



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

October 1, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

We have a very active and involved Grand Master in Rick Boyles. As you know, Rick is one of the founders of DMC, and he has often written articles focusing on the need for congeniality and the exercise of "friendship, love and truth" in our Lodges. Please read the attached latest article from our Grand Master.

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Dave Rosenberg, GW

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Opinions, Attitudes and Behavior: Possible Skeleton Keys to our Future

Recently, I have been struck by how many of us have opinions, attitudes and behavior contrary to our own basic tenets of Friendship, Love and Truth. All of us want to do good things for the order. All of us want to see fundamental improvements, but that does not give any one among us the privilege of dumping on others. Probably, there are those among the readers thinking is he talking about me in particular? Yes, I am. Even I am complicit in this problem because I also see issues that are almost unsolvable given the present situations at many lodges. We need to take a breath and remember why we joined this order. If we joined because we admired the premise of friendship, love and truth, we need to be true to this premise.

No one should feel that they may lambast another regardless of their position, their station in real life or their however lofty aspirations towards our order's improvements. I am struck by how many members feel that their path to improvement is the only path available. It is not. All of us are worthwhile, all of us are Odd Fellows, all of us mean well, and if we don't mean well, the question should be asked what are we here for? I am called upon to referee many disputes within lodges but often times this may be solved by the lodge simply taking the time to discuss the issues between the competing factions. Sometimes, I personally am berated over some issue I have no control over but am asked to pass judgment on. I don't want to close a lodge due to member disruption, but sometimes it becomes necessary because one or two members have poisoned the lodge in general. Sometimes a lodge files charges against one individual and that one individual persists in disrupting the lodge. Should this be allowed? Is one disgruntled member rationale for the closure of a lodge? Not generally, but neither should we think that disruption of any type is somehow permissible.



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Sometimes lodge trustees feel that they are justified in doing things on their own. This is not right. Trustees operate within the sphere of the lodge and must make periodical reports to the lodge. All decisions by trustees may be called into question and may be overturned by the lodge in full. We are a democracy just like the outside world. We are not dictatorships. No one, no matter how well meaning, can create a dictatorship within our order.

A person looking into our order might say how can you have a lodge of only ten active people and yet allow one bully to rule the roost? When you think about it under those terms, it does seem ludicrous, doesn't it? The fact that you have a very small group yet some tunnel-vision buffoon seems to think that he controls it. But perhaps it is part of the psychological make-up of the human species to want to control anything he or she presides over no matter how inconsequential, no matter how trivial, no matter how self-serving it becomes. Our order is dying due to the loss of members by death certainly, but also due to other reasons. Clearly, another way our order is losing members is because some feel that they are self-entitled. Some are controlling lodges for monetary gain, some are controlling lodges to reap other benefits, but in the long run, the results are the same. Loss of members is always the result. If we want to lose members, all we need to do is act like we know everything, attempt to control everything we see, disallow new ideas, and berate everyone around us. Why would anyone join such an atmosphere?

I joined the order originally because I admired our main terms friendship, love and truth. If we can't maintain our order, to me that just says that we have abandoned our principles. If we want to survive, first we have to look at ourselves and ask ourselves if we are following the principles of the order. If we are, we should be able to attract new members. If we are not, we are only repelling new members and only fooling ourselves about our future.

Now it is a popular excuse to say that all fraternal and benevolent groups are losing members, and while this may be true, it is also true that at one time, we were the largest benevolent group in the world, and yet now we are one of the smallest still functioning. We have to ask ourselves why. The popular notion is that somehow we have not aged well, that the terms Odd Fellows and Rebekahs are old-fashioned, but I don't think that this is true. Contrast that with the popular group, the Clampers (E. Clampus Vitus) who number 40,000 members in California alone. Certainly the Clampers name is no more new than our own. Why do they have 5 times the members? Simple, they present an opening exterior, don't torture their members uselessly, and don't belittle new members. One of my friends says it is because their basic motivation is fun! We should follow in all these orders' footsteps. Let's trumpet friendship, love, and truth, and also fun. Let's loosen our death grips on various committees and lodges. If we truly want new members, let's act like it, and not close our hearts and minds to the outside world.

In Friendship, Love and Truth, Rick Boyles, Grand Master



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