



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

October 20, 2012

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Back from a quick trip to Victoria, Canada.

Victoria is a small town on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, a fairly short jaunt from Seattle, Washington. My wife, Lea, and I took a short vacation to Victoria, and while walking the streets of town, spotted a building on Douglas Street with the three links displayed on the facade. Of course, we walked right over and sure enough, it was an Odd Fellows Lodge (although in British Columbia, they call it "Oddfellows" - in one word). We could peer into the glass on the old front door, and could also look through a window into a small adjacent room. Looking through the glass of the front door, we could see a very long stairway leading up to second floor landing. And behind the glass window, there was displayed some Odd Fellows memorabilia, including old photographs, lovely carved chairs, and a display cabinet filled with all things IOOF.

Next to the front door was a small sign which indicated that this building was home to two Odd Fellows Lodges, a Rebekah Lodge, an Encampment and a Canton. But it was early morning and there were no signs of life. Lea and I were about to depart when the front door suddenly opened and out emerged "Bill". Lea and I immediately informed Bill that we were delighted to see him because we were Odd Fellows! Bill seemed to be equally delighted and then asked if we would like a tour of the facility. Of course, we immediately said "yes" and thus proceeded a step back into another time.

Bill was Vice Grand of Victoria Lodge #1, one of the Lodges that occupy the facility. Bill also served as President of their equivalent of the Hall Association. His Lodge had about 45 members, but (as is unfortunately typical of IOOF Lodges) less than 20 show up at meetings. The Victoria Lodge #1 was chartered in the late 19th Century and, along with the other Lodges in the structure, owns the entire building. The ground floor is rented out to tenants, supplying a steady income to the IOOF. As is typical of the old Lodge Halls, the Odd Fellows Lodges meet in the upper floor. That floor includes a billiard room with three tables, a dining room, large kitchen, a small museum and other amenities.

But the best part was the formal Lodge Room. Stepping through the anteroom with the traditional wickets, one emerges into the Lodge Room.



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And that Lodge Room was, to me, the quintessential Odd Fellows Lodge Room. It was like stepping back in time to the 1800's. The room had a very high ceiling, probably 25 feet high or more, with ornate paintings. The "all-seeing eye" was up there. The furnishings were all from another century - high backed wooden chairs set up in the traditional way. The Lodge Room could easily hold over 100 members. The walls were festooned with IOOF works. The room was lit by chandeliers. I could envision a Century of formal meetings in this room, packed with members. And it was sad to think that this large room might now only see 15-20 members in attendance.

Bill was rightfully proud of this Lodge Room and the rest of the Lodge Hall. He was a man full of energy and happy to be an Odd Fellow. But at the end of our tour, Bill told us that he was not going to become NG of his Lodge, rather he had decided to leave his Lodge and join the other Lodge that occupied the space. Curious, I asked why and Bill told me that his Lodge was starting to admit women, and he felt more comfortable in an all-male Lodge.

So, here was, again, the juxtaposition of Odd Fellowship in the 21st Century. The old ways and the new ways meeting head on.

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Dave Rosenberg