



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

October 20, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Did you know that Odd Fellows first held their meetings in pubs and taverns, singing songs, eating food, and drinking ale?

Did you know that Odd Fellowship once excluded from membership all women, black men, Asian men, Native American men, and persons who were deaf or blind?

Did you know that once the only men who were permitted to join a Rebekah Lodge were men holding the Third Degree of Odd Fellowship?

Did you know that the first Lodges in North America were “self-instituted”, that is no Grand body authorized their formation?

Did you know that Sovereign Grand Masters were once known as Grand Sires?

Did you know that Odd Fellowship once had a “sign of distress” and an answer to that sign? And when the sign could be observed, the member in distress could use certain words, pronounced in full, to indicate distress.

Did you know that once upon a time when a member of the Order desired to be recognized as an Odd Fellow by another Member of the Order, he could give a secret “sign of recognition”? When both the sign and the answer were given, the members could advance to each other, shake hands and exchange the words “Are you looking for me?” and the response “For you.”

Did you know that in Odd Fellowship there was once a “warning sign” and a “sign of safety”, as well as a “sign of danger” that a member could use when conveying warning, danger or safety?

Did you know that the First Degree, the Second Degree and the Third Degree of Odd Fellowship once each had its own unique and secret grip?

Did you know that once Odd Fellows Lodges provided money to help support members who were out of work?

Did you know that at one time there were five Degrees obtainable by a member in a Lodge of Odd Fellows (not just four degrees that are presently available)?

Did you know that once two or three members of the Order could “black-ball” or prohibit new applicants from being initiated?

Did you know that consumption of alcohol was once always prohibited in Odd Fellows Lodges?



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Did you know that the word “Independent” was not added to the name of Order of Odd Fellows until 1814?

Did you know that the ritual of our Degrees has been revised and re-written on numerous occasions since the 1800’s?

I offer this short summary of some changes in Odd Fellowship, for those members who don’t believe that this Order evolves and changes. Clearly, evolution is part and parcel of our history as an Order. We have, in fact, evolved, to fit our times. And we need to continue to evolve to meet the needs of the 21st Century – because, at bottom, it is men and women in the 21st Century that we have to attract to our Order.

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Dave Rosenberg, Grand Warden