



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

December 23, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Past Grand Master Rick Boyles has submitted the following thought-provoking article, just in time for the holidays.

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Dave Rosenberg
Deputy Grand Master

To Change or Not to Change - that is the Question...

Whether 'tis nobler just joking, to continue my Shakespearean appropriation. . . . Almost all members I have met of late feel that at least some change is needed, but what form of change? The sad thing is that often lodges finally decide change is needed when it has pretty much become too late. Lodges that have 5 or fewer members in attendance, often members of one family, are already dead lodges walking. The Lions' club near my lodge, conversely, is panicking because their lodge has fallen below 600 members! Do we really think 5 members makes up an adequate lodge structure? In reality, it is only the skeletal vestige of a lodge. We must change to include today. What does that mean? We must accept the simple fact that much has changed since 1850 and show the world that we realize that. One of the questions I generally hear from those outside our order is "do you guys wear funny hats?" Thank goodness we do not. The point is that the interested onlooker is asking such questions trying to ascertain whether or not we have climbed into today's world. In my year as Grand Master, I found that some lodges really have not advanced at all. To an outsider contemplating membership, it is not about charitable deeds (because they don't know of them), it is not about cash handling (also an internal issue), it is not about some sort of political disagreements within the order; it is quite simply the perception they get with their brief view in. Tom Peters, the management guru, coined the phrase "perception is all there is" meaning that first impressions by an interested onlooker may be all the attention one receives. If they perceive disharmony, distrust, hatred, or a general sense of malaise, they will shut off any further view of such things. A happy, outgoing lodge spawns members. This should be obvious.

So then, the question should arise as to how do we become a happy lodge? Simple, really, we must put our heads together within our individual lodges and see what makes us happy, not some



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external group or mentality. Different lodges have different interests. There is no worth in being a cookie cutter lodge. No two lodges are alike, and it can be our differences that attract. The problems within our order come from our expectations that everyone should behave in an identical manner. This will not and should not happen, and clearly our name proves this out. While the Declaration of Independence declares "All Men are Created Equal", which is a perfect statement, it does not translate to "All Men are Created Identical". If everything were identical where would the flavor and depth of life occur? No, it is our differences which are of most importance, our personalities. It could easily be proven that most conflict arises in the world out of someone's misguided need to have everyone else walk in lockstep. This must never happen to our order, but you can see the vestiges of that whenever you go into a troubled lodge, a few misinformed members squeezing the life's blood out of their own lodge by presuming that they know the only way to growth and happiness.

Then there are various statements and points of view which tend to be derogatory or negate another group or mentality within the order. Some members call lodges which attract members at a higher pace "clubs" as if this is a bad thing, the statement being that these are not "True Odd Fellows". I am still waiting their description of a "True Odd Fellow". Am I to understand that a "True Odd Fellow" is an octogenarian who reels off the ritual, eats a snack, spreads gossip and goes on home is a "True Odd Fellow" while someone who joined to be part of a shared interest promoted by the lodge is less of an Odd Fellow? Hardly, in fact, it could be easily proven that the more admirable Odd Fellow is the new member wanting to make a new path, not locked on the old path. A real Odd Fellow is a man or woman who sees the worth in all souls, who does not question humanity in general, who marvels at the world in total who loves mankind, who sees the joy in reality, who greets each new face with a look of love and joviality and can see the world as not a glass half full or half empty but rather with an all encompassing and complete and total rapture. Merry Christmas!

In Friendship, Love and Truth, Rick Boyles