I have put together a Petition Investigation Manual which is included in this booklet. It is not required, but it is recommended that Lodges for it or a similar procedure in investigating Petitions.

At the 2013 Leadership Conference, I gave a presentation on the Electronic Verification Process, or National Back Ground checks for petitioners. And I asked if there were any lodges who would like to volunteer to be a part of a Pilot Program to see how well this process would work in Oklahoma. I had fourteen lodges who were interested in this project. During the year, those Lodges which volunteer to participate will order background checks on Petitioners to see if such a system works and produces useful results. I'd urge all other Lodges to pay attention to that Western Gate even if they do not order background checks. We have no wish to exclude good men, but we do want to exclude men who would harm Freemasonry.



**The Masonic Trail** deals staying in contact with the candidate, through the Master Mason degree and beyond. Contacting the people who went through the Chance to Advance and encouraging them to become active in the Lodge. It does little good to the man and less good to the Fraternity if we ignore him after the Entered Apprentice Degree. There's a good chance that he will not continue and become active in the Lodge unless we make sure he knows he's welcome. The Chance to Advance program brought many good men into Masonry. It would be unfraternal to them and hurtful to the Lodge if we do not do

everything possible to make them feel at home.



**"Alas My Brother"** deals with Masonic Memorial services. We need young men to learn the Masonic service. We have several good men in the state who will travel many miles, when called, because a lodge in that area doesn't have anyone to do a service for a departed Brother. We have promised that if a Brother or his family wants a Masonic Memorial service, he shall have one. It is a responsibility and an obligation—and the last kindness we can perform on this earth for one who was dear to us.

I will continue, with the help of our lodges, to support OETA, Fund raising efforts for the needy and giving emphasis to the CHIP program for childhood identification.

I also have an FFA committee, which will work with our rural lodges in support of the FFA programs. For those of you who are unaware, the FFA was started by Masons. And should you have the opportunity to attend one of their meetings you will definitely see the resemblance to your own lodge.



The purpose of my program is to enrich the fraternal experience for all of us, new Masons and Masons who have been around for some time. Because I truly believe that, in this age of instant communications—and instant isolation—men truly long for the personal human touch. Thank you for helping make all this a reality!

We long for the friendly hand upon the back.

*Ren Chamberlain*