



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

May 22, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

I have just returned from attending the 159th annual Grand Lodge of the California Odd Fellows. This event is a Marathon with matters on the agenda from Tuesday to Sunday, (officially) running from Wednesday evening through Saturday. The Grand Lodge could easily be run over a three-day weekend (Friday-Sunday) to make it more user friendly to younger members and members who are not retired - but that is a discussion for another day.

This is the third Grand Lodge that I have attended. My first one, in 2009 was a learning experience to say the least. My second one, in 2010 began a process of proposals and resolutions that achieved some success - and showed me that there were members in California who were ready for appropriate changes to the Order. This third one, in 2011 has to be rated a remarkable success from the perspective of the Dedicated Members for Change and for those who are striving for evolution and change in this ancient Order. There are, indeed, progressive forces at work in the Order in California.

You will recall that DMC is focused on the decline in membership and what we can do to reverse this trend. The membership statistics continue to be grim. Those statistics showed that the Odd Fellows Lodges and Rebekah Lodges in this jurisdiction have, again, lost members. Regular dues paying Odd Fellows in California at the end of 2010 were down to 4,566.. Regular dues paying members of the Rebekahs are now less than 3,000.

As to Odd Fellows, we have 141 Lodges at the end of 2010 (down from 145 last year). Of those 141 Lodges, only 29 had a net gain of members. That means that the other 121 Lodges either were stagnant in terms of membership or had a net loss. And of the 29 net gain Lodges, 12 had a net gain of only 1 or 2 members. In fact, only 5 Lodges in California had a net gain in double-digits.

Here are what I perceive to be the successes for our Lodge and for our progressive view for the future of our Order:

1. The Davis Lodge resolutions. My Lodge proposed eight resolutions to the Grand Lodge this year. Six of the resolutions passed with overwhelming support. This, alone, was a great step forward for us. One resolution was defeated and one I withdrew. The six that passed did the following:

- * Start the development of the "21st Century Project" to work toward a goal that all Lodges have



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a minimum number of 21 members.

- * The Grand Lodge officers are charged with developing a program to foster community outreach and good community works by Lodges.
- * The Grand Lodge officers are charged with developing a program to foster good fellowship activities within Lodges.
- * The Grand Lodge encourages at least six open social meetings of Lodges per year. open to the public and prospective members.
- * The Membership Challenge Grant Program (which was proposed by the Davis Lodge in 2010) will continue for another year.
- * The Grand Lodge encourages joint social meetings of Odd Fellows and Rebekahs Lodges.

Defeated was our proposal to make Grand Lodge officer visits voluntary, rather than mandatory. And I withdrew our proposal to boycott Sovereign Grand Lodge (I did so for good and valid reasons as will be explained below).

2. Elections. This was a watershed year because we elected a member of DMC to the position of Grand Warden. This is a key position because the Grand Warden is on track to become the Deputy Grand Master next year, and becomes the Grand Master of California the year thereafter. Rick Boyles was elected with 54% of the vote. The fact that we were able to achieve such a strong majority speaks well for the future. Also I should mention that I was re-elected (without opposition) to the Odd Fellows Homes Board (the Board that runs our two retirement communities in Napa and Saratoga) and Vic Bucher - a member of DMC - was also elected to an open position on that Board. I have also been appointed chair of the Grand Lodge Judiciary Committee. And another member of DMC - Peter Sellars (who is also a member of the Grand Lodge Board of Directors) - was appointed as Chair of the Membership Committee for Grand Lodge.

3. Dedicated Members for Change. DMC held our first meeting and dinner at the Grand Lodge and - much to our delight - attracted 80 members to this event! What was striking were the number of leaders of the Order who attended, including Rod Metoyer who is now the Deputy Grand Master, Rick Boyles who is now the Grand Warden, Randy Krassow, the Chairman of the Grand Lodge Board of Directors, Grand Lodge Board of Directors Vice Chairman John Morgan, Past Sovereign Grand Master and Past Grand Master Don Smith, and numerous Past Grands of Lodges throughout California. Our e-mail matrix of DMC now contains the names of close to 100 Odd Fellows and Rebekahs, and many leaders in this Order. During Grand Lodge I spoke to many members of the Order and am convinced that virtually everyone understands the dilemma we face with declining membership. We are truly all in this together. There may be different solutions that we propose, but we all wish to achieve the same result: The growth and



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continued prosperity of our great Order.

Next year, at the 2012 Grand Lodge, our DMC dinner meeting will be bigger and better - I predict we will have over 100 attendees in 2012!

4. Membership Workshop. As noted above, our Davis Crew presented its popular "Membership Development Workshop" at Grand Lodge. This is the same workshop that was presented in Davis and at the Cupertino Lodge. We had about 20-25 leaders from other Lodges in attendance. Our workshop DVD was also available for sale by the Grand Lodge office and numerous DVD's were purchased. If any of you wish to obtain the DVD, it is available for sale by Grand Lodge at \$5 each (and \$2 for mailing). If you wish to purchase a membership DVD just contact the Grand Lodge office clerk Daniel Honniball at gl-desk1@sbcglobal.net.

5. Sovereign Grand Warden. One of the highlights of this Grand Lodge was the attendance of Charles Renninger, the current Sovereign Grand Warden. Charles is an articulate and urbane member of the Order from back east. He is in line to become the Sovereign Deputy Grand Master, and then the Sovereign Grand Master. I had a couple of useful chats with him. It is clear that there are leaders of the Order at the highest levels who understand that we need to change and evolve. In his remarks on the concluding day, Charles told the body that "We're all in the sinking ship together". He stated that there would be significant changes proposed in the coming year, including a 5-year Revitalization Plan (which I had proposed two years ago) which would suggest some dramatic changes to the way we do business. I, personally, predict that the plan will include merging of the various units of this Order into one (e.g. instead of having separate Encampments, we would just make the encampment degrees additional degrees of Odd Fellowship). I am hopeful that some day soon, we will see the merging of Rebekahs and Odd Fellows - the days of separate Lodges for men and for women have long-since passed. Based on his encouraging comments, and the requests of supportive members, I withdrew the "boycott" resolution.

6. The DMC list. Let's continue to grow the e-mail matrix of DMC members. If you know of other members of the Order who wish to be included in the e-mail list, please let me know their names and e-mail addresses.

Brothers and Sisters, we are making progress.

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Dave Rosenberg