



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

March 13, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Following is an insightful article written by Grand Master Rick Boyles. A little introspection is in order for our Order. We can't just continue doing things with 10 people that 100 years ago we did with 1,000 people.

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Dave Rosenberg, Grand Warden

Sung to the tune of David Byrne's Stop Making Sense

If we all agree to show love and affection for each other, we need to take a look at the inner workings of our order. Of late, I have been discussing attendance issues with many influential members and it has become pretty clear that there are prevalent problems with many of the functions we have. Specifically, attendance at many events is dropping quickly. Not too long ago, receptions and other events were attended by hundreds of members. But now, most events are lucky if they garner 50 members. This is sad, but it is not necessarily indicative of the failure of our order, but rather indicative of the expense, and nature of today's world. As Grand Master, I am often invited to events, and attend as many as I can, but I find it sobering that upon arrival, I am often one of a dozen or so hardy individuals in attendance. And yet, I have found that we may actually record a negligible loss or even a slight increase of members for the first time in many years. So, how can we explain this phenomenon, the fact that membership is increasing and yet attendance to events is dropping? Is it really that hard to understand? Our Members are getting older, hotels cost at least \$100, gas often matches that, time is of the essence and many we honor we have honored previously or even repeatedly. We need to take a look at each event and ensure that we are not just becoming repetitive in everything we do.

Every year, our officers, each of them, in each arm of the order, receive a reception in their honor. This is a wonderful thing, and I certainly will always treasure my own. Yet, many have suggested that we need to start having more joint receptions. This year, two of my officers did this and it was very nice and did not lessen each officer's importance. The underlying issue was that it made those in attendance spend half as much on gas, and other assorted expenditures. In the future, I recommend more such events. Also, at these events, we need to free them up and not just "bring greetings". To be frank, this is terribly ponderous, and I have heard assorted members talk about how boring this has become, and those who are "bringing greetings" often



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have no idea who that they are honoring and this becomes pretty near farcical. We need to make common sense. If we bring greetings, we need to at least know whom we are greeting and why.

I have heard from a number of individuals regarding the dress codes. I personally abhor the tuxedo routine and I have heard now from at least 20 men who find it too confining, and probably won't attend such events. Generally, if you hear from 20, there are many who feel that way but won't vocalize their displeasure. One prominent member sent me a flyer for an event where tuxedos were required to attend pot luck! We both found this pretty ridiculous. Often times, we require the buying of flowers for our partners. If we do, please be specific and don't require it of everyone. One thing we seem to ignore is that while the main branch or branches of our order are given budgets within which they may operate the other branches are not and like it or not, those branches are diminishing quickly. We have to stop acting as if everyone in the order is John D. Rockefeller. Many of us are on fixed incomes, many of our lodges are in depressed areas, and still others are working full time or collecting welfare. It's time to act human and not robotic. If we want to grow we have to make sense in what we do. I think we can grow if we begin to realize that the world would join us if we would join the world. While the Robert's Code talks about the lodge as being a refuge from the turmoil of the outside world, it is referring to the hardship and the strife of the outside world, we should not be party to our own. We need to realize that all people want to be loved and honored for who they are, treated humanely, and respected for their unique personalities. To me, it almost seems contradictory to call ourselves Odd Fellows and yet carry on in the same old way as everyone else always has. Doesn't our name itself denote singularity? Shouldn't we each try to be unique and different? Let's try something new and not just do what our forefathers did 150 years ago. After all, our forefathers were unique in their time, so we should attempt to emulate that attitude in our own.

In Friendship, Love, and Truth, Rick Boyles, Grand Master.