



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

November 29, 2012

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

It's my pleasure to forward to you another essay by California Deputy Grand Master Rick Boyles. Once again, Rick gives us good food for thought.

And a reminder: Feel free to forward these DMC Newsletters to members of your Lodge. Let's make sure the word gets out about DMC. And if you have members who you believe would enjoy receiving these DMC Newsletters, simply ask them if they wish to be included, and if so, pass along their name(s) and e-mail address(es) to me, and I will include them in the e-mail matrix. The goal of DMC is simple: We want to raise awareness of the need to increase our Order's membership, and we want to suggest ways to do so. Simple. But really, really important to the stability, strength, and survival of Odd Fellowship.

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Dave Rosenberg

What Not to Do and Beyond

If we were to examine the typical downfall of a group - any group - be it benevolent, fraternal, or even a country, we would see that what accompanies a downfall is turmoil. Just like the chicken before the egg question it can be asked which came first: the decline or the rise in turmoil? Either way, it should be evident that turmoil is not to be encouraged. I have personally seen too much turmoil for such a small group as Odd Fellows to endure. This must stop if we are to grow.

No one, no matter what their position, should feel the right to bully others. The order was founded on wonderful principles, some of which we have forgotten or have become so ingrained that we accept them without question. For instance, one of the excellent ideas the order has continued is to give each member a title or a measure of responsibility. At one time, when lodges normally numbered in the hundreds, sometimes thousands, this was quite an honor. Now,



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we still may feel the honor and our own self worth, but the playing field is much smaller. Often times a position is now hard to fill or filled for long periods with the same person. Many of us still wear our titles like badges of entitlement, but this is not what was originally intended. What was intended was rather a way in which to reward a good and honest member with a responsibility that they were only too happy to fill. Part of our history shows that much of the time the strong members in an early lodge were townspeople of renown, trusted elders, business people, craftsmen. Today, many of these types no longer see the rationality of joining our order. We have somehow removed any benefit that might be derived by joining. In order for us to experience new growth, we need to find renewed benefits to the prospective member looking in. We have to look beyond our own turmoil, above the whirling descent of our membership numbers to find the rationale to join our order.

Many members have spoken of this but we need to take it one step further and put our thoughts on offering benefits to work so that those who once saw no reason to join now see our worth. Lodges which are functioning well already offer something to interest onlookers. Some encourage committees of shared interests; music, wine, chess, bowling, sports, art, singing, reading, all can draw interest from outside the lodge. Does this make a lodge less than a lodge? Certainly not, in fact it can be well documented that at the beginnings of our order, our lodges were segmented by our members' self interests. This is what we have lost in the last fifty or more years. Our lodges have to feed our members on more than one level. Dinners may attract prospective members but they will not necessarily sustain their interest. Another look at the successful lodges will show that lodges that have viable committees have members who attend lodge not because they have to but because they want to.

An additional aspect that we see in successful benevolent groups is that they successfully journey outside their own lodges. In an earlier message, I noted the "Masons4mitts" program which enabled the Masons to actually promote their order prior to a San Francisco Giants Game. They were given free air time on network television. This type of charitable work is great advertising for our order and we should encourage our members to go outside our order to promote whatever worthy charity we can. We do many worthy things as an order, but we fail ourselves in not announcing them to the world.

These suggestions are tough for one member to do, but many hands make light work, so let's endeavor to put our best foot forward, and I believe that progress can be made. Encourage your lodge to energize your own members, find an interest that all can share and go forward announcing your own successes to the public, along with the simple idea that we care about something more than ourselves and we may finally connect with our own future.



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In Friendship, Love and Truth, Rick Boyles