



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

November 11, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Time for another journey down "Statistics Lane."

If you take a look at the journal identified as "Proceedings of the 161st Annual Session of the Grand Lodge of California" you will find some statistics that may point a bony finger to the future of Odd Fellowship in California.

The tally of Lodges in California shows that as of the start of 2013, there were 126 Lodges on the books in California. Total dues-paying membership of these Lodges was 4,404.

Parenthetically, I note that at the high point, California boasted 58,820 Lodge members and hundreds of active Lodges.

Of these 126 Lodges that existed in California on January 1, 2013, the journal always prints the names and membership numbers of the 10 largest Lodges in California. They are:

California #1	341
Apollo #123	296
Yerba Buena #15	247
Davis #169	188
Golden West #322	164
Lodi #269	120
Vacaville #83	104
Franco-American #207	96
Santa Rosa #53	90
Mt. Brow #82	88

The total membership of these 10 Lodges is 1,734.

These 10 Lodges make up only 8% of the 126 Lodges in California, yet the membership of these 10 Lodges makes up 40% of the total membership of this Order in California. That needs repeating: Just 8% of the Lodges make up 40% of the total membership.

Let's look at the statistics from the other direction as well. In analyzing the numbers of members of the 126 California Lodges, you will find that 71 of these Lodges have 25 or fewer members. In fact, if you drill down even further, you will find that 54 of our Lodges have 20 or fewer members. Drilling further, we find that 34 of our Lodges have 15 or fewer members.



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So, 56% of the 126 Lodges in California - more than half - have 25 or fewer members listed on their books. And 42% of our California Lodges have 20 or fewer members. Finally, 27% - more than a quarter - of our Lodges have 15 or fewer members.

These statistics show ominous trends for our Order in this State.

First, the statistics show that, increasingly, the Order in California is devolving to fewer and fewer Lodges. If the trend continues, it is clear that within a decade, this Order will have (at best) only half the Lodges that it currently has. The trend will be toward fewer, larger Lodges.

Second, the statistics show an increasingly troubled Order as Lodges shrink through withdrawal, attrition, and death of members. Smaller and smaller Lodges present their own challenges as Lodge leadership diminishes to only one or two people, and the normal financial checks and balances start to disappear. Significantly, we all know that membership on the books does not translate into active membership in a Lodge. At best 50% of Lodge membership is "active." Accordingly, a Lodge with 15 or fewer members will almost certainly be a troubled Lodge. For example, a Lodge with 10 members probably means a Lodge with 5 active members. How does that Lodge get a quorum for meetings? How does that Lodge fill officer positions?

Can this Order take a different path? Of course it can. But the only way to change the trajectory of the Order is for Lodges - particularly the ones with 25 members or less - to increase their membership every year.

Will Lodges do so? I am not convinced that this will happen. It appears to me that through complacency many of our Lodges are "satisfied" or resigned to the status quo. To me, this is the height of selfishness. These Lodges want to keep their small world to themselves. They are comfortable the way things are during the lives of their current members. But they ignore the next generation and the future existence of their Lodge.

Why do I say this? Let me give you one example of Lodge complacency.

Recently, the Grand Lodge - through the Membership Committee and the leadership of Peter Sellars - developed a special grant program whereby Lodges could submit one or two page letters requesting a grant of up to \$1,000 for a membership development program. The application was the height of simplicity. The membership development program chosen was completely up to the discretion (and imagination) of the Lodge. Every single one of the submitted grant requests was approved. BUT, only 9 Lodges in California took advantage of this



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\$1,000 grant program. The other 117 Lodges submitted no grant request.

So, wake up, smell the coffee, and change the future. The first step is to bring in that first new member. Then the second. Then the third. And let's all work on preserving Friendship, Love and Truth for the next generation.

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Grand WardenDon