

A

Anniversary – Organized Odd Fellowship emerged from Eighteenth Century England, and traveled to the United States in the early Nineteenth Century. On April 2, 1819, Thomas Wildey, John R.B. Welch, Richard Rushworthy, John Duncan and John Cheatham met at the Seven Stars Inn in Baltimore, Maryland, and Odd Fellowship in America was born. On April 2, 2019, Odd Fellowship in the United States will celebrate its 200th birthday.

Admonishments – Founded in the Eighteenth Century as a “friendly society” (a group formed for the mutual self-help of its members), Odd Fellowship developed ancient admonishments including: “visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead and educate the orphan.”

B

Bylaws – Every Odd Fellows Lodge has a set of Bylaws, approved by the Grand Lodge of the jurisdiction. The Bylaws govern the conduct and proceedings of the Lodge, but must conform to the rules and regulations of the Odd Fellows Ritual, Code of General Laws and the Roberts Code of California Odd Fellows Laws.

C

Creed – Odd Fellows believe in the universal brotherhood of Man and the fatherhood of God. Odd Fellowship is non-partisan, non-sectarian, and welcoming of all people without regard to religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, and national origin.

Committees – Many Lodges conduct much of their work through Lodge Committees such as the Finance Committee, By-laws Committee, Good Fellowship Committee, Community Support Committee, and others.

Character – A goal of Odd Fellowship is to “elevate the character of Man.” In the daily exercise of friendship, love and truth, Odd Fellows strive to make a better world.

Conductor – The conductor is an officer of the Lodge, appointed by the noble grand. The main charge of the conductor is to receive candidates for initiation when they enter the Lodge room, and to perform all duties assigned in conferring degrees.

California – Along with the Gold Rush, Odd Fellowship came to California. On September 9, 1849, one year to the day before California became the 31st State of the United States, California Lodge #1 was chartered in San Francisco.

D

Degrees – Once a member is initiated into the Lodge, he/she is said to hold the Initiatory Degree.

As an initiated member, he/she has all rights and privileges of the Lodge, including the right to vote. The initiated member cannot hold office in the Lodge until he/she holds the other three degrees of the Lodge. The three degrees are the Degrees of Friendship, Love and Truth.

Dues – Dues are collected annually from each regular member of the Lodge. A portion may be retained by the Lodge, and portions of the dues are shared with the Grand Lodge of the jurisdiction as well as the Sovereign Grand Lodge.

E

Encampment – Odd Fellow Lodge members who have earned all three degrees in their Lodge may seek to join an Encampment. Members of the Encampment are known as Patriarchs. Each Encampment also confers three degrees – the degrees of Faith, Hope and Charity – and has a full slate of officers, just like the Odd Fellows Lodge.

F

Financial Secretary – The financial secretary is an elected officer of the Lodge charged with correctly keeping the accounts between the Lodge and members, receiving all monies due to the Lodge and working with the secretary and treasurer to properly maintain the books.

Flag – The United States flag is honored in every Lodge and is an important part of the Lodge ceremony and ritual.

Friendship – The first degree of Odd Fellowship is known as the Degree of Friendship. It is represented by one of the three links – the link on the left.

G

Grand Lodge – The Lodges in a jurisdiction are part of a “Grand Lodge”. In California, the Grand Lodge convenes once each year for four or five days and governs Odd Fellowship in the jurisdiction, with a Board of Directors conducting the affairs of the Grand Lodge in the interim. Delegates at Grand Lodge elect that Board, as well as the Officers of the Grand Lodge: the Grand Master, the Deputy Grand Master, the Grand Warden, the Grand Secretary and the Grand Treasurer.

Guardians – The Lodge has an inside guardian and an outside guardian, appointed by the noble grand, to guard the doors leading into the Lodge meetings, to ensure that only qualified Lodge members enter.

Good Fellowship – Part of the joy and reward of belonging to a fraternal order is the good fellowship that comes with membership in the Lodge. Different Lodges engage in a wide variety of social and fellowship activities for the members including dinners, trips, wine tasting, beer making, and the like. Odd Fellows Lodge can provide a social network for members.

