



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

November 18, 2012

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

I attended a local Rotary Club meeting the other morning, and the speaker, a Rotary District Governor, mentioned that Rotary has over 1.2 million members worldwide, in some 34,000 clubs, in over 200 countries. Rotary adds 100,000 members to its roster every year. The growth of Rotary is not so much in the USA, but rather in countries outside the United States, primarily in Asia. Clearly, Rotary International is the Big Kahuna of organizations. But then, the District Governor mentioned a statistic that truly got my attention: Rotary loses 112,000 members each year.

So, at bottom, while Rotary is huge, the numbers show a declining membership - more people leave the organization each year than join it.

Sound familiar? It should. A similar effect is happening in Odd Fellowship generally, and in our Order in California. Most recent statistics, from 2011, show that Odd Fellowship in California added 559 members in that year. That's a good thing! However, in that same year of 2011, Odd Fellowship in California lost 771 members. The net result is that in January 2011 we had 4,994 members in this State, but in December 2011 we had declined to 4,782 members. Additionally, and ominously, our Lodges in 2011 declined from 141 to 131. Interestingly, in 2011 the number of women who joined Odd Fellows Lodges exceeded the number of women who left those Lodges. It was in the population of male members that we saw our decline.

So, it would seem to me that our focus should not only be on bringing in new members, but also on retaining our existing members. Now, obviously, some loss of members - through death or serious illness - is involuntary. But other losses of membership are voluntary. Why do members of our Order not renew their membership. Is it because the financial burden? Is it the result of a personal, family situation? Did they just get too busy with family or work? Did they move out of the area? Is it because they have become disaffected with the Order? Is it because of personality conflicts with members of the Lodge?

We should know this information. Each Lodge should make an effort to survey its membership and determine the level of satisfaction. Even more importantly, each Lodge should make efforts to survey those members who leave voluntarily and try to figure out why they left? With our numbers (currently 4,429 dues-paying members) approaching a point where we will soon drop to



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under 4,000, every member is precious.

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