



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

August 23, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

I'm sure that at some point in our past, all of us have been asked the question: "If you could have dinner with any three historical figures, who would you choose?" Well, if our Junior Past Grand Master Rick Boyles were asked that question, I'm pretty certain he would say something like "Carl Jung, Frederich Nietzsche, and Aristotle." That's because Rick is a philosopher at heart.

And we need philosophers, like Rick, in our Order - men and women who can step back and take a look at us and help us enjoy the perspective. Read Rick's submission to the DMC Newsletter, below, and you will see what I mean.

F - L - T

Dave Rosenberg
Deputy Grand Master

Why Us?

Those who look for a silver lining inside every cloud, there is one within our order: we still exist.

There are many now defunct fraternal groups whose members could testify that this alone is not an easy task. The question is why do we still exist? In my year as Grand Master, many members would say that it was our name Odd Fellows that chases prospective members away, that it is an old name which is no longer relevant, but I personally don't believe that's true. In fact, the sheer oddity of our name can give our order a type of attraction. Some lodges have even capitalized on our name by calling events "Odd-toberfest", "Odd Poetry", and other variants including the word "Odd". The point is by blaming the decline of our order on such a mundane thing as our name, we miss the larger issue. I believe that our order has ceased to be odd enough; we no longer are equal to our name. In fact, it's that very oddity that we should be trumpeting, not trying to subvert. In many of the lodges I visited I found most of the members quite ordinary, and clearly not odd, and surely not odd enough. In order for us to grow into our name, we should try to embrace all that is odd within our world. Why not? In fact, if you think about it, many of the oddest things we do lend our order its flavor - the cave degree comes to mind, an odd but beautiful tradition.



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Some say it's because many if not most of us are elderly, that we are complacent within our communities and just ordinary citizens. Nothing wrong with that of course, but a little complacency goes a long way, and gives the feel of a flat existence, unmarred by change or even emotional highs or lows. Many of our lodges can't cope with emotional outbursts of any type. Successful lodges often lend a sense of energy that failing lodges do not. While most lodges fail due to a lack of members, a lack of funds or both, some lodges can fail even though they have a fair amount of members. Why? Because the feel of the lodge is one of failure, or boredom, or what some modern philosophers call "Nada", and some even describe death as the "Nada of the Dark". Our Sovereign Grand Master, upon his last visit to our state quoted Carl Jung, and Carl Jung describes existence as sort of a "collective unconscious". Jung also said "The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed." So then, if we agree this to be true, we know that the emotional make-up of our lodges is dependent upon the interaction between our members. Flat existence begets more flat existence; excitement begets excitement. To expect excitement to grow out of flat existence is illogical. Flat existence more easily becomes "the Nada of the Dark".

I see our oddity being a mark of our ability to survive, so we need to nurture our own oddity. This does not mean I suggest eliminating such things as our ritual as I believe a framework is called for, but not a framework which is mind-numbing. Some lodge meetings are so tedious that it is amazing anyone attends. When one attends a meeting of such tedium it's not a surprise that they are failing. Try to inject some humor into your meetings, some fun, "laissez faire" (laissez-faire assumes that the individual who pursues his own desires contributes most successfully to society as a whole. The function of the state is to maintain order and avoid interfering with individual initiative) some "joie de vivre" (cheerful enjoyment of life; an exultation of spirit). My dad always used to say live a little. Why not? Have fun and perhaps by doing so, we may oddly enough gain new members!

In Friendship, Love, and Truth, Rick Boyles