



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

April 10, 2011

To All Members of the Order Who Would Like to See Us Grow into a Brighter Future!  
(Dedicated Members for Change):

For the last 50-plus years, our order has experienced a steady decline in membership. Why? Because in many cases, our lodges have become irrelevant to today's world and today's potential members. Many of our lodges are diminishing and closing due to a lack of active membership. Some lodges have no members under the age of 70. Others barely make a quorum, waiting hopefully for the fifth member to arrive to make a semblance of a meeting. But let me say what many are already thinking - five people do not really make a lodge - five people only succeed in making the skeletal remains of a lodge.

And yet, we do have growing lodges among us! We do have hope! Last year Sovereign Grand Lodge provided a list that showed that only California made substantial advances in membership. We beat, by far, every other state in growth. Several lodges are responsible for this growth, and we must learn from those lodges. The Davis Lodge, for one, is consistently growing by attracting many prominent city and county members to a lodge that encourages varied interests and sponsors many events - five years ago they had about 40 members - today they have over 160. The Hayward Lodge, for another, barely reopened for a year, boasts 70 members due to sponsoring interests in music and the arts. San Francisco Lodge, keeps growing due to good management and offering a wide and varied list of events and ways in which to enliven their members.

We want to grow, don't we? We want to go forward. We can't expect new members to knock at locked doors while we are whispering tired mantras to a tired and sleepy few (who already know them). We have to go out and get the members! We have to show them relevance. We are proud of our heritage. Now let's show them how proud we are that we are still relevant to today. Let's open our eyes to reality and accept the facts of life. Let's unite and face the future together.

How do we accept today? First, we realize that we are in today. That sounds simplistic but is really not. We must lose all sense of racism, sexism, and all other exclusionary thinking. We say we practice "friendship, love and truth". Let's really practice it. Let's realize as good old Thomas Jefferson said that not only are "all men created equal", but that we love all races and genders equally. It is time to shed any vestige of hate. Look at the vibrant lodges - they are involved in the charities of today - the AIDS walks, the cancer awareness events, Davis Lodge sponsored the world's longest bicycle parade to aid the schools, Hayward Lodge sponsors many community musical events.

In my travels as Grand Conductor under Grand Master Barry Prock, I met many fine members of the order. Members who wanted the order to succeed, and were trying their best to make it do



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so. Everyone in Grand Master Barry's party did our very best to encourage growth and greater community involvement but none of this is easy. We must learn from those who have made it work and take it back to our own communities and lodges. This is the point of our group - DMC. We exist not to cause any dissent within the order but to amplify the best qualities of our order. We exist for the future and to merge our glorious past with today. Anyone who says that these new and vibrant lodges do not practice the ritual, or follow the code, has not visited them lately. Hayward Lodge loves to give degree days in full costumes. Davis Lodge follows each and every line within the ritual. The Davis Lodge has organized a clean up event at the Sonora Odd Fellows' cemetery. I challenge every lodge to be as active and involved as Hayward or Davis.

Join us, please, in honoring our past and designing our future. Our DMC inaugural dinner meeting at the Doubletree Hotel at Grand Lodge sessions on Thursday, May 19th at 6 p.m. should be fun and informative. The Grand Lodge has also agreed to allow us to hold a brief seminar during sessions focused on increasing membership. We already have gotten many reservations for the dinner, and we have no limit to how many we will accept. We hope to see everyone there! If you wish to be there for our historic DMC inaugural dinner but have not already RSVP'd, please do so in response to this e-mail - the first 50 RSVP's receive dinner at the discounted \$19 per person rate - after that it is the full rate of \$39 per person.

In Friendship, Love & Truth, Rick Boyles