



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

October 23, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

The attached article - by Grand Master Rick Boyles - pulls no punches. But these are things that need to be said. You may have noticed that Grand Master Rick is fearless in his dedication to this Order. If we are to bring in new members and to retain the members we have, we simply need to re-think our "business-as-usual" approach. I commend his article for your reading pleasure.

Also, I have attached the enrollment form for the 2014 "Officers/Membership Seminar" to be held on January 25-26 in Santa Nella. The seminar is led by Peter Sellars and Don Lang - two knowledgeable and long-time members of this Order and DMC. This seminar is open to ALL members of our Order. A major focus of the seminar will be membership and membership development. I will be attending myself - and I encourage other DMC members to attend. Sign up now!

F - L - T

Dave Rosenberg, Grand Warden

101 Ways to Leave the Order (to be sung to the tune of "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover")

In my travels, I encounter all types of lodges with all sorts of issues and problems, successes and failures. My last essay talked about ways in which to increase membership. In this essay, I will describe ways in which many of us are guilty of losing membership. Many of these examples are so obvious that they must be deemed to be intentional. In other words, there are those among us who don't want new members, who in effect, fear new members and all matters of change and growth that they bring. We have to realize that new members must come if we are to survive. But let's take the time to look at some often glaring examples that turn away anyone new and beyond that, even deny some of our own members access.

- 1) At a recent event, a prominent member complained that many of our groups, since they each demand their own version of sessions, in effect, resist anyone joining who happens to have a job, as in order to attend each sessions, a working person needs to take vacation time to attend. And yet, combining sessions apparently is something we as an order have been contemplating for almost 50 years! Time to take the leap.
- 2) Those with titles seem to think that this empowers them to be belligerent to the general membership. I find this one of the most abhorrent (and changeable) aspects of our order. In order to draw members and to retain our old members, we have to assume that we all



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have good hearts and souls, and not use our titles to bully, belittle or besmirch anyone else.

- 3) Lodges with phantom meeting times. Apparently, there are a number of these. I have been Grand Master for several months now and have encountered a number of lodges that either don't meet or meet only sporadically.
- 4) Lodges with bizarre meeting times. Some lodges meet in the middle of the day. One such lodge, with very few attending members, meets in the afternoon, and confided with me that they had not gotten a new member in 10 years! Yet, they refuse to change. This is yet another way in which we deny entry to anyone with a job.
- 5) Lodges without a point of contact. Some lodges don't answer a phone, aren't listed in the phone book, don't have a web site, don't respond to email, have no site on Facebook, or fail to acknowledge any of the myriad of other contact methods. Naturally, they don't get many new members, and yet when you ask them they will claim they want new members. Although even when they are open, they keep their doors locked, with no bell or way in which to gain entry. How exactly does a new member join?
- 6) Some persons have a religious or political phobia. Some practice to it to the exclusion of those they may feel and think differently than they do. This world would be a pretty dull place if we all thought alike or worshipped in one manner. Even our ritual states that we allow no political, sectarian or other debate, so those who espouse one religious or political belief seem to think this entitles them and no one else. The fact of the matter is that religious and political beliefs are highly personal and should be kept to ourselves and not spread throughout our lodges to poison them with discord.
- 7) Sexual politics. Some Odd Fellow lodges still ban women. While not expressly against the code, to me this goes contrary to our own belief systems. Is it somehow fraternal to deny entry to half of our population? Of course not. I have also found that when lodges like this finally allow women entry, they are often pleasantly surprised.
- 8) Cronyism. Institutionalized belligerence. Prolonged ignorance to generally accepted moral norms of behavior. No one should feel threatened within our midst. We should not threaten each other nor should we encourage the threat of violence or violent behavior on others. You say this doesn't exist? Email or call me and I will provide examples of all these actions.
- 9) Know-it-alls who belittle others. Many quote the code, but many often mis-quote the code. The code is not a bludgeon. The code is a guidebook for our actions, but it is not a tool to use over your fellow members. Many new members are constantly berated with the simple fact that they don't know the code. Of course, this is true since most of us were not born with the code ingrained in our psyche. I have written legislation for many years yet I am constantly struck by how much I don't know. To me, the proper code of



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conduct is the moral way of conduct, and whether or not it says it properly in the code, is almost redundant or unnecessary.

- 10) A tuxedo obsession. Recently, I spoke to a number of up and coming members and I asked them why they did not attend a certain event. They replied, almost in unison, that they did not have tuxedos to wear to the event. Now many of us who have been in the order don't need to worry since we have the tuxedos, or long flowing dresses, that seem to be required of us, but to those outside looking in this is one of our most ridiculous obsessions. In a recent trip to Men's Wearhouse, whom are one of the biggest sellers of tuxedos, a salesman confided in me that almost all tuxedos go to wedding and prom participants, and very few to other events. Eventually, we are finally going to have modernized our wardrobe, if we really want to attract anyone new. My own officers wear either polo shirts or Hawaiian shirts. At several lodges I have been told it is refreshing to see visitors who dress like fellow members.
- 11) Money as a weapon. Many who would like to join simply can't afford to join, due to various costs. I am not referring to the membership fees or the per capita. I am referring to the expectations we have in which members are expected to attend events hundreds of miles away, rent hotel rooms and pay event fees. This often runs into the thousands of dollars. Grand Lodge Elective officers are given a budget, but all others generally travel under their own nickel. Another reason why statewide events are becoming less and less attended. This is also a relatively new issue since years ago there was a network of fellow members statewide who would provide room and board for travelling members.
- 12) Negativity. Some of our long-time and prominent members discourage new members by constantly being negative about new ideas or suggestions from these new members. We need to learn to say "yes", instead of always saying "no".

These are just a few of the reasons people fail to join or end up leaving the order. I thought of these reasons pretty quickly. I have no doubt that many of my brothers and sisters could think of other reasons. In order for us to initiate growth, we must look at these issues and think of ways in which to make new and old members more accepted. Some members treat differences between each other as some type of mortal combat, to which it seems that Paul Simon's first line from his song is very appropriate – "the problem is all inside your head". It's time for us all to relax, band together and head happily into the future.

In F., L., & T., Rick Boyles, Grand Master.



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Officers / Membership Seminar

Santa Nella
January 25 & 26, 2014

Registration Form

Return this form, with your check, made out to **Grand Lodge of CA**

Mail to:
Don Lang
11220 Monterey Ct
* Note: The address in the CA IOOF
Cupertino, CA 95014 Magazine is incorrect.

Name of Delegate _____ Age _____
Members Address _____
City _____ Zip _____

Members _(_____) _____

1st Time to Seminar _____ Yes _____ No

Incoming Office in Lodge (if any) _____

Lodge Name _____ No. _____
Lodge City _____

Double Occupancy (\$150) _____ Yes
Single Occupancy (\$165) _____ Yes

Room Mate needed ? _____

Any Special needs?

Do you want to check in Friday night (you pay) _____ Yes