



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

January 11, 2013

Trans-Global Modernization, Interconnectivity and the Odd Fellows

150 years ago, our order was basically dealing with issues that I feel are still relevant today. When we ask ourselves what do we each want from life, it seems that much of it should deal with how we relate to one another. Certainly, at that time of the gold-miner and the small merchant, many were hungry, lonely, sick, or discouraged, but even in today's world, beneath the modern veneer of technological advances we still are souls in the machines, hearts within bodies, all of us searching for relevance in this fast-moving, sometimes frightening time. Many may feel that it is now even lonelier than ever as technology attempts to imply connectivity but does not connect on the basic plain of soul to soul. I believe that this is where the Odd Fellows may retain relevance.

So then, we need to ask ourselves how do we relate to each other? Many of us who are active feel that connecting with many statewide will help, but I don't believe that this is the long-term answer. Clearly, it is admirable that there are those of us who pay visits to lodges far and wide, but it should also be clear that even with constant driving to and fro, it has not stemmed the decline of our order. I have found in seeking out officers for my own year, that there are many who feel that either the visitations or the expense of the visitations are beyond their ability to accept. There are time constraints, even for those of us who are retired, financial constraints in driving hundreds of miles to partake in a dinner or reception, and even physical demands on some of us who are hobbled by medical issues. The question is how do we connect with today's world in a search to retain the emotional connection that perhaps years ago we could maintain on a personal level?

I personally encourage anyone and everyone to become proficient on the Internet. The Internet helps us all connect on a level where even if we saw each other in a lodge setting may not translate as well. In my case, I sometimes feel much more eloquent in a written forum than in a speaking one, since I love to read and too often am tongue-tied in person. Public interaction will always be best just because it is always desirable to talk on an even plateau but sometimes it is simply not practical or even logical. Old photos of Grand Masters of yore show them being driven from lodge to lodge in horse and buggy. They would literally begin their year at one end of our grand state and end their year at the other end. There was a time where there was an active network of households who would welcome the Grand Master in, have a visitation, and then send him on his way to the next lodge a few miles away. But today's world is less dotted by lodges and the members sometimes not quite as active as those old members.

I like to think that one of the secrets to our survival may lie in our ability to accept change on all fronts. Our lodge halls are hallowed places that often strikes me with awe, and old code books



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talk about the lodge being a refuge from the hardships and turmoil outside its walls. Even today, this has relevance, but most of the world does not know these hallowed locations even exist, and somehow it should be our goal to show them the glory of inclusion. Somehow we have to transcend historical ramblings, accept technology and yet merge one with the other. This may sound difficult, but it could be as easy as each of us being proficient enough online to tell the world what we have to offer. Many of us had the honor to speak with Brother Louie Sarmiento from the Philippines when he visited our state recently and it should have been evident what the power of the Internet did for him. He has created a network of friends through Facebook and has seen membership grow in his own country due to his creation of a vibrant online presence, and the same can be done anywhere. It's not magic. It does not lessen our relevance; it increases it. It does not share the secrets of a lodge, but it does whisper of its existence. The reality of the order could cease to exist if we don't do something and do something soon, and to me, this is the cheapest, best and most relevant way to react to an issue that is affecting almost all fraternal groups.

In F., L., & T., Rick Boyles