



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

July 13, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

For several years, I have focused on one major subject: How do we stop the decline in membership of this Order? In my opinion, the steady decline of membership in the Odd Fellows, Rebekahs, and all our branches is the single greatest challenge we face today. Frankly, it is a matter of survival. I have raised this issue again and again, and over the years I have suggested numerous ways in which we can evolve, change, and truly reverse the course of our decline. I would say that I have accomplished at least part of my mission - virtually everyone in the Order now at least recognizes the problem of declining membership, and many have sought to address the problem in various ways.

In fact, we are beginning to show some signs of progress after 66 years of almost continual free-fall in our membership numbers. Two years ago, the decline slowed considerably. And last year, it had almost come to a halt. With further work, I believe our Order in California may actually show a slight increase in membership in the next year or two.

But as I have also often said, the solution to declining membership cannot be found at Sovereign Grand Lodge or at Grand Lodge - although these entities can certainly make fundamental changes to the Codes that will make it much easier for our Lodges to thrive and attract new members. At bottom, the retention of existing members and the introduction of new members into our Order can only be accomplished by the members themselves (you and I) with the assistance and support of our respective Lodges. As members, we cannot look to "the other guy" to solve the problem. The solution is in each of our minds, hearts, and hands.

To this end, I attach an actual letter I received which was sent out recently by a Noble Grand to the members of his/her Lodge. This is a powerful letter sent by a concerned and involved Noble Grand.

I have deleted some identifying words in this letter. I do not identify this NG, nor do I identify his/her Lodge or the area where the Lodge is located. I don't identify these things because they are not really relevant. This NG could be the NG of 100 different Lodges in California, and hundreds more throughout the United States and Canada. This is a Noble Grand who really cares about the decline of his/her Lodge and the (dare we say it?) complacency of most of the members.

Please read the attached letter. Could this be your Lodge?



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Dave Rosenberg
Deputy Grand Master

Independent Order of Odd Fellows

-- July 2014

----- **Lodge #** -----

Subject: **LODGE MEMBERSHIP AND STATUS**

Dear Brothers and Sisters

SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE: It is with heavy heart that I inform you of the closing of our Lodge # ----- . This closing has been coming for many years as the membership, attendance and Lodge participation has been dwindling throughout the past two decades. Members age and either can or no longer want to participate. Our formal meetings barely make the necessary quorum. New members have been difficult to enroll. An example is in 2013, the Lodge enrolled 4 new members but sadly 3 of those quit participating before the end of the year. The Lodge functions have been supported by the same 5-7 members who also are ageing and are overwhelmed by the load they have. For those reasons, this Lodge will consolidate with another Lodge and the ----- building returned to the Grand Lodge for disposal.

BACK TO THE PRESENT : No, the Grand Lodge is NOT consolidating ----- Lodge # ----- at this time. However, the above message is one which members will receive in the near future unless membership apathy changes. Membership has been declining, not only at this Lodge but State and Nationwide. Active members are becoming tired of carrying the load for those who do not participate. The facility is becoming run down. We have ---- Odd Fellow members on the roll, however less than 1/3 seem to ever make it to any activity. The last social function, hosted by the Rebekahs, had only two Odd Fellows in attendance. Other social functions have experienced less than 20 attendees including both Rebekahs and Odd Fellows. Even the free dinner social, provided due to the membership stimulus funding from the Grand Lodge, was attended by only 34 people including spouses, children, and a few guests. A poor turnout and why is that?

This Lodge has and is starting some great projects. We have established a community benefit with the Adopt-A-Highway and are initiating a cooperative effort with an organization in



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----- that provides clothing and necessities for single moms and their children. We are awarding three scholarships this year to High School graduates. Members from Lodge # ---- have been very active in helping our sister lodges in starting their own breakfast fundraiser. We are in the process of obtaining bids to renovate the hall. We have supported the Three Links Camp in both funding and in labor. We hosted, in conjunction with the Rebekah's a two day art class which culminated with a spaghetti feed. Very little funds were made from that. And, finally we are developing a web page for this Lodge, which will provide active news and a calendar of events. We are still planning the annual ----- event at my house on -- August (hope you can make that). Many other ideas for fundraisers and socials are being considered. But again the core 5-7 members attending our meetings cannot do this alone. I commend those members who have dedicated themselves to the Order but we need everyone involved.

Let me ask a few thought provoking questions:

1. Since less than 1/3 of our members are participating in Lodge events, and most of those for the Sunday breakfast If you are not involved, what do you get from your membership?
2. The lodge pays almost \$50 each year per person as a tax to the Grand Lodge. The \$40 most members pay does not cover that. Should we raise membership fees?
3. What is this Lodge doing wrong or not doing that prevents you from participating more fully? We have reduced our formal meetings to one each month. I understand that some people work, some are ill but is one meeting a month too much?
4. A number of the proposals which have been made by members on how to change Lodge # ----- e.g. Increased socials e.g. baseball games, bingo night fundraisers, card nights at the lodge, etc. Wouldn't you like to contribute to those changes?
5. The converse of that, I would like to hear from you as to how this lodge should change to enable increased attendance and entice new members. The Grand Lodge is encouraging us to be more relevant in today's environment. How do we accomplish that from your perspective. Please e-mail me at ----- and let me know your thoughts.

Now is the time for you to step up for your lodge. Yes, I understand that you did or may have stepped up sometime in the past but your efforts are direly needed now. We are having a series of meeting with this as a topic in the Good of the Order section. Attend and share your thoughts if you care about your organization. Also, we will be having a picnic on ----- at ----- park in ----- starting at 10 AM. Come and help cook the lunch and provide me your ideas, criticism and concepts then. Hope to see you there or at a Lodge meeting.

Sincerely, in Friendship, Love, & Truth.



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-----, NG