



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

April 1, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

I'm pleased to forward to you the latest DMC article, written by our Grand Master Rick Boyles. Enjoy!

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Dave Rosenberg
Grand Warden

Thoughts from an Alternate Universe (i.e.: Why we Should Not Get New Members)

Recently, as the Dedicated Members for Change group grows there are a few disgruntled members not part of the DMC out there who basically don't want new members. One such angry member told me he wants new members but not "the type you or Dave Rosenberg would get". I'm not sure what this means, unless he means he only wants people who would walk in lockstep with him. But of course, this is realistically impossible. No two people think alike. I have disagreed with my friend Dave in the past, but we agree on the idea of membership 100%. I don't think it is morally right to recruit "yes men". The officers I picked in my year as Grand Master comprise a varied group and I did not seek to influence them at all in a political manner. The problem I see in the order is that we have made the recruiting of members a political subject and as long as we view it in this manner, our order will continue to languish in our own sad version of mediocrity. We need to be unafraid of new members. We really can't rely on 80 year old members to be around much longer. Modern day mortality rates would bear this out.

If you really don't want new members in your own lodge, don't get them, but don't be surprised if your lodge sooner or later closes. Lodge members who just want the status quo are doomed to become buried by it. No one anywhere can make you get new members, but in reality, the main reason to fear new members is change. Some lodges I have visited do everything they can to avoid getting new members: their building is closed all but about 1 hour every two weeks, and even then their doors are locked, their phone number unlisted, their lodge though in the middle of town bears no signage, and does not even contribute to their own community. When they have an event, it is in secrecy, sometimes even from some of their own members. Or, they demand so much of their own members that eventually their own members quit due to exhaustion or



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disgust. Some lodges have levels of members, where some of them are held in higher esteem than others; some trustee groups operate in total secrecy behind locked doors. There are ways in which we can improve that basically don't take much energy from each of us but show a willingness to grow. Here are a few examples I have seen:

1. Recently, traveling down highway 101, I saw a big billboard from an Elks Lodge advertising right on the highway. They actually listed some lodge events, so evidently were open to "outsiders" checking them out.
2. Some of the lodges I have attended have regular dinners for their members at little or no cost, and offer it free for prospective members. If your lodge does not, why not? What is wrong with inviting prospective members in? Most viable lodges have at least \$50,000 in savings, so if this is the case, spending \$200 to hopefully garner a new member or two is well worth it.
3. Peter Sellars and the Yerba Buena Lodge have a wonderful event entitled "A Day at the Races" which now attracts 400 people! This is where they go to Golden Gate Fields in the East Bay, and have lunch and watch the horse races. I have been to this twice and it is a great event! Events such as this should be emulated by all of us. If not, why not? Is it that old line, we don't want any of "those types of people"?!
4. The Sycamore Lodge in Hayward offers musical events that are open to their members. This is a fun event that actually attracts outsiders to listen to their talented members. I would be willing to bet that other lodges have some talented members as well.
5. The Fremont Lodge is currently sponsoring a chess club which has garnered one new member and has every chance of getting more members. Of course, the danger here is that chess players tend to have a certain level of intelligence which could be viewed as threatening at some lodges.
6. The Cupertino Lodge has members actively participating in bowling leagues. This makes their members closely knit (although my joke is that they don't want you if you are a poor bowler), but in fact, they maintain a consistent membership because there is something to attract them.
7. The Davis Lodge has many active committees which attract members specifically to be on certain committees, which in turn enlivens their lodge as a whole. But of course, the nay-sayers insist that these are "clubs" but the reality is that 150 years ago when lodges were formed they were club-like as well. The reason these seem exceptional now is because for many years lodges have had little or no substance (Gertrude Stein's statement: "there is no there there", is very appropriate). The point being that lodges fail mainly because they fail to have any substance.

In closing, if we want to grow, we need to make sure that our lodges exist for some reason, not just because we glorify friendship love and truth, but also because we offer some reason to have a gathering of happy individuals. Either we want new members or we don't; this is the only



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hurdle we need to clear. In fact, if friendship is our first word, why do so many of us live in fear of it?

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

Grand Warden