



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

March 19, 2012

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Here is the latest "DMC Newsletter" for your reading pleasure. Today we have an article written by California Grand Warden Rick Boyles.

Brother Dave Rosenberg had an excellent point when he wrote about lodges having shared interests. Lodges many years ago had shared common interests, and were often town centers. In a different atmosphere and certainly a different time, they offered security, camaraderie, and a place where a tired soul could not only get sustenance for his body, but for his mind as well. Today's world is more complex and faster than those earlier times. Yet, there are many lonely souls out there, many who would benefit from our beautiful thoughts of friendship, love and truth. A prominent member of the order said to me that before we invite new members in, we should search within ourselves to see what we offer. This is an important point. Some of our lodges no longer provide welcoming atmospheres to the point where they have almost become anti-social. They may have members who practice berating others or guided by their own self interests. They fail to attract new members due to a flaw within themselves. Our order is a benevolent one, and is meant to aid each member who wanders into our midst, but it can't help one to the exclusion of others. My feeling is that we have to expunge fear and hatred from our midst. Not only are all men created equal in our country's heroic constitution, all souls should be loved equally within our walls. The real question before us today, is do we have the fortitude to banish hatred, to diminish rhetoric, to admire the majesty in each person's smile? If so, then we will survive. If not, we will just fail by virtue of our own flailing hatred and screaming dissent. Our country and our order were both founded by nurturing dissent. We should not forget that, nor should we think that it is best if the majority of us remain silent while someone else derides our good intentions. We are all brothers and sisters, and through our own diversities spring salvation.

Sometimes, at some lodges, we allow one member to dictate to others, and all others become subservient to him or her. This is the wrong route to take, since eventually it constricts all growth. No one person, no matter how noble, no matter how knowledgeable supplants our need for growth and universal acceptance. We are not an order shaped in one human's image, but rather a composite of all of us. We can't allow one member to bankrupt our lodges morally or financially. Moderation in all areas is the key.

Then, we come to the basic question we all ask, is how do we grow? I believe that we grow by suspension of fear. In other words, many of us whom have grown comfortable in our lodges



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with our fellow members have to realize that there is nothing to fear in attracting new members. If we guide the new members correctly, then there is nothing to fear from them. Some of our long term members may say that they don't fear new members, but I believe all of us share a certain apprehension of anything new and different. If we realize that new members are not joining to attack us but rather to make us stronger, than it should follow that new members are our greatest asset.

Does what work at the Davis Lodge work for the rest of us? Perhaps not. But, let's analyze the arguments against the Davis Lodge. The arguments that I hear is that Davis is run by judges and lawyers and so naturally attracts other judges and lawyers. Some of this is true, but I have found members at the Davis Lodge who now join to be part of specific committees within their lodge. I have spoken to members who did not know Brother Rosenberg prior to joining the lodge and only joined to be on the wine committee, the bike committee, the hiking committee, the beer committee or any of the myriad of other committees they now have. Another argument I hear that it is a club and not a lodge. What does this mean, exactly? I have attended a number of their lodge meetings. They follow the ritual. They have many reports, where most of the smaller lodges are now silent. They have elections, visiting committees, new and unfinished business of substance. In short, they have everything we require of a lodge. Their push towards modernization is now endorsed by Sovereign Grand Lodge. In short, I believe that many who cast aspersions on the Davis Lodge just fail to smell the coffee. The order is shrinking quickly. Our older members are dying off. Receptions and other order-related functions are becoming less attended almost by leaps and bounds. Where receptions used to draw hundreds and thousands, now they are lucky to draw 50 hardy individuals, many of whom are compelled to attend. Let's wake up, before it is too late.

In closing, I don't suggest that we all emulate the Davis Lodge, but we can find what works for us and use it. If we have a specific interest, hobby, or cause, let's run with it. Let's not be so stubborn that we forget what our goal as an order is which is to survive. If that makes us club like, then let's take a look at our history and see what has proceeded us, because many of our successful lodges are indeed club like. Do you recall the video SGL presented several years ago on a motorcycle club who re-vitalized a lodge in the Midwest? Was that not club like? How about in the 1800's when most members could not read the ritual and each lodge was run by politicians, lawyers, judges, business people, who could read the ritual was that not club like? If our intention as an order is just to cast aspersions on the few successful lodges still in existence, then we truly have lost our way.

A final note: defunct orders now listed as curiosities are multitudinous online. We could easily join their ranks. Let's try and work together to prevent this.



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In Friendship, Love and Truth, Rick Boyles, Grand Warden