



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

May 25, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Just a few days ago, Rick Boyles ended a busy year as the Grand Master of this jurisdiction, and entered the small "fraternity" of Past Grand Masters. Rick was a hard-working GM who served with distinction and honor, in the finest principles of friendship, love and truth. His term as GM was distinguished by putting the brakes on our free-fall loss of membership - a grand achievement which bodes well for the future.

Below are thoughts and observations by Rick as he reflects on his terms. It's worth reading.

F - L - T

Dave Rosenberg  
Deputy Grand Master

\*\*\*\*\*

A Retrospective of My Year as Grand Master and Observations and Views of This Year's Grand Lodge Sessions

Brothers and Sisters, There were many great things that happened this year at the Grand Lodge Sessions in Modesto -

1) Incoming Sovereign Grand Master Jimmy Humphrey explicitly emphasized the need for vast and immediate change in the order. He left little doubt that change is upon us and called for. He was a pleasant breath of fresh air to all of us who promote change. He confirmed my belief that not only are we the most populous state in the Union, there are 22 state jurisdictions with less than 200 members! This should be an immediate call to action! Nothing is more important than membership. There are many ways in which to analyze these figures, which I will do in later missives.

2) Much of the legislation meant to effect change was passed resoundingly. This emphasizes that our order is firmly in line with the need for change. Those who oppose change, are quickly either tempering their own views, or reducing in numbers. This is inevitable. The idea that the "status quo" will somehow rejuvenate a failing populace is ludicrous.

3) The order in our state has become more receptive to certain unifying philosophies. The Board of Directors of the Grand Lodge has enjoyed a widening influence. As most of us are aware,



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

according to our code, the Grand Lodge Board of Directors represents the Grand Lodge when it is not in session. This has been a subject of debate for a number of years but this year it appears that its influence has been of a positive manner and has reflected the quickly evolving views of our order.

4) In fact, there are some positives to learn from our Grand Lodge versus other Grand Lodges, but many stem from the Grand Lodge Board of Directors. The Grand Lodge Board of Directors perhaps represents the only Grand Lodge Board in the United States, but our state is also the healthiest, both in finances and population, in the union. Is this a coincidence? I doubt it. What it shows is that our state is less receptive to upheaval year after year. However the elective officers of Grand Lodge are perceived, every year they represent a changing face, and so every year committees change, and perhaps take a different path. When I speak to Sovereign Grand Lodge Officers, I am struck by how many states have been decimated by their elective officers, or by some person or set of persons believing that they have a divine right to superiority. Some states can be leveled by one or two misguided personalities. Our state, however, is stronger. Our state has multiple levels by which decisions are to be made. Think of what the incoming Sovereign Grand Master said when he visited our state - "22 of 50 states are at or below 200 members"! This is scary, representing almost half of all the United States. But somehow we have stayed well above that level, and actually experienced little or no loss of members last year.

5) Even though there are some in our state who still act as if they oppose the DMC, they now talk about "change". This is not contrary to the workings of the DMC, because the DMC only encourages change, not change of a certain sort. If anyone speaks of change, it does not matter if they are within or without the parameters of the DMC. In fact, there are no parameters to change. The point is that change is inevitable. Status quo is not an option. The idea that if we just speak the ritual clearly, give the signs correctly or cross ourselves eight times will result in new members is an almost childish view of the order. We need to realize that if states are now at or below 200 members the time to change is now! And not 10 years from now.

6) I was shocked and thrilled to hear Brother Humphrey quote Carl Jung extensively in his speech not because I am a fan of Jungian philosophy but because it was outside the walls of the IOOF. It's time to wrap ourselves not just in the flag which is admirable but in society and modern philosophy. Carl Jung was a popular psychologist who died in 1961, whose beliefs and works have transcended his time to become well admired today. He was big in the coordination of opposites while maintaining their sovereignty. In other words, opposites can co-exist and thrive. This goes back to my statement about the Grand Lodge Board of Directors. In other states there are no checks and balances, no give and take, but in our state, we have legislated the give and take, and in my personal view, this is what has allowed us to slow the descent and perhaps even reverse it. If I were to ever run for a Sovereign Grand Lodge position, I would encourage the Sovereign Grand Lodge to take a similar path. Otherwise, the sheer constant upheaval of



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

different official positions will sap the drive of the order. I believe that elective officers should change every year, but it should be a purely ornamental position while the business stance should be more stable and long-lasting. This is what our state has that others do not.

7) In listening to the Grand Treasurer, the Grand Secretary, the Chairman of the Grand Lodge Board of Directors and other fine people discuss the financial aspects of our state, I found it most inspiring. Yet, my understanding is that other states are below the Mendoza line so to speak (baseball talk for futility) - they are both waning in finances and numbers. I think it is time to recognize that in our state we have done a number of things correctly, we have a fine Grand Lodge Office, a wonderfully diverse Board of Directors, and a general air of stability both in finances and in numbers. If we maintain these, we can sustain growth and our primary goal should be to exhibit this to the world. Our message if we are to see the sheer purity of it is that we are ready to accept the world, just as Carl Jung saw the value in both the East and the West where religion or philosophy was concerned but also see the wealth of each individual irrespective of the same old tired rhetoric some of us like to chant. Time to open up like a flower.

More on my year in later emails.

In Friendship, Love, and Truth, Rick Boyles