

## IDEAS ON LODGE GROWTH

By Pete Sellars

Based on success and experience, it is my opinion that membership will increase if the lodge is performing certain tasks and/or functions.

Understanding that each lodge is unique, I have listed some of the very basics a lodge will need to do, if new and potential members will gravitate and enjoy the meetings.

Younger members seem to like meetings that begin earlier than 8:00 PM; they like being able to socialize a least an hour before the meetings; they enjoy light refreshments (pizza, sandwiches, Chinese food, beverages, etc); they like being able to read and look at all of the lodge's correspondence(s) before the meeting (remembering not to discuss business matters prior to the meeting).

A lodge will thrive and appear to be strong if it has a newsletter or news page. This should list the meeting dates and times, special events on a local and state level, the lodge officers, new members names, and a small paragraph or two on history of the Order.

Attendance prizes are fun and enjoyed by all of the members. Spend a few dollars and purchase several \$1.00 lottery tickets and give them to winners who have their names or tickets drawn.

Ask Grand Lodge officers to visit your lodge. Visits are a way to connect to the Grand Lodge – and sometimes ask questions.

Take a night off from your lodge meeting and visit another local lodge as a lodge. This is fun. This establishes relationships and affords your members to see how other lodges handle their meetings. You would be surprised.

Follow the Ritual very closely when conducting lodge business. Try to know your charges by memory; it is impressive to new members. They learn integrity by watching you take pride in your lodge.

It is important that new members attain or obtain their degrees (Initiatory, First, Second, and Third). By investing their time in obtaining these degrees, they will more than likely come to meetings.

Join a historical society!

IF YOU HAVE OLD ITEMS THAT ARE PUT AWAY IN YOUR CLOSET, IN A BOX, IN A BASEMENT, IN AN ATTIC, OR STORED, THEN, INSTEAD OF HIDING IT AWAY AND LETTING IT DETERIORATE, DONATE OR LOAN IT TO YOUR LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY. THEY CAN PRESERVE YOUR HISTORY BETTER THAN YOU CAN.

JOIN A CHAMBER OF COMMERCE. JUST A LISTING OF YOUR ODD FELLOWS NAME, PLACES YOUR LODGE IN THE MINDS OF THOSE WHO READ THE LISTINGS.

SET UP AN INFORMATION BOOTH AT A LOCAL FAIR OR FESTIVAL; WE HAVE SEVERAL DIFFERENT KINDS OF BROCHURES ON OUR ORDER'S ACTIVITIES. PUT A BOWL WRAPPED CANDY ON THE SAME TABLE FOR PEOPLE TO ENJOY. PURCHASE A BANNER THAT READS "INDEPENDENT ORDER OF ODD FELLOWS (AND REBEKAHS) AND SET UP AT THE BOOTH. IT IS ALL ABOUT VISIBILITY NOT GETTING MEMBERS.

Know the history of your lodge. Have a handout about the history of your specific lodge. Where was the lodge originally located? Who were the charter members? Were some of these members important figureheads in the town at one time? Any special events that the lodge enjoyed or participated in years ago? Write a one or two page history page of your lodge.

If you think your local paper would print something about your lodge, write it for everyone to read.

Make a small donation to a local charity – and/or volunteer time as a lodge.

There are promotional events that are allowable by law (IRS); these should be called Membership Promotional events. All corporations, non-profit or not, are allowed to advertise. Sponsor a local youth sports team with your lodge's name and logo on the t-shirts (soccer, football, basketball, bowling, etc.). The costs vary.

You could do additional events, provided your lodge has the proper and adequate insurance. For example, take all of your members to Yreka, California for their degrees or just to watch or help in the degree work. The Cave Degree is fun.

There are so many things a lodge needs to do before new and potential members will come and come again, but most are easy and relatively inexpensive. A lodge should attempt and strive to do all of the above.

# **ONCE A LODGE HAS ALL OF THE IDEAS IN PLACE – OR NEAR TO HAVING IT IN PLACE...**

## BRINGING IN A NEW MEMBER

There is a technique with bringing new members into a lodge. It involves a very honest approach.

First, the sponsor should know how to explain the name of the odd fellows. Then, what the Odd Fellows “do” (on a national level state level, and local level (your lodge). Remember, local level things include the booth at the festival, the donations to other charities, the historical society membership, the history, chamber of commerce. **You see it now: Your lodge has created a fantastic conversation when speaking to new and potential members.**

You must be able to answer the questions that these applicants will ask.

(Please keep plenty of applications with you. It takes about five of these to bring in just one member)

(There are also contemporary history books that have been written and can help you learn more about how and when the Order sprouted up in California)

**This is the most important thing to remember:** Listen to the interests of your applicant. Tell him or her that the lodge would look into including his or her interests in the activities of the lodge. For example, an applicant may enjoy fishing. Tell the applicant that the lodge would enjoy a get-a-way day of fishing and that he could start that event. There are so many things of interest (that can be done) that it is surprising more lodges do not take advantage of these things.

Personally, I have brought in over 200 members over the course of the past 10 years because of being honest and listening to new members.

Do not set racial, gender, and age barriers! If an applicant meets the qualifications for membership set forth in our code, then encourage that person to join your lodge.

## **APPLICATION PROCEDURE**

Once an applicant has filled out the application and the sponsor has signed his or her name, the application should be given to the secretary along with the required amount of dues and degree fees.

The sponsor should help find the three references so they this section will be signed too.

Before the application may be read under the proper order of business during the meeting, the fees must accompany the application.

Once the application is read by the secretary and the paid fees have been verified, the Noble Grand will appoint two members to the Interviewing Committee, and then ask the Vice Grand to appoint one more member to this committee. (Note: The sponsor and the references may not be on the Interviewing Committee)

At the next meeting the Interviewing Committee should report its findings and **opinion as to the character of the applicant** – that the applicant meets the eligibility requirements within our code. Either the committee will recommend this applicant to become a member or not.

Once the report of the Interviewing Committee has been given, the members will use the information of the application and the Interviewing Committee to help them decide how to ballot. A ballot box will be prepared and the applicant shall be balloted upon. **ONLY THE BALLOT BOX MAY ACCEPT OR REJECT THE APPLICANT.**

Most of the time the ballot is favorable. If the ballot is not favorable, the applicant and sponsor may apply after a prescribed time (six months). A majority of the balls or cubes will be needed to decide if an applicant is accepted or rejected.

**USE THE BALLOT BOX! THIS IS REQUIRED BY THE RITUAL. IT IS EASY AND FAST IF DONE REGULARLY AND EVERYONE IS FAMILIAR WITH THE PROCEDURE.**

**WELCOME YOUR NEW MEMBER(S)!**

