



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

August 27, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

It's Sometimes Hard To Let Go.

Parents certainly experience this phenomenon. As children grow older, it's a fine line that parents tread in protecting the children from the world, while at the same time allowing the children to participate, learn and grow in the world. And, certainly, at some point, parents must "let go" and have the grace to allow the children to become independent in that world - to develop on their own, mistakes and all, as adults.

Well, what is true for parents is also true for a generation of leaders in our Lodges. At some point in time, the leaders of the last generation have to "let go" and allow a new generation of leaders to develop and to flourish. And it's sometimes hard for that last generation to let go the reins and allow that new generation to assume leadership in the Lodge. I have seen this failure to let go first hand in some Lodges - much to the detriment of the Lodge and the good fellowship within the Lodge. I have seen men and women who have led the Lodge for the past 20-plus years simply refuse to truly let go, and truly allow the younger members to become the new generation of leadership. This failure to let go can be terribly frustrating for the new members, and frankly, it can be very damaging to the Lodge. Those new members feel shut out of decision-making, and sometimes even feel resentful of the last generation. And it's quite short-sighted. No one lives forever, and inevitably the new generation must assume positions of leadership. But if the old leadership team refuses to develop that new generation, and refuses to let go of those reins of power, that new generation may not still be around. You can't expect new members to "wait their turn" for a decade or more.

Many members are important to a Lodge, but no member is indispensable to a Lodge. Just like the task of a Noble Grand is to develop candidates to become Noble Grand some day, it should be the task of every senior member of the Lodge to develop young member's skills and knowledge so that those younger members can assume positions of responsibility in the Lodge. It's really very selfish for members of the last generation to ignore the new generation of leaders, or worse, to refuse to empower that new generation. The welfare of the Order and the Lodge should come before any personal pride and personal titles.

When I first joined my own Lodge, it had less than 25 members on the books and was inactive. Within a short time after I joined, I assumed the position of Vice Grand, then Noble Grand. In the position of Noble Grand I changed the culture of our Lodge and moved us to become a strong, dynamic, large and growing Lodge. But I did not continue as "Noble Grand for Life". I



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worked on developing the future leaders of our Lodge, and then moved on. I did the same in our Encampment and our Canton. I assumed the positions of Chief Patriarch and Captain, respectively, changed the culture, attitude and direction of these branches, and then relinquished the leadership positions to the next generation. And the new leaders have done the same. I moved on, and so did they. It's healthy for the organization, and the results can be very satisfying for all concerned.

This is not to say the last generation of leaders should go sit on the proverbial Lodge rocking chair. Not at all. There are many, many options available to senior members of our Order. Those senior members can continue to serve in numerous positions in the Lodge such as Warden, Conductor, Right Supporter of the Noble Grand, and others. Those senior members can assume responsible committee positions in the Lodge, such as Membership or Good Fellowship. Those senior members can take responsibility to organize Lodge events. Further, they can advance at Grand Lodge or even Sovereign Grand Lodge. They can join and advance in the Encampment and the Cantons of our Order, or the Rebekah Lodge. Lots of options exist short of the pasture.

So, it may, indeed, be hard to let go, but the future of our Lodges depend on passing knowledge, responsibility, and leadership to the next generation. If we fail to do so, we have failed the future of our Order.

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Deputy Grand Master