



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

May 12, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

I look forward to seeing many of you at Grand Lodge sessions in Modesto this week. As he finishes his active and dedicated term as our California Grand Master, Rick Boyles has penned the following observations. It's a little bit future and a little bit nostalgia. Hope you read this worthwhile departing message from your Grand Master.

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Dave Rosenberg
Grand Warden

Duties of the Grand Master

As my year draws to a close, it becomes necessary not to judge anything but to realize that the years of each Grand Master come to an end quickly, but what should not end are our goals and dreams for the order. The order will survive not because of any one individual but by all of us realizing that the order must survive beyond us personally. No one person is necessary therefore it becomes imperative not to paint the order with too big a brush. As almost everyone knows, I co-founded the Dedicated Members for Change with my friends soon to be Deputy Grand Master Dave Rosenberg and Past Sovereign Grand Master Don Smith. This group exists primarily with the idea that all members have some importance, not just those with an impressive sounding title. We can't be afraid of the future, which some undeniably are, nor can we ignore the future, which some undeniably do. And many of us make the mistake of feeling that without us specifically the order would fail. As long as our order is guided by this premise, we are destined to be on the road to failure.

I was forced to make decisions not by anyone else but by the situation. Lodges close because of their own actions not because of someone externally. Generally, lodges that close are sinking to this level over a period of years. Some lodges have lost all monies, others all members and often both. We as an order really can't keep lodges going without funds very long before it taxes the core of our order directly. Also, a lodge with 2 people in attendance ceases to be a real lodge no matter what we feel about those 2 people. Some suggest that the Grand Master should not



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close any lodges, but this is literally impossible, because eventually without a sustainable income lodges go broke, and without a sustainable membership base eventually lodges end up being unattended. Lodges must meet not just because our codes say so, but also because if they don't, bills end up being unpaid, and our buildings end up being shadows of the past. Some lodges can be resurrected but often times the resurrection is as unique as the original lodge was before its descent into failure.

In our state, because of our high level of income, our diversity of interests, such as our two retirement communities, our Rebekah Children's Services, our Three Links Camp, 120 lodges and other ventures, we are really too complex as a unit to be governed by just one individual no matter how well meaning, we have to have a Board of Directors. This Board of Directors comprised of quite a few members, now, according to our code, represents our order when it is not in session. Therefore, it is mandated to address serious issues each time it meets, and will often direct the Grand Master to proceed in a certain manner. Some feel that the Grand Master is the ultimate authority and while this may seem romantic it is not very logical. The U.S. government does not exist like that nor does any other democratic seat of government because real governing is supposed to be by the people in general. Therefore, in my year, if the board of directors directed me to send a letter, I did send a letter under their counsel. If you were to stop and realize that otherwise you are asking the Grand Master to every year decide the fate of all members, of all financial units, of all corporations, solely by himself, you might come to the realization that this is by its definition ludicrous and dangerous. In fact, I believe that our state remains the healthiest state in income and membership by virtue of this arrangement, and if the order as a whole recognized this they would immediately make this arrangement in every state. Let's face facts - we can't survive as an order, if we don't have someone independent of the annual fraternal officers guiding the ship. Some feel that we should abolish the Board of Directors, but this is on its face, a simplistic view, and really has no merit. What, for example, would the Grand Master do with personnel issues at one of our entities? It's scary to assume that we would empower any one person, no matter how well meaning, to take this on. By our code, the Grand Master is in charge of all "fraternal issues" brought before them, and this is the correct point of view. Over the years, our code has changed to reflect the proper view and a Grand Master often enters the financial end at his or her own peril. The Grand Master is most mistaken when they don't listen to counsel. That is why our board exists - to maintain counsel - to realize that issues are more complex than one person can often comprehend. There is also some discussion that there should be no executive session, that all minutes, no matter how delicate the situation, be shared with all members. This is also dangerous, since delicate issues are by their nature, complex and infused with personal animosities and perhaps personal attacks. Would it be healthy to spread these to the order in general? Of course not, and it may be injurious to the board members who are empowered by the order to review these issues.



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Brothers and sisters, in my year as Grand Master, I have seen some serious issues which require our attention, but I have also seen some things we do very well. I would be willing to bet that we are surely one of the most healthy, both financially and fraternally, states in the United States, so we should be happy with that situation, and realize that it is best to use an operating implement rather than an axe. We need to move forward, happy in the idea that if we continue on a balanced well versed path, we will survive and perhaps even thrive into the Brave New World.

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

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