



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

November 24, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Today, November 24, 2013, was the "Celebration of Life" for Don Smith, PSGM and PGM, at the Linden Fraternal Hall. Don was born on August 20, 1932, and died on November 9, 2013. Hundreds of his friends, neighbors, family, and fraternal brothers and sisters attended this lively and moving ceremony. I was privileged to be one of the speakers at the "Celebration of Life." Here are the comments I made in remembrance of a life well lived.

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Dave Rosenberg, Grand Warden

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Don Smith was my fraternity brother, my friend, and in many ways, my mentor in Odd Fellows.

I first met Don in 2008. Don was a major figure in Odd Fellowship, having served as Grand Master of California at a very young age, and then having served as Sovereign Grand Master - a rare recognition in this Order for a person from California. I was a relatively new member in this Order, having only joined the Davis Lodge in 2004. But my Lodge was in trouble when I joined - losing members and diminishing to less than 40 members on our books - and I had found myself become Vice Grand and then Noble Grand in 2005 - only a year after I was initiated. Soon after I became Noble Grand, I realized that it was not only my Lodge - but Lodges throughout California that were in trouble and so I started instituting changes to reinvigorate and grow my Lodge. Don had heard about some of our changes, and he asked if he (and a few of his Lodge mates) could come up to Davis to attend one of our breakfast meetings. He did so in November of 2008, and then wrote an e-mail to me. I would like to share two paragraphs of that e-mail with you:

"We really enjoyed attending your meeting, and the breakfast was excellent. The meeting reminded me of Scio Lodge #102 about 12 to 15 years ago. I understand that there were many public officials and several office holders present for your meeting. Back in the 1990s we had plenty of activities and included in our active membership were our County Supervisor, six of the seven town council members, half a dozen of our Chamber of Commerce Directors, and others. Other members of Scio Lodge at that time were our District Attorney, County Sheriff, superintendent of schools, etc. During this period Scio Lodge was the largest lodge in the county



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and the tenth largest lodge in California. Today we are the second largest lodge in the county (more than 50 members) with the Lodi lodge taking over the number one spot in San Joaquin County. Back then we also gave the Lions Club a run for its money as far as activities and membership, but now the Lions have more than 200 members and it is the 10th largest Lions Club in the United States. Linden has a population of about 2,000, so many of the Odd Fellows and Lions came from the greater Stockton area. During this period Scio Lodge sponsored a Crab Feed for up to 1,000 persons with nearly every judge in the county attending along with most public officials in the county. One of our members, Andy Guy, was chairman of the California Judicial Review Board (I believe that is what it was called). Andy has since passed away as has the brother that owned the barn where we held the crab feed. One year the governor of California attended one of our crab feeds, which was a complete sell out every year with several hundred on a waiting list to obtain tickets that seldom were available. We charged between \$32 and \$40 for tickets over the years, and we were able to sponsor many community service projects in our area including the purchase of a car for the County Sheriff's STAR program."

Don went on to write the following: "Anyone being realistic understands that Odd Fellowship needs to make some major changes if the Order is going to survive. You have demonstrated this fact in Davis, and the fraternity needs to wake up and be willing to make these changes or we will be out of existence except for a small number of lodges that have a lot of assets. The traditional Odd Fellows Lodge, following the ritualistic ceremonies, is a thing of the past. Very few lodges exist that can conduct the degree and ritualistic ceremonies as they were performed years ago. A few lodges exist that take great pride in conferring degrees, but that is the exception."

Don was a man of vision and great influence in this Order. He was, as I said, a mentor to me. Don convinced me to run for and serve on the Odd Fellows Homes of California Board of Directors, and I had the great privilege of serving with Don as a member of that Board for many years. Don took great pride in the work of the Board, and in the fine homes this Order owns in Saratoga and Napa. He felt that our homes were among the best - perhaps the best - endeavors and assets of our Order. Don was also the man who encouraged me to run for election as Grand Warden of California. I did so, and much to my surprise - but not to Don's - I was elected and I currently serve as Grand Warden.

But I would say that my most memorable engagement with Don Smith occurred on December 13, 2010, when Don Smith, Rick Boyles (the current Grand Master of California), and I formed an internal group within our Order. Don actually came up with the name - Dedicated Members for Change. The purpose of our group - starting with just us three - was to re-focus this Order on



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just three things: Membership, membership, membership. The three of us understood that our fraternity had been losing members for over 60 years - in fact, had diminished more than 90% in membership - and that this was simply unsustainable. Our group wanted to refocus the Order on the need to evolve and change to attract and retain members in the 21st Century. I am delighted to say that Don's vision for the Order is flourishing - as perhaps his greatest legacy. Our Dedicated Members for Change (DMC as it is known) has grown from 3 members to hundreds - from California, Oregon, Washington, Oklahoma, around the country and around the world.

Don Smith was loved and respected and he will be missed, not only by his beloved wife, Darlene - his constant companion, adviser, and supporter - his family, his Lodge brothers and sisters, members of this Order who knew him personally or by reputation - but also by me - his friend. He was a man of vision. And he was a man who made a difference during his time on this earth.