



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

May 22, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

As your newly elected Deputy Grand Master for the Jurisdiction of California, I want to start the same way I left off. I want to focus on three, and only three, topics. And those topics are: membership, membership, membership.

The year 2013 ended remarkably well for our Order in California. Instead of showing a net loss of 100-200 members for the calendar year as we have been showing for the past decade, we actually showed a flat line figure (a net loss of only 3) which, to me, says that our membership efforts over the past two-three years are starting to work, and we may have put the brakes on the membership free-fall we have seen for the past two or three generations. I am hopeful that 2014 will show a continuation of this trend, and perhaps even the beginnings of net gains in our membership. The signs are encouraging, and our new Grand Master Tim Brown has indicated that he intends to continue the good works we started in 2013 regarding membership development.

But while the overall membership statistics show a better trend, there are still some troubling realities revealed by those statistics. We need to slice and dice those statistics and really drill down to the heart of the numbers. And in doing so, here is what is revealed below the surface:

1. As of the start of 2014, we had 120 Odd Fellows Lodges in the State of California with 4,751 members. including associate and non-contributing members. (The number of dues-paying members is 4,399.) Of our 4,751 members, 3,630 are men and 1,121 are women. We have 2 Lodges with 300 or more members, 2 Lodges with 200 or more members, and 2 Lodges with 100 or more members. All the remaining 114 Lodges have less than 100 members per Lodge - most have far less. We have 48 Lodges with 20 or fewer members on the books. We all know that members reflected on the books do not translate into active members. It is estimated that about 50% of the members listed "on the books" are active participating members in the Lodge. That being the case, a Lodge with 20 members is likely to have 10 active members. So, drilling down further, of our 120 Lodges, 33 Lodges have 15 or fewer members. I would submit that these 33 Lodges are in a very fragile zone and should be on "yellow alert". A Lodge with 15 members is likely to have only 7 or 8 active members, and runs the risk of quorum problems. And if we dig even deeper, we find that California has 9 Lodges with 10 or fewer members. Those 9 Lodges are in a "red alert" status as I see it. I would submit that a Lodge with 10 or fewer members on the books is precariously close to becoming a defunct Lodge. We should be watching and assisting those 9 Lodges as best we can, to find ways to bring in fresh new members.



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2. Our 5 largest Lodges (in membership numbers) hold 1,266 of the members of our Order. That is close to 27% of the total membership of the Order. In other words, 1 out of every 4 California Odd Fellows is a member of just 5 Lodges. These large Lodges continue to grow, while a large number of small Lodges continue to shrink. The trajectory of these statistics show that in just a few years, the 15 or 20 largest Lodges in California will hold more than half the membership.

3. Women have been admitted as members in Odd Fellows Lodges for about 15 years. And yet, in 2014, we find that there are 21 Lodges in this jurisdiction which have no women on their roster. Zero. Nada. Null. Nothing. While some of these 21 Lodges are quite small, there are others that are medium-sized or large Lodges. It is frankly illogical for any Lodge in the 21st Century to have no women as members. To exclude women is to exclude half our population. And as a shrinking Order, we simply cannot afford that. In addition to the 21 Lodges with no female members, we have another 21 Lodges that show only 1 or 2 women on their rosters. We can do better.

4. At this year's Grand Lodge Session, we had less than 200 voting delegates. Yet, statistically our Lodges were entitled to send more than three times that number. In reviewing the voting representatives, we found that only 70 of our Lodges sent voting representatives to Grand Lodge - that is an embarrassing 57% of the Lodges. Fully 43% of our Lodges sent no representatives at all. And of those 70 Lodges that sent a representative, 23 sent just 1 representative. A number of these Grand Lodge representatives also came to Modesto as Rebekah Assembly representatives, and in this double-duty rarely, if ever, came over to Grand Lodge sessions. And so, typically, only 100 to 160 actually voted depending on who was still in the room. These statistics are discouraging. Lodges that fail to participate at Grand Lodge sessions lose out - they fail to enjoy a great resource available to them to share ideas, to network, to create unity, and to build this Order. And I suspect that many of the Lodges that do not participate in Grand Lodge sessions are the very Lodges that could use some help growing membership.

So, Brothers and Sisters, we have our work cut out for us in the coming year. We must continue to tackle - head on - the biggest challenge to our Order: We must work individually and collectively to bring in those new members.

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Dave Rosenberg
Deputy Grand Master