

Masonic Lodges all over the country have a similar problem with many of their Entered Apprentices. A high percentage of them never learn their work and therefore never go any further in their degrees of Masonry. Several years ago, our Grand Lodge tried to solve this problem by reducing the amount of work that a Candidate had to learn and recite in open Lodge. What used to take 10 to 15 minutes now takes less than 5. Of course, the "long form" is still preferable and is mandatory for the 3<sup>rd</sup> degree. The "short form" also means that an Entered Apprentice spends less time with his coach to learn firsthand the workings of Masonry and his Lodge.

The California Masonic Code, Section 2670 (Forfeiture of Fees and Contributions), used to state that "a candidate must present himself qualified for the second and third degrees within a period of three years from the date of his initiation." This statute went into effect October 1973. Candidates after October 1973 have three years; candidates before this time had five years. Exceptions could be made for valid reasons and a couple of more months could be granted by our Grand Master.

At the time Section 2670 was operational, dues did not start until a candidate was raised a Master Mason. Several years ago this changed and dues now are collected from the date of initiation forward and there is no time limit to get your second and third degree.

At this time Las Palmas-Ponderosa has 25 Entered Apprentice Masons who have not advanced. Yes, some are recent initiates and with the Covid-19 problems they have not been coached or Lodge has not been open to give the proficiency, but most have been on our rolls for years and years. Our longest Entered Apprentice got his first degree in 1986--that is 34 years ago. If they pay their dues, they can still be coached if they wish. If they do not pay their dues for 2 years, we have to go through the prescribed process to suspend them for non-payment of dues. At this time, out of the 25 Entered Apprentice Masons in our Lodge, 17 are behind in their dues. Of course, several will pay their dues late, but many of these should be suspended; however, we have a COVID-19 problem. Since we cannot have Stated Meetings, we can't vote on suspending them. It also means that Las Palmas-Ponderosa Lodge will have to pay the Grand Lodge assessment on these 17 Entered Apprentices, which at about \$50 each is \$850. Has the "short form proficiency" helped the candidates or the Lodge? It doesn't look like it to me.