



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

May 2, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

This is the second in a series of three articles. I asked three questions to three progressive and proven leaders of this Order. This newsletter features the responses to these three questions from Peter Sellars. Brother Peter is the Chair of the Grand Lodge Membership Committee and also served this year as Grand Instructor. In addition he is Co-Chair of the Historical Committee and is the driving force in the renaissance and renovation of the historic San Francisco Lodge Hall. He has served as Grand Patriarch of California.

I think you will find Peter's answers both thoughtful and insightful.

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Dave Rosenberg
Grand Warden

What do you consider the greatest accomplishment this past year in your capacity as Grand Instructor? The re-establishing of communication lines between the districts' deputies and the Grand Instructor. As I did many years ago when I served as the Grand Instructor - when there were 44-plus deputies - I sent regular letters guiding the deputies with their duties; i.e. schools of instructions, visits, installation options, helpful code and Ritual passages which were to their advantage. The line of communication had been lacking for years and we have seen more confusion and disruption because someone was not passing along good advice or advice at all. Equally, the greatest accomplishment, was bringing back the Membership Educational Seminar at Santa Nella. This is one of the best things that ever happened for our membership, as it is inclusive of all members who wish to attend. It is a social setting where an exchange of information is shared by the instructors and the attendees. All of us learn from these gatherings and the various topics presented. It was a loss to the IOOF to see this disappear two years ago. Brothers Don Lang, Ron Carrey, and myself were reunited.

What do you consider the greatest accomplishment this year of the Grand Lodge Membership Committee? Without a doubt, it was the implementation of the Event Grant Program AND the



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total use of electronic communication between the committee members. The committee's make-up, with the exception of one member, was comprised of members from successful and progressive lodges. For the past 3 years, I have been the chairperson, we are finally narrowing in on our goals and advancing identifying our lodges' needs, where they can become successful. The committee has worked together for 3 years. Any plan takes time and understanding. We are hopeful the incoming Grand Master shall understand the importance of maintaining the committee's make-up, as success does not come overnight. To change it now, would mean to start all over. Again, being in the position of the Membership Chairman has afforded me an opportunity to bring new and updated methods of creating successful lodges. We are expanding at a slow rate, but that was expected. San Pablo Lodge #43 is a fine example of a lodge coming up from near disaster to success and many new members. This lodge has also followed the direction, which was been encouraged by Sovereign Grand Lodge, to establish strong community ties. The lodge is the center of attention now, with the creation of the Art Hub, open to the community. The Membership Committee supported this lodge with the event grant. Also, being the lead on Membership for the Grand Lodge Board, allowed the direction of our programs to come from one central person. This is important when we needed to evaluate grants in a timely manner, as we did.

3. What is your vision of Odd Fellowship in California over the next five years? This is the standard "Five-year-question.": First, I shall state, this is my opinion and that I was asked this question. That is a tough one to answer. It is not tough to answer, but difficult to tell my fellow members my opinion because they may be hurt or offended. Our Order is in a steep decline. Our lodges are closing at an alarming rate. I see the progressive lodges growing in numbers and successful, while the majority of lodges continue to collapse. That is where we will be in five years. The cause is not just "being a lodge where the population has declined" but it is the reluctance of our members, who are somehow entrenched in the belief our Rituals or Codes should never change. It is the reluctance of our members to tear down the barriers, which prevent people from joining our lodges. We still see lodges without women. We still see lodges without members of different heritages. We still have degree work using terms like, "black, brown, and yellow races" in its language. Using colors to describe different people is unacceptable. UNACCEPTABLE! Any person who has gone through the U.C. or C.S.U. system and has taken a minorities class, as required, knows that such terms are no longer considered proper. As long as our parent corporation resists change, we shall continue our decline. As our society has changed and evolved in many areas, we must change too. We change too slowly. Growth is still within our means, but change must first occur. This question should be: "How do we get Sovereign Grand Lodge or our recalcitrant membership to change?" It starts with electing open-minded members.



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In friendship, love and truth,

Peter Sellars