



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

April 26, 2012

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

The DMC Newsletter is happy to feature another article from Grand Warden Rick Boyles. Please read it, below. It carries many thoughts worthy of consideration.

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Dave Rosenberg

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All of us are in this together. Of all the things we all discuss, the one subject we can all agree with is that our order is diminishing. This is impossible to dispute because the numbers bear it out. Not only are we diminishing, we are diminishing quickly. The Rebekahs stand to lose 10% of their membership this year alone. If you have an issue with the DMC that is certainly your privilege, but to ignore the issue itself, simply accentuates the problem by one more member. The few of us who still remain within the order have gotten petty, not simply in our minds, but in our actions as well. We should not spend our time discussing the message we should focus on the problem itself. The person who points to a house on fire is not the issue, the house on fire is. It's time to think of ways to put out the fire.

We in California are fortunate in that we have a number of successful lodges, which stand little or no chance of closure. Remarkably, some of these are experiencing consistent growth. These lodges may not be perfect, but we can learn valuable lessons from each successful lodge. A friend of mine said that the DMC has done nothing for their lodge, so what value do they have? In point of fact, no membership committee can do anything for your lodge it must be initiated on your own within your own lodge. But we can all learn valuable pointers with which to take back to our lodges. Here are some points we have learned thus far.

Decorum. To me, this is one of the primary issues now happening in some of the smallest lodges. Many lodges are losing the sense of decorum and fair-mindedness we all should have. Nobody wants to join a lodge where members do not get along. Arguing, screaming, and abuse on another member have no place within our order.

Open Minds. Of course, this sounds almost silly, but many of the smaller lodges have closed their minds, and hearts, to anything or anyone new. In order to grow, those we invite in may be different, but that does not make them less of a human being. We must learn to look at the



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prospective members with the same affection we might give one of our oldest friends. This may be difficult, but it may also return rewards.

Shared Interests. All people have personal interests, hobbies, or favorite recreation habits. Whether it is as ordinary as watching sports, television, playing chess, or as intricate a pastime as acting or singing, there are many interests that may be shared with others. This is the glue which is beginning to bond many of the larger lodges together. How can we do this at smaller lodges? Perhaps the smaller lodges have no shared interests, but that does not mean that members may not join who share your own interests. This tells a member that his attendance has value, that what he does is important, and goes beyond the dinner or dessert that the lodge may serve. Serving dinners may bring people in, but it is something that is too impermanent to have lasting significance.

Form committees based upon shared interests. If your lodge finds interests that are shared by different members, form committees based upon these shared interests. Several successful lodges now have committees made up of members who share similar interests with one another. In the ritual, there is a section entitled "reports of committees" and in successful lodges, this tends to be an intriguing section of their meetings. Smaller lodges have few or no committees; therefore they tend to lose the cohesiveness that may merge them.

Go outside the lodge to share committees. Odd Fellows, ever since their inception, have been a welcoming influence on their communities; therefore, the natural progression is to share successful aspects of a lodge with the public. Dinners can bring a prospective member in the door, but it will not retain them unless you can interest them further. Another way to look at why our order is quickly declining is to ask ourselves why people leave. Nothing sustains their interest. This is something you may hear when you talk to a member who ceases to attend. How can this be, when dinners or desserts are still being served? Something must exist beyond sustenance of the body. It has to include sustenance of the mind.

Humor. This sounds almost ludicrous, but many of us have forgotten the gentle gift of laughter. Not at each other's expense, but if we begin to exhibit the joy of our order this can give it an exhilarating effect as well. Maintaining decorum is one thing, playing dead is another. If all we do is talk in a monotone, there is no future, and actually, there is no rationality for new members. Boredom is a primary reason for failure, as well.

These are some of the methods by which I have arrived at on behalf of our committee. Our many members may suggest more. Thank you for your kind indulgence.

In Friendship, Love, and Truth, Rick Boyles



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