



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

July 7, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Perhaps no one knew Odd Fellowship better than George Hannaford. After all, Brother George served as Grand Treasurer of this jurisdiction from 1966 till his death in 2009 - a period of leadership spanning some 44 years. Recently, a Brother who knew George Hannaford quite well related to me a conversation he had had with George during his last years. George Hannaford said to the Brother, "Unless we change, in a few years only the San Francisco Lodges and the Davis Lodge will remain."

A long-established truism reads: "The past predicts the future." That being the case, Brothers and Sisters, what does the future of Odd Fellowship in California look like in ten years, say 2024?

It's not that hard to figure out - because the numbers of the past 60 years show us the trend. In 10 years, without changing the way we do business, here is a future scenario that we could see in California:

1. There will be less than 40 Odd Fellows Lodges in existence, and at least half of the remaining Lodges will be very close to having quorum problems.
2. There will be less than 15 Rebekah Lodges, and a majority of the remaining Lodges will be very close to quorum problems.
3. California will have only 3 or 4 Encampments. There will no longer be any functional LEA in existence.
4. California will have only 1 or 2 Cantons. There will no longer be any functional LAPM in existence.
5. Theta Rho and Junior Odd Fellows will be historical footnotes.

Is this the future of this Order in California? Without change, it is certainly possible. We know that there are at least 20 jurisdictions in the USA that have less than 200 members.

But in truth, I don't expect this scenario to occur for many reasons. For one thing, I fully expect there to be significant changes in the way we do business. Even the Sovereign Grand Lodge will be compelled to make changes to save the Order, because while California can continue to



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function (as the largest IOOF jurisdiction in the USA), other jurisdictions are in dire straits. So, I fully expect that SGL will implement significant changes for our Order, including but not limited to a revised and modernized ritual, a merger of our branches, a renewed emphasis on community visibility and community involvement.

The fraternal landscape of America is littered with the skeletons of orders that were once large and vibrant (e.g. Knights of Pythias, the Redmen, the Moose, etc.) that are now mere shadows of what they were a Century ago, or even 50 years ago. Without significant change in the way we do business, Odd Fellows will travel down the same road of obscurity.

Regrettably, some in our Order don't get that. They continue to operate as if we were the fraternal order of the 1920's. But in those days, we had hundreds attend our meetings and gatherings. Today, some Lodges can count their attending members on two hands - sometimes just one hand.

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Dave Rosenberg
Deputy Grand Master