



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

January 10, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

A Tuxedo Obsession, Long Dresses for Extremely Hot Occasions, Life in the Slow Lane, Establishing an Identity in the Modern World, Traditional Airspace Strangulation and General Unhappiness Boiled Down to a Perfect Science...

1. Tuxedos for Every Occasion – Very few, if any, other fraternal groups like to spend much of their time in outfits generally relegated to the 1930s, however in the Odd Fellows, it is considered a mark of distinction, if you waltz with Matilda in an outfit left to you by Dear old Dad. It is so ludicrous to me it simply makes us look like a laughing stock. After my reign as Grand Master, I may torch my distinctive outfit in a quasi-Clamper ceremony. Interestingly enough, the New Yorker notes that the normal attire now worn by the “techies” tends more towards jeans and t-shirts. Of course, I would never suggest that the Odd Fellows might try to emulate the mode of dress of today’s world. Also a curious question would be is that while the Odd Fellows tend to be members of the middle class, why would we want to emulate billionaires?
2. Long Dresses for Extremely Hot Occasions – my friend’s wife was a Rebekah for many years, but she said she quit because she got tired of wearing the long dresses that she felt were “torture devices”. I personally have never seen these types of dresses worn anywhere else in today’s world except perhaps by Minnie Pearl from Hee Haw which was popular thirty years ago. Of course, even Minnie wore them to show how ludicrous her position was but naturally the Rebekahs decided to emulate this look and to carry it forward into perpetuity. Let’s keep this look up into the year 2157! Far be it for me to suggest change. I have found that even as Grand Master it is dangerous to suggest change, even though most of those outside the order view us as moronic! If you doubt this, ask a few people for their real opinions of our attire.
3. Life in the Slow Lane – I have gone to a lot of lodges that do nothing, that try nothing, that contribute nothing, and yet somehow view it all as some type of proud badge of continuance. Generally, their point to continuance is because someone or all who are left are being paid for their continuance. In reality, this should not displace an urgent need for members, but damn it all, they are happy as things are, and no person under the age of 90 can tell them what to do!
4. There are lodges out there growing, becoming more attuned to today’s world but oddly enough, these are the lodges that don’t wear tuxedos or long dresses, that don’t chant mindless mantras and yet practice hatred. These are lodges that actually practice Friendship, Love and Truth to the outside world! Imagine that!
5. The lodges and segments of our order that are nearest failure are the exact same entities that contain the naysayers, those who deride anything new, those who claim their own superiority even though their own abilities are quickly waning. The easiest way to dismiss progress is to mock it, to spread hatred, to wear long dresses that drag on the floor, to wear white ties and tails, even though Fred Astaire was the last actor to wear them. That is my own attack. For Grand Lodge this year, I suggest anyone who desires



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to do so, please wear your finest wear that you may have gotten handed down from your grandparents and wear it proudly. Top hats, too. Why not take the whole ludicrous stance to its ultimate conclusion?

6. Let's face it, most of us are old. Yet, we wring our hands and say why can't we get the young? Are we serious? If you were young would you want to hang out with buffoons in top hats? Those of us who are trapped in the 1920s and are afraid to move forward, don't we lead by our fine example? Let's all join hands and sing John Philip Sousa, Ethel Merman, and try to get the kids. When do we wake up? Has anyone come up to you lately and asked you if they could also wear them long dresses and those raggedy tuxedos? We are beginning to look like we are totally out of synch with the world.
7. There are those among us who will never be happy. Every time I see them, I know that they will have a negative remark. They only contribute to our demise. To them, progress is not only not wanted, it is feared, period. To them, and there are a number of them, their solution is to keep on the same track, say the ritual as clearly as possible, use the code as a bludgeon, never smile and yet act like f., l., & t., is their motto. Give me a break! The first key to all of us should be are we capable of spreading friendship, love and truth, if not, we should get out of the way of those who can. Friendship, Love and Truth is the only way we survive. Of course, if you really think white ties and tails will help, all the more power to you, but please don't demand it of everyone else!

All my love, Rick Boyles, Grand Master