



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

April 13, 2012

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Well, happy Friday the 13th to each and every one of you. Our numbers in "Dedicated Members for Change" grow every day - and that's because we are loyal Odd Fellows who see the statistics showing losses of members and closings of Lodges year after year - we understand that this cannot continue. We simply can't lose 100-200 members a year and close 5-10 Lodges a year and hope to survive as an Order. DMC continues to point a laser focus on the need to evolve our fraternity so that we start attracting those new members which are the lifeblood of our future. Our DMC members have come up with numerous suggestions on how to do so. And many Lodges are beginning to implement those suggestions in ways that work for them. We know we can stem the tide of losses that have washed over the California jurisdiction for the last 65 years. DMC serves a valuable purpose in the Order by encouraging new ideas, by developing new leadership, and by being a constant reminder that we need to focus on ways to increase membership in our Lodges. The status quo is no longer acceptable. DMC members are all optimists: We are optimistic about the future of this Order.

And if I can digress for a moment: Last night my own Davis Lodge #169 celebrated its "142nd birthday" - we were instituted and chartered on April 12, 1870. Over 60 members attended a little informal "birthday party" at the Lodge complete with cakes, candles, and good fellowship. We are proud to be Odd Fellows.

Below is an inspiring message written for our DMC newsletter by Grand Warden Rick Boyles. I commend it to you for your reading pleasure.

Dave Rosenberg

To All Members:

When I was a child, many years ago, I remember going to church with my parents and thinking what a wonderful place it was. Everyone wore a smile, and those in pain or grief were cared for, both in words or actions. That is also how I feel about our order. When I first joined, my friends who brought me in as a member kept repeating "friendship, love and truth" and I felt just as I did in going to church that here was a place where I was welcomed unconditionally without respect to my own imperfections. I did jobs within the order because just as in my church when I was younger, we did things for others to feel better about our imperfect selves. Somehow, some of that has been lost in our order. Some people feel the need to



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overpower others, to control a space that is supposed to be filled with friendship, love and truth. This is when our order loses its way. If we forget congeniality, if we feel the need to scream to get our message across, if we really think that all members should walk in some tired lockstep to "my way or the highway", we have really succumbed to our own fears and prejudices.

The Dedicated Members for Change group loves all members. Our goal is solely to study ways in which to get more members. That is our entire focus. Again, our sole goal is to study ways in which to get more members. Our committee now numbers in the hundreds of members. We have as many flaws as we have members, and those who are not on our committee we love just as much as those who are. Lately, our committee has become the target for many who are mad for one reason or another. When I personally answer a complaint about the committee, I simply repeat continually that "we are just about membership". That is our sole concern and reason to exist. If our order had no membership concerns, we would happily disband as a committee - but the need clearly exists.

DMC was formed in December of 2010 made up of a number of concerned members who were worried that our order would continue its inevitable decline in membership. DMC has grown dramatically in numbers. Frankly, one of our first plans was to study lodges where they have had success. San Francisco, Hayward, Lodi, Davis, and a few others have contributed information to our group, and of course, all have members in our committee. Meanwhile, smaller lodges are closing at the rate of 5-10 yearly - and year after year we lose more members than we gain. Obviously, this is a rate of decline that can't be maintained. Yet some people state that our group causes trouble and they criticize DMC. How can the call to increase membership cause trouble? Why should the call to increase members be criticized by any Odd Fellow? Just by people stating our committee is causing trouble will not stem the rate of decline. If people who know the answer to waning membership are not on our committee, they are obviously still welcome to answer the issue. It is tiresome and in fact self-defeating to blame our committee for people growing old, becoming disenchanted or just dropping off our membership rolls. Blaming DMC is like blaming fire-fighters because we have fires. It makes no logical sense.

We have found some similarities in lodges having success. First, they are active and they share interests. Secondly, they are happy places to visit. Third, they do not attack other members. And lastly, they preserve the basic tenets of our order: that good old "friendship, love and truth". It is my impression that if we can preserve the ideals of our order, we will survive, but if we do nothing but hurl insults, pass edicts, close our doors to the public, we are clearly doomed. I have spoken to many members in my years as a member, and I see the good in everyone. We need to convey love, not wield a code book which entraps every soul who attempts something new. As long as we can show others our affection, nothing else is insurmountable.



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In Friendship, Love and Truth, Rick Boyles