



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

April 21, 2012

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

I received a big red flag in the mail the other day.

No, it wasn't actually a "big red flag". It was a letter from the Rebekah Assembly Finance Committee addressed to the President, Officers, Representatives and Members of the California Rebekah Assembly. I received it in my capacity as Secretary of my Rebekah Lodge. The underlying concern of the letter was the rather significant drop in membership of the Rebekahs. Membership had declined by 179 members in the first six months of 2011, and the committee was projecting that this trend would most likely continue for the last six months of the year. The immediate impact of this significant drop in membership is a budget which would be substantially negative (in other words, more money spent than money received). Because a negative budget is untenable, the committee was proposing three scenarios - all of which would increase per capita. And, of course it goes without saying that raising dues will undoubtedly have a further depressing effect on membership - higher dues will result in some members opting to withdraw.

But to me the underlying message is especially distressing. The California Rebekah Assembly assumes only 2,200 dues-paying members for budgeting purposes. If we further assume continued net losses of 200-300 members per year, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that the Rebekahs will be hard-pressed to survive as a unit within the next 10 years. And it may be even more dire than that. Assuming 2,200 dues-paying members, it's typical for organizations (not just our Order) that only half the membership is "active". How will the Rebekahs survive as a unit if the "active" membership, statewide, diminishes to just 800, or 500, or 200.

And the larger numbers don't tell the whole story. When an individual Lodge's membership drops below 15, that Lodge has difficulty filling offices, undertaking activities, and even the simple and basic act of making a quorum for meetings.

There is no silver bullet which can solve the problem of declining membership. But there is a way to combat it. While it's a wonderful thing to grow old together in a marriage, it is imperative in a Fraternal Order that Lodges continually bring in the next generation of members. Without the new generation, a Fraternal Order simply can't survive. And those new members have to do their part in bringing in more new members. That's the lifeblood of any Fraternal Order. But in the Odd Fellows and Rebekahs and in all our units - for the past two generations - we have lost more members each year than we have brought in. Clearly, that is not a sustainable path for us.



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For Odd Fellows Lodges, our "early warning system" is to look at what is happening with Patriarchs Militant, the Encampment, and the Rebekahs. In California today, I will be surprised if there are more than 100 active members of the Patriarchs Militant, or more than 250 active members of the Encampment. With rare exceptions, Cantons and Encampments are declining. But there is a solution.

We have to look at the handful of our units that are actually experiencing a net gain in membership. Yes, there are Encampments, Rebekah Lodges, and Odd Fellows Lodges which are growing. They are few and they are the exceptions. But if we don't look at these few and start to understand and appreciate what they are doing to buck the trend that 90% of the others' are experiencing, then we face continued decline. That is unacceptable to many of us. This great Fraternal Order has a history spanning some 300 years. Let's not let it decline during our watch!

F - L - T

Dave Rosenberg

Less than four weeks to go!

Our Second Annual DMC Dinner Meeting is coming up in just four weeks. We're going to have a great turnout and seats are going fast. Keep in mind that we are subsidizing only the first 100 who attend - so get your reservation check in soon. The dinner normally costs over \$18, but we are able to subsidize the first 100 due to donations made by generous members of DMC.

On Thursday, May 17, DMC will have its Second Annual Dinner Meeting during Grand Lodge Sessions. No-host cocktails begins at 5 p.m. and dinner commences at 6 p.m. - attire is comfortable and casual. The location is El Torito Mexican Restaurant & Cantina, which is less than a block away from the Grand Lodge Hotel, the Doubletree. El Torito is located at 1598 Arden Way, about a four-minute walk from the hotel. The entire dining room of the restaurant has been reserved for us! The dinner will feature El Torito's famous taco buffet with fresh handmade corn tortillas filled with grilled steak, chicken or carnitas, as well as cheese enchiladas, rice, re-fried beans, sweet corn cake, seasonal fresh fruit, guacamole, lettuce, cheese and fresh salsa. In addition, the dinner includes soft drinks, iced tea, coffee or lemonade, and flan for dessert. That's an amazing meal and at \$10 it's the best bargain during Grand Lodge Sessions. No one will leave hungry.



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As noted, DMC is offering the first 100 who reserve a special price of \$10 per person. After the first 100 (unless we receive additional donations), the charge will be the full \$18 for the dinner.

We invite Odd Fellows, Rebekahs, and their spouses and family members to this special dinner. We promise speeches will be brief and will be kept to a minimum. Speakers will include Rod Metoyer (Deputy Grand Master of California), Rick Boyles (Grand Warden of California), Don Smith (Past Sovereign Grand Master and Past Grand Master of California), and Dave Rosenberg (Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Odd Fellows Homes of California). Come out to enjoy a wonderful Mexican meal and a good time with your brothers, sisters, and friends. I promise you that the DMC Dinner will be a highlight of your Grand Lodge experience.

To reserve your place at the Second Annual DMC dinner please send your list of names of attendees and \$10 for each attendee (checks payable to "Dave Rosenberg") to the following address:

Dave Rosenberg
Davis Odd Fellows Lodge
415 Second Street
Davis CA 95616

Hope to hear from you very soon!