



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

May 9, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Recently, we published a provocative and interesting article in this newsletter from Peter Sellars, the Grand Instructor of California, who addressed the issue of "leadership" and whether it is nature or nurture that makes leaders. Peter took the position that true leadership is a learned characteristic. Peter's article generated a fair amount of thought and a few responses. I thought it would be fun to publish a couple of the responses to Peter's premise.

Below are responses, first from Past Grand Master Gene Breeland, and then by long-time member of the Odd Fellows Homes Board Robin Oliver. Enjoy!

F - L - T

Dave Rosenberg  
Grand Warden

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David,

I find Peter's article very interesting in that I agree we need more leadership training and guidance. However, I disagree with his premise that leaders are not born.

If you watch small children at play, you will observe that at least one will be guiding the play session and the rest will follow that individual. Is that inborn leadership? I think so. Each of us is born with a set of genes that govern our personality, and our environment as we grow will either sharpen or dull the traits we are born with. I agree there are some we can train and build in them the self confidence to take positions of leadership; while there are others with personality traits that will never permit them to make that major step.

There are cases in which no amount of nurturing will overcome that basic shyness that ties the tongue or even leads to tears. But should we turn our backs on these people? Of course not. Many members dread being shoved into the spotlight, but are willing workers and want to take part. Use them, don't abuse them and give them credit for their contributions. Train all those willing to be trained, but also recognize the fact that some prefer the supporting roles. My



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thoughts.

In F,L&T

Gene Breeland, PGM

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Peter, I applaud you for composing this piece. It is precisely what I have been trying to express all along these past years...

Leaders in the Order and leaders outside of the Order are not born. Nor do they learn everything they need to know to be competent in their formal schooling. And they are not entirely trained. Training can be -- and often is -- a critical component of their development. But more than training and being born into the right circumstances, leaders see purpose in what they do...

And they see more than themselves. They see others. They see both the productive and hostile social dynamics around them. They see goals and options. They see desired outcomes. For themselves. For their families. And for their communities...

A good and effective leader knows, yes, about direct and passive influence. But that is largely because she or he has taken the time to size up the situation and the people around her or him. He or she understands the urgency and the priorities of the moment. She or he understands the people nearby, and whether they might need explicit direction or simply a silent nod to move forward...

A good and effective leader can show others the way. And, in most cases, that is really all they have to do, i.e. motivate, orchestrate, and guide...

What we are talking about here is a quality and integrity of character that is clearly obvious to those who "follow". This is precisely what the Order claims it seeks to improve in each member. There is no "pool of leadership" in any group. There is only the potential to develop the qualities of leadership in every member of the Order who is willing to learn and determined to perform. That is accomplished with understanding and development of the requisite skills and the on-going practice of those skills...

I also learned about leadership in my military experience -- just simply by paying attention -- particularly in the field. The infantry officer in charge of a patrol is like a guide and appreciates



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men whose technical expertise and personal experience extended beyond his own. He is always in the center of the group, not on point or in the rear or on the flanks. He is always alert and always prepared to make adjustments to ensure the success of the group's mission. And he is always developing the leadership and character skills of those around him just in case he gets dinged and the group must look to another for that character and guidance...

What possible greater good could the Order do for its members and its communities than to develop these qualities in every member who seeks this improvement and enhancement of character? It is about the "big picture". That is how the Order makes an impact on the world around us...

In Friendship, Love, and Truth...

Robin  
Grand Warden