



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

October 17, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Time to dip into the "Old Mail Bag". I get a lot of feedback and responses from DMC members. That feedback and those responses include many suggestions for the future growth of Odd Fellowship, and also sometimes include the frustrations of Odd Fellows who see the results of a shrinking membership in their Lodge and in other Lodges. The opinions are diverse.

I thought you might enjoy a quick tiptoe through a few of these missives from DMC members and so I have re-printed a handful of them, below. Please note that what is expressed is the opinion of the writer, not necessarily the opinion of anyone else. I have also deleted the names of the writers and identifying information regarding the Lodge about which they are writing. I believe such confidentiality fosters a franker and fuller discussion.

Enjoy!

F - L - T

Dave Rosenberg
Grand Warden

Dave,

If we all start practicing friendship, love, and truth, we will be halfway there to generating acceptance. However, we must think of these principles as more than words. Friendship, for example, should be unconditional. When we start to place limitations on extending the hand of friendship we have totally lost the true meaning. The idea that we only want new members who look and act like us then we are doomed. Unfortunately I know a member in my own lodges who position is so rock bound that he stopped coming to the Odd Fellow lodge and now only attends the Rebekah meetings. His complaint is that those new members that have been brought into ***** don't think and act as Odd Fellows as he knows them. I explained to him at one time if we did not have these new members that we would be without a quorum on many occasions. His reply, "As far as I am concerned that would be acceptable". I don't have an answer to this situation except that this individual believes that he is right, and it is those who want change that are destroying the order. As for me, I will continue to recruit men and women of good character and good will.



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Hi Dave,

While I enjoyed *****'s letter and appreciate his suggestions, I have to point out the obvious, even having a lovely, loving, and social lodge can't overcome the outdated and deadening ritual. In my lodge, members state that the boring antiquated ritual as the main reason for not attending meetings. What can be done about that?

Dave,

A quick status from ***** . I read a couple of your newsletters to the group last night. We have established a committee to explore new ways of finding potential members who are a good fit and are interested in the three aspects (legs) IOOF has to offer. This will be a slow process but a necessary one which your visit catalyzed.

Dave,

I must agree that a lodge that is meeting for twenty minutes is doing nothing but entertaining its members. By that statement I mean that the meeting is just a prolog to the real event they came for, the "card game". This may hold the interest of the few that are coming for the bi-monthly poker game, but they are no longer an Odd Fellow Lodge. They are now a card club with a ritualistic opening. When a lodge reaches such a position that their sole purpose is the twice a month card game or domino game they may be beyond recovery unless the Grand Master steps in and demands that they start meeting for the real purpose for which they were organized. This may require an audit to determine their use of funds, and if necessary a charter suspension pending a planned redirection. Harsh action but sometimes necessary.

Dave,

When a lodge has so few and older members it no longer has the ability to change in many cases. It is very hard to attract people to join an organization so tied to, let's face it, silly rituals at every meeting and silly rituals to even being initiated. People join organizations to feel a sense of belonging, common interests and common cause. But how can a lodge with fewer than 20 members mostly over age 60 install activities to attract people? And even when this does occur, they are driven away by people who pull out the rule books, of which we have many, and



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use them as a weapon over members.

Some ritual is good but ours is too verbose, too Old Testament oriented and some just plain silly! My Lodge is controlled by "Mr. Rule Books" with disastrous results - a declining membership, especially in enthusiasm. I get very discouraged about how to encourage people to join. Oh well

Hi Dave,

Your last message hit home for me. I am an associate in one lodge in which there is a tacit agreement not to get new members and simply keep having dinner together and proforma meetings until the lodge shrinks through death. It is very saddening.

Dave,

My lodge ***** had shrunk to about [less than 10] members attending an average meeting with most members just coming for dinner and paying little attention to the functioning of the lodge. It had gotten to the point where two members began making decisions for the whole lodge, misleading and withholding information from the rest of the lodge and voting against new members joining. It finally got to the point when a rebellion occurred and those two members are now marginalized with a great deal of animosity and hurt feelings through the lodge.

Grand Warden Dave,

I believe the focus, as I have discovered, that the members grew the ideology that the "lodge is mine". I don't have to share it. Then, because they discovered that they did not plan their retirement well, the income from the lodge had the same ideology with a twist that the "money is mine". They forgot they have to pay it forward. Now they are dying out and so is the building. Unfortunately, there are members still today that are keeping the income for themselves. Along with, the new renters have discovered to become members to control the lodge and are not paying the rent to the lodge. They only pay the bills to keep the building in somewhat of a working condition. Therefore, there is no money to do the charity and community work. The members just don't want to go to the meetings because they get tired of fighting.



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