



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

April 6, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

A few days ago I ran an article written by Gary Charpentier of Los Angeles - Golden Rule #35, that has generated a fair amount of interest and dialogue in this DMC e-mail pipeline. One of the references in the article was to the "old guard" who say "no" to all new ideas and who hit new members over the head with "the Code". Amazing how prevalent this is throughout the Order. In my own experience, I have heard and seen brothers cite "the Code" as a way to diminish a new idea or concept - yet it appears that they have never read the Code section that they cite. In checking the Code, I have found that it either does not stand for the prohibition that they are touting, or that they have misread it. Yet they have no hesitation to use it as a bludgeon or weapon to argue against the idea that is proposed.

By the way, there is no "Code" of this Order. There are "Codes". We must follow the Code of General Laws of the Sovereign Grand Lodge, but also the "Robert's Code" (not to be confused with "Robert's Rules of Order" which deal with parliamentary procedure only) of the Grand Lodge of California.

One example of the "Code citing" phenomenon was sent to me by a member of a Lodge (for the sake of confidentiality, I will neither reveal the member's name or Lodge) as follows:

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Speaking of the 'old guard' - we had an strange situation at a recent lodge meeting. Prior to our meeting, we had interviewed a new candidate for the lodge and found him worthy of acceptance. When it came time to vote on his candidacy, our secretary did not have the original membership application (had left it at home). When the sponsor said that they had a copy of the form, one of the 'old guard' said that this was not permitted by the 'Code', and further questioned why the sponsor had a copy of the form - that being somehow impermissible. Our District Deputy Grand Master was also in attendance, and ruled that we could not vote on the member, since we did not have the original signed application.



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While there is no real damage done in delaying this, it just reinforces the point that we have challenges with 'old guard' members that 'stick to the book'. Even when the 'book' may not explicitly state that the original application must be present in the room when a vote is taken.

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Clearly, the passage above is an example of the victory of form over substance. The behavior of the "old guard" member and the DDGM was, frankly, illogical - one would even say ludicrous. The application form had been submitted - the secretary of the Lodge had received it but simply forgot it at home. The sponsor had a copy of the application form. Clearly, the application form had been filled out and submitted. It served no purpose to postpone or delay the vote.

But more to the point, there is nothing in any Code of this Order which mandates that an original application form be present in the Lodge room when a vote is taken. I ran this example by the Grand Master and the Grand Instructor, and they both concur. Further, the Code of General Laws of this Order states, explicitly, that the laws of the Order "shall be liberally construed."

So, in closing, I urge members of this Order to familiarize themselves with the Codes. Certainly, have them available in or near the Lodge room. When a member starts citing "the Code" - ask that member to point out the specific section that they are citing. I have found that in many cases, there is no such section, or alternatively, upon actually reading the language, we find that it does not say what the member purports. Let's get specific. Saying "the Code" prohibits something won't cut it. Follow the philosophy of Missouri (the "Show Me State") - and ask the member: "Show me."

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Grand Warden