



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

June 14, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

I recently sent out a newsletter highlighting some of the history of this great Order, and indicating that the history of Odd Fellowship is, in fact, replete with change and evolution. Below are some thoughts on the subject from Robin Oliver, one of the earliest members of DMC. Hope you find it as interesting and thought-provoking as I did.

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Dave Rosenberg

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Hi Dave...

I find myself encouraged by the last few DMC messages. A big part of changing the direction in which an organization is heading is taking a "nothing-is-sacred-here" examination of the purpose and values of that group and what it does. It is not that these things are not sacred. This purpose and these values may be sacred as well as timeless. But the question really is whether the purpose and values -- and their implementation and promotion -- remain relevant in this world we find ourselves...

We can all cite the names of great men who have been openly and proudly associated with the Order in the past. But we are hard pressed today to find in our membership more than a few prominent public leaders with three links on their lapel. That suggests strongly to me that perhaps we are out of step with the notions of contemporary civic or regional or national leadership. Or perhaps they are out of step with the principles and values that Odd Fellows advocate and promote. Or perhaps and more likely, both...

In some ways we are tempted to fall all over ourselves to bring members into our lodges. But I am mostly convinced that not everybody should become an Odd Fellow. I believe it should be free for anybody to apply for a place in the lodge. But I applaud the Davis approach of orienting prospective members over a period of time. It is drop-dead simple. If there is no genuine interest then that person is not likely to remain patient to become a sustaining member. Odd Fellow membership should be something favorably distinctive. In my work in and around the Order, and even my work beyond, I have always felt that way about it and enjoyed its benefits...



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The kinds of commitments that men and women make in today's world bear little relationship to a penny-to-enter-this-meeting admission price two centuries ago. My guess is that in today's world those kinds of commitments will vary greatly from one community to another and to the next. There are a lot of things that need to be examined if nothing is sacred...

The social interaction of an on-location lodge meeting or a social event should always remain the heart and soul of the Order. And the Grand Lodge sessions should remain as the center of the Order's decision-making council for rules and protocols. I have a genuine love for watching the theatre in each venue. That theatre is entertaining but it is also genuine...

A lot of our work can be accomplished online. The technologies are there on the Public Network to connect. I am wondering why there aren't more joint lodge socials with the Philippines (one having breakfast and the other at dinner)...? So, the tools are there. But what we lack are the protocols of connection. In the old days, these protocols were handled by the DDGM (who might now devote some time to researching the code to question the legality of that joint meeting 8D). Social, political, and economic hierarchies are changing constantly but the trend now is toward peer-to-peer relationships...

I understand that the ritual is important. The ritual should be examined for the lessons that it teaches us. But the ritual should not be an obstacle to transacting the business and developing the future of Odd Fellowship. Nor should it be an obstacle to developing and adopting the protocols for friendship, love, and truth in the 21st Century...

I guess that the point of Odd Fellowship for me, when I thought about it, is that an Odd Fellow, regardless of what she or he knows or believes, is a genuinely decent person. But we do not come by that naturally. That is what the ritual is about. It is a loosely scripted set of behavioral guidelines that promotes the sense of brotherhood with anyone who shares it... And can relate to it... The Ritual teaches us the basic skills of getting along and creating something good...

A lodge hall can be an incubator for civic leadership in the 21st Century. The Ritual works. But perhaps the Ritual is not found to be very pragmatic or relevant for day-to-day application beyond the walls of the lodge hall. This does not change the fundamental principles and values we should share with the great legends of the Order...

Question is this: Are we waiting for the 21st Century to come our way...? Or is the 21st Century waiting for us to catch up...?



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Just askin' in FL&T...

Robin Oliver