



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

May 14, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

In about a couple of hours I will be leaving my home in Davis to drive to Modesto where I will participate as a voting representative in the 162nd California Grand Lodge Session. I first joined Odd Fellows in 2004 and now, in 2014, I am about to finish my term as Grand Warden of California and will soon start my term as Deputy Grand Master of California Odd Fellowship. What a long, interesting and "odd" journey it has been over that decade.

When I first became an Odd Fellow 10 years ago, I had no conception of Grand Lodge. I had no idea what Grand Lodge Sessions were all about. I barely knew what a Noble Grand was, let alone a Deputy Grand Master. I was unfamiliar with the Codes, Constitutions, and By-laws of our Order.

The one thing I learned pretty quickly, however, was that my own Lodge was hurting. We might have had 25 members on our books, but we could barely muster a dozen for meetings. I determined that I would change the focus and the culture of my Lodge - and over time, I did.

And then I realized that my Lodge was not an isolated situation. Other Lodge throughout California - indeed the entire Order in California - was diminishing. Members were withdrawing or dying at a faster rate than new members were being initiated. Every year - year after year - we were losing members and we were losing Lodges. I determined that I would seek to change the outlook of the State Order - and over time, we did. In 2010 Don Smith, Rick Boyles and I started this group called Dedicated Members for Change - focused like a laser on the subject of our declining membership and suggesting ways to reverse that trend.

Today in 2014, I do believe we have made great strides in convincing this Order of the need for new blood and new energy in our Lodges. We have realized that our Lodges cannot continue to operate in secret behind closed doors and windows. We have come to accept that Lodges must reach out into their communities with good public works and must strive within to develop fun social activities for their members. It is these efforts, at last, that will bring in those new applicants we need to grow and continue this ancient fraternity. We are beginning to see the results of all these, and other efforts. Statistics show that in 2013 (Rick Boyles' year as Grand Master) the Order in California has finally put the brakes on declining membership - the numbers show that are losses and our gains are almost even. I am hopeful that in the coming year we may start to show the slow ascent of our membership and we will have reversed the decline that has hectored Odd Fellowship for the last half Century. And in doing so, we can serve as an example for the Order throughout the nation. Even Sovereign Grand Lodge will have to take



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notice.

Lodges are strong when they are three dimensional, not just one dimensional, focusing on: (1) the great history and ritual of this Order, (2) community projects and good works, and (3) fun social activities for the members.

So, I am proud to be driving to Modesto this morning as we re-focus, re-energize and re-dedicate ourselves to Odd Fellowship now and in the future.

And I hope to see many of you there! I am delighted to announce that we have 100 RSVP's for the DMC Dinner this Thursday, May 15, at the DoubleTree Hotel - this is an all-time record and I look forward to seeing so many of you at the dinner. We will be in the Hotel's Arbor Theater, starting at 5 p.m. with wine tasting, then the buffet dinner at 6 p.m., followed by a few short but pithy speeches, and then musical entertainment for the evening offered by the popular band "Wealth of Nations". A memorable evening is in store!

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Dave Rosenberg
Grand Warden

p.s. You won't be receiving any DMC Newsletters for about a week - we're off to Grand Lodge Sessions and won't be able to send any out while we are in Modesto. But we'll be back next week with a review of the highlights from Grand Lodge. "Talk" to you soon.