



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

September 16, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

A couple of days ago I sent out a DMC Newsletter containing my thoughts on the "links in our chain of Odd Fellowship" and the need for us - each of us - to continue to add links to our chain by bringing in new members. I suggested that we are all connected through those links, generation after generation. And I urged each of us to do our part in bringing in a new member - we can't just rely on "the other guy" to do it. We each have a responsibility to continue the chain.

I received a thought-provoking response from a long-time member of our Order, and a Dedicated Member for Change. Who he is and which Lodge he belongs to is not particularly relevant. The point he makes, however, is. Here's what he wrote:

Time is a powerful thing. And it has many powers. One of the most obvious is that it truly the "great revealer". Humans are oft times in the habit of trying to fool themselves and others in order to forward a personal agenda or maintain a comfortable status quo or other such foolery. But time has a way of unveiling such charades to others if not, sadly, to ourselves.

I would like to gently suggest that we are not gaining members because for many Odd Fellows, it is not the primary goal. The primary goal is to hold on to the illusion of the past. Everything else is secondary. And if they are able to maintain that until death, then, in their own mind, they have succeeded. You won't see anyone challenging the goal of expanding the roles--clearly this is against the party line. But you will, at the same time, find little in the way of actions, changes, compromises, etc. toward such a goal.

Ironic and nearly absurd, then, I find your noble, persistent, yet largely unheeded call to action. You are humming a tune the choir refuses to sing, as they have no ear for it. And your audience is "out there". But for how to reach them in the cloister of the stale, dim light of a tired choral rehearsal room ?

And this is my claim. And I offer time as my witness for such.



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Unfortunately for our Order, I believe much of what this DMC Member suggests is true. I have seen it with my own eyes and have heard it with my own ears in some Lodges. And I still remember, years ago, discussing and debating with a long-time respected member of our Order the need to change and evolve in order to survive. He was against it. Ultimately, when he had exhausted all his arguments, he said to me: "I would rather see this Order die than change."

That comment was both shocking, and revealing, to me. But I learned a lesson from it. There are, in fact, members of our Order who are "comfortable" with the status quo. Their priority is to maintain things just the way they have always been in their particular Lodge so long as they are a member. I understand that. So, I understand and recognize our enemy - he is Complacency. But, I also understand that if this attitude were to prevail in this Order - we will surely diminish and evaporate in time.

My goal is to not dwell on the members who won't evolve and refuse to grow. That would be a waste of time and effort. My goal is to reach out to the members who understand that this Order - like any fraternity - must evolve and change to attract the 21st Century men and women we need to keep the promise of Odd Fellowship. For almost 200 years on the North American continent, Odd Fellows have taken it upon themselves a duty to add links to our chain of membership. If we are true Odd Fellows, and if we truly believe in the tenets of IOOF, then we cannot walk away from our responsibility to add links to that chain.

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Dave Rosenberg, Grand Warden