



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

March 29, 2012

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Reading the Minutes of the Grand Lodge Board of Directors shows many positive aspects of Odd Fellowship in California. But it also shows that our hard-working Board of Directors is grappling with increasing problems brought on by the decline in membership in our Order.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that when Odd Fellows Lodge membership in California falls to below 5,000 (as we currently have) there is trouble in River City. And we all know that the number of dues-paying members does not reflect the actual number of active members. At best, we can expect that half the dues-paying members are active in their Lodges - and that's a recipe for trouble. While the 10 or 20 largest of our Lodges may be in pretty good shape in terms of membership, it is apparent that the remaining 120 of our Lodges have issues - large and small - caused by lack of membership.

Imagine a Lodge with only 12 members on the books. That Lodge probably has about 6 active members, and probably struggles to get 5 to 8 members to attend a meeting of the Lodge. Sometimes, that Lodge even has difficulty obtaining the minimum quorum of 5 members for a meeting. That Lodge can't fill all officer positions. But more importantly, because of the lack of members that Lodge can lack the financial checks and balances inherent in our Order. That Lodge may overly rely on only 1 or 2 members to do almost everything - run meetings, prepare minutes, deposit money, finalize financial reports.

The problems created by declining membership are, regrettably, reflected in the minutes of Grand Lodge Board of Director meetings. For example, the minutes of the December 3, 2011, meeting show (in part) the following:

Oakdale #228 - Temporary suspension.

East Nicholas #269 - Charter suspended.

Whittier #315 - Consolidate with America #385 complete.

Victor #429 - Consolidate with Ontario #345.

Merced #208 - Charter surrendered - building to be sold.

Kernville #58 - Charter suspended.

Manteca #425 - Charter pulled.

Campo Seco #66 - Charter to be suspended.

Yosemite #97 - Audit ordered.

San Leandro #231 - Audit complete - possible charter suspension.

Osceola #215 - Audit complete - recommend consolidation with Healdsburg #64.



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This is, unfortunately, may be just the tip of the iceberg of what is happening - bit by bit - throughout the jurisdiction.

The most significant problem we face as an Order is the decline in membership that we have been experiencing for the last 65 years. Our efforts to help Lodges bring in new members should be our main short-range and long-range focus. And THAT is the goal of Dedicated Members for Change.

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Dave Rosenberg