



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

February 17, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Our Brother Rick Boyles is about three months away from the end of his one-year term as Grand Master. As Grand Master, Rick has put thousands of miles on his car, traveling to and visiting Lodges large and small throughout California. He has talked with thousands of Odd Fellows in cities, towns and villages in this State. As his term of office nears its conclusion, Rick reflects on what he has seen, heard and learned.

I strongly urge each of you to read what the Grand Master has written, below. It is a powerful and important statement of the status of and the future for our Order. I am sure it was not easy for Rick to write these words. But I know Rick. He is a humble man, with a refined sense of humor, and a positive attitude. But most importantly, Rick is an honest man. And he does not hide the truth.

We ignore Grand Master Rick Boyles' words at the peril of our organization.

F - L - T

Dave Rosenberg
Grand Warden

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

The great things about our order are many:

- 1) Our core beliefs - Friendship, Love and Truth, are unassailable moral beliefs that all souls throughout the world should share and trumpet.
- 2) Some lodges are very accepting of all walks of life. Many accept members from all sexual orientations, all races, and all political beliefs.
- 3) Camaraderie - many lodges share common goals, and can radiate those goals to a wondering public.
- 4) History - we have a multi-layered history of colorful groups, and were the founders in many towns throughout our state and our nation.
- 5) Some lodges are able to go out into their communities and allow those same communities to venture in. We fail to grow if we can't show our hearts and souls to the communities.

Areas we need to improve upon:



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- 1) Politics: why do we as an order seem to think that all of us are part of one political ideologue? I often get right-wing diatribes from various members and I find this amazingly scurrilous. Do we really think this is acceptable or morally correct?
- 2) Failure to see the bigger picture: Many of us sit in our individual lodges and act like we are in our own little worlds. We wonder why we as an order are shrinking, and yet, often times, neighboring lodges don't even interact.
- 3) Factions: We seem to have become a shrinking order with warring factions. It has gotten me very depressed at various times throughout the year. One side will pick on the other side, and forget that all of us are of the same group. We should not lose sight that all of us are brothers and sisters, and together we survive, while divided we inevitably fail.
- 4) Resentment towards anyone not exactly the same: Some members and therefore some lodges only want individuals that think just like they do. This was not always the case. It should seem obvious that this is one of the ways in which we are failing. It's hard to grow if all we do is seek out the 1% who share our own political beliefs.
- 5) Denial of the Modern World: Because the average age of our members is 70 years old, our average event is focused around 70 year old thinking. No one seems to see this as incongruous with the outside world. I actually have listened to Ethel Merman played at some of our events. Of course, for those of you modern members, Ethel Merman was big in the 30s and 40s. Apparently, none of our members want to listen to music from the last half century. Some people glorify tuxedos and long dresses. Nowhere else in the modern world do folks dress like this any longer, unless you are James Bond playing five card stud in Monaco. Time to wake up.
- 6) Racial and Sexual Prejudice: I actually have had a popular statewide person pull me aside and tell me his favorite racist jokes. I try to be congenial with this person but each time it happens, I feel myself cringing. The worst part about it is that I know this person tells these jokes to more than me. What is even more ludicrous is that I have heard this person tell racist jokes to people of the same race! Amazing.
- 7) Inability to React: Some of us perhaps due to our advancing age, or our own complacency with our lodge or our group, or our exalted title within the group have an inability to react to anything. If our lodges are sinking, we smile and do nothing. If our group's membership is sinking, we smile and do nothing. If our fellow members are besmirched and made fun of, we smile and do nothing. In all instances, we smile and do nothing. One such person when I pointed this out to them said "what can one man do"? In reality, I have seen that one man can do a lot. It seems like the rest of us are just too tired or lazy to try.
- 8) Mental Impotence and a flat denial of reality: Some lodges and some of our units don't even seem to acknowledge the diminution of members. One member said that he does not want anyone who does not think like him. I doubt that his opinion is isolated to only him. In reality, in order to grow, we need to go forward accepting of reality and learning to accept the goodness in all people, not just those we agree with.

Dear Members, I will be out of office soon enough and another Grand Master will take my place, but if we refuse to make changes we will fail completely. It really is inevitable. If all you want is the same old status quo, then be prepared to sink into the oblivion of your own creation. You



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get what you pay for. No effort no reward. The simplest facts of life expectancy and failure to attract new members will eventually rule the day. Think about it.

In Friendship, Love, and Truth, Rick Boyles, Grand Master.