



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

June 6, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

When I ran for Grand Warden of California, I presented a platform of two issues. First, I said that my focus would be to take head-on the challenge of declining membership in our Order. And that, of course, is the focus and purpose of DMC: we were formed to keep the spotlight on the most critical issue facing our Order - our steady decline in membership - and on developing ways to help members and Lodge reverse that trend, and start growing. Second, I said that it was time to leave the negativity, the past perceived slights, the feuds and disputes behind us. We need to start working together, hand-in-hand, as brothers and sisters to tackle the elephant in the room - the decline in our membership.

I am reminded from time to time of how hard this second goal will be to achieve.

We have, regrettably, all seen this negativity in the Order. We have seen it in our Lodges. A new member might screw up their courage and suggest a new idea or program for the Lodge. And a long-time member might immediately say, "we can't do that," or they might say "we've tried that, and it doesn't work," or worse, "that's a stupid idea." Is this a way to welcome and include the new members we so desperately hope to encourage to join our Lodges, and to stay as members over the long term? Of course not. This sort of negativity is poison to our Order.

We are, after all, supposed to practice "toleration" - or so our ritual says. We are supposed to be governed by the precepts of "Friendship, Love, and Truth." And yet, there are members of our Order who are negative, hurtful and rude to other members. Such bullying tactics make our Order and our Lodges uncomfortable for others. Our Order and our Lodges must be places of comfort where the discord of the outside world is shut out - where members can enjoy each others' company in an atmosphere of friendship.

The negativity must stop.

Let me give you a recent example of this negativity. A few days ago, a member in a Lodge asked me to come to their meeting in Southern California and make a presentation on membership and methods to increase membership. I was delighted to do so, but had difficulty traveling there in the near future. I suggested that I could appear at their meeting through the use of Skype. Now, Skype is not complicated - it just requires a computer (or laptop) and,



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preferably, a television monitor. The member was delighted and said he would go about the task of setting it up. Because I thought this might be a good, easy, convenient and inexpensive way to meet with Lodges using 21st Century technology, I had the Grand Lodge Office send an e-mail to all Lodges suggesting that I could "meet" with interested Lodges via Skype to talk about membership development techniques and methods - I asked Lodges to contact me directly if interested and we would set up a convenient date and time to meet. In response to this e-mail, one member of our Order wrote, in part, the following to me: "The Judge and his 'followers', or should I say his 'flock of sheep', think they're going to 'gain' membership in this manner, and maybe that is so, but those of us who have been 'loyal' to this Order for 30-40-50-60+ years will be by the wayside, is that his and his flock's goal?!" And later in the e-mail from this member, I was called, with obvious sarcasm, "the almighty and wonderful judge."

More examples? A respected member of the Rebekahs told me a couple of weeks ago that one of the past leaders of the Rebekah Assembly was calling our DMC "a cult". And when two of the younger and newer members of the DMC were at the DoubleTree Hotel in Sacramento during sessions, looking for the DMC dinner, two members of our Order who overheard them looking for the dinner location said, in voices loud enough for them to hear: "Oh, you're looking for that bullshit dinner."

These sorts of comments - meant to hurt, ridicule or demean - have no place in our Order. I hope you will join me in speaking up, and speaking out, in the future when you see a brother or sister engage in comments that aim low. We need to gently remind that brother or sister of the precepts of this Order. We were founded, in Great Britain, a couple of centuries ago as a "Friendly Society." Let's not forget the "friendly" part.

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Dave Rosenberg