



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

February 24, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Here, dear readers, is an article by long-time Odd Fellow and Membership Chairman Peter Sellars. Peter is a former Marine. He pulls no punches in stating his opinion.

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Dave Rosenberg  
Grand Warden

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IN RETROSPECT, MY PROSPECTIVE.

For years, I have been a strong proponent of progression in the IOOF. I have written articles, taught seminars, given lectures, shared new ideas, even to the point of being outspoken and purposely offensive to those who cannot handle positive change.

It was never my intention to be such a "radical" within the Order.

If I thought the Order was facing pending doom, why would I want to even be a member - you ask? I have asked myself that question, as well. I tell a "half-joke" when I tell people I have quit a hundred times. Well, this isn't too far from the truth. I have been discouraged at times and have thought this Order could never be changed. But, then I am a person who was trained - I mean trained for many years - quitting is not an option - literally to the death. (I had been an explosive ordnance tech "e.o.d." in the Marine Corps for 15 years and then completed my five years of college and overcome some personal difficulties.) I came into the Odd Fellows because my grandfather had asked me. I was still in the Marines and I told him I could not be active in the lodge. In short, I obtained the initiatory degree while on leave and he continued to pay my dues for many years. After my discharge and college, I came to meetings. I was dismayed. This was something I would have never stayed with if it was not for my grandfather.

But, then, I noticed some of the old books and I became hooked. I saw an opportunity and a need to bring out an untapped trove of HISTORY. I had a purpose. It was to write history. I wrote as I learned. I read and wrote. Of course, the older members - I mean some of the old recalcitrant members absolutely resented me knowing more than they did about the history of the Order. I took that as a challenge. It was at that point I became a progressive member. Remember, I was asked to join this Order. But now, that I had the Ritual memorized and could recite the history, these longtime members became resentful. They had had their place in the



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stars before I had come along. I could have easily quit but in the year 2000, a challenge caused me to stay and fight.

In 2000, women were allowed to join the Odd Fellows! I took that as the best thing that could happen in our Order. Some of you may remember that at the time every lodge was collapsing on themselves. The Order was leaving this world in every way possible. On a visit to another lodge, one of the members told me that he could no longer be my friend because I supported women coming into the lodge. That was my challenge. From that moment, I realized this was not really a fraternal organization whatsoever. It was nothing but a place where senior citizens could brag and boast about themselves. And when change came, the true bigots came out of the woodwork. They resented youth, and women even more. This was the Odd Fellows that I saw. This was the dying, no hope, group I had joined. But, I was none of those things. I fought. I wrote articles and spoke of the advantages of having our doors open to women. It worked. More and more women joined my lodge. I brought in no less than 50 women into my lodge in two years. I did this not only in spite of those who had been so offensive, but because I knew the Odd Fellows needed change. In order to make other changes, it was necessary to succeed on this change. I had members actually tell me they did not want blacks or Catholics in the Order. Well, I was already a Catholic. No apologies needed on my part. I decided my lodge would have no barriers and that I would ask my fellow lodge members to help in breaking down the barriers of this Order. (Yes, there is a lot behind that statement!) We could do it in our lodge, but not in other lodges. There lies the problem. There lies the battle. There is the challenge and the fight. I chose not to quit and to keep fighting. There are others who have taken up the challenge, too. Success is seen in those lodges who have taken up the fight. These successful lodges do not have the eternal struggles and social ills of those lodges that still haven't changed.

Please don't get me wrong: I am here to offend the bigots and racists who have managed to place our Order on the very brink of oblivion. I blame the closed-minded folks who are still living in the past. Experience has taught me well. I encourage you and your lodges to be progressive and welcoming of diverse new members. If you are somehow offended by this message, then I have succeeded.

Peter Sellars, Membership Chairman.