H

Homes – The California Grand Lodge opened a home for aging members in Thermalito, Butte County, in 1895. Today, the Odd Fellows Home of California Board of Directors operates two outstanding retirement communities: The Saratoga Retirement Community and The Meadows of Napa Valley, serving Odd Fellows, Rebekahs, and members of the general public. Odd Fellowship was the first organization to establish homes for senior members and for children in 1771 in Pennsylvania.

Hall – Many Odd Fellows Lodges own and operate their own Lodge Halls (sometimes also called Temples). Often, these Halls are owned in conjunction with a local Rebekah Lodge. Typically, the Lodge Hall is managed and maintained by a Hall Board, composed of Lodge members. Small towns throughout Northern California contain historic Odd Fellows Lodge Halls.

I

Independent Order of Odd Fellows – The Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) is a fraternal order with a long history. At a time when other fraternal orders were forming in England to help themselves, the Odd Fellows formed in part to help others who were less fortunate. They were called “odd fellows” because they helped members of society who needed their help. Community service is part of the history of this Order.

Initiation – An applicant for membership to a Lodge must be voted on by the existing members in a secret ballot. If the applicant receives an affirmative vote, and pays dues and the initiation fee, the Lodge will initiate the applicant in a secret ceremony and the applicant will be a member of the Lodge holding the Initiatory Degree.

Initials – The Order uses initials to designate offices and past offices. For example, the Noble Grand is identified as NG, the Vice Grand as VG, the Right Supporter of the Noble Grand is RSNG. A Past Grand of a Lodge is identified as PG, the Past Grand Master is PGM, and the Past Sovereign Grand Master is PSGM.

Installation – Once each year, the Lodge will install its newly elected officers. Typically, officers are nominated in October, elected in November, and installed in January. Elected Lodge officers are the Noble Grand, Vice Grand, Secretary, Treasurer and Financial Secretary.

J

Jewels – Odd Fellowship provides a plethora of “jewels” which are badges reflecting service and achievement in the Order.

K

Knowledge – Every member of the Order is expected to gain knowledge from participation in the Initiation. Further, by attaining the First, Second and Third Degrees, members increase their knowledge about their fraternity and about themselves.

L

Love – The second degree of Odd Fellowship is the Degree of Love. This degree is represented by the link in the center of the three links symbol of the Order.

Links – Odd Fellowship is often called “the three-links fraternity” based on the symbol of the order – the three intertwined links standing for “friendship, love and truth”.

M

Membership – Membership in a Lodge can be either regular or associate. Every member must be a regular member of one Lodge, but may be an associate member of more than one Lodge. To survive and flourish in the 21st Century, every member of Odd Fellows must seek out and bring new members to the Order.

N

Noble Grand – The “president” of each Odd Fellows Lodge is called “Noble Grand”. Other elected officers are Vice Grand, Secretary, Treasurer and Financial Secretary. Each Lodge also has a number of appointed officers, including Warden, Conductor, Chaplain, Inside Guardian, Outside Guardian, Supporters of the Noble Grand and Vice Grand, Scene Supporters, Musician and Color Bearer.

O

Odd Fellowship – A member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows is referred to as an Odd Fellow. Because this is a fraternal order, members may refer to each other as Brothers and Sisters.

Odd Fellows – No one knows, for sure, how the name “Odd Fellows” came into being. Some have speculated that it was due to the fact that the original members spent a fair amount of time helping others, which was an odd thing to do in early fraternities, hence they were called “those odd fellows”.

P

Past Grand – After a Noble Grand has served his/her term, that officer is known as “Past Grand”. Past Grands can be appointed to the position of District Deputy Grand Master, and can be delegates to the Grand Lodge.

Patriarchs Militant – Those Odd Fellows who have earned all three degrees in their lodges, and who joined an Encampment and earned all three degrees in that encampment, are eligible to join the Patriarchs Militant. This is the uniformed branch of Odd Fellowship.

Q

Quorum – The traditional number of Odd Fellows required to conduct business at a meeting is five.

Quality – More than the quantity of our members, it's the quality of our members and the good works that are done by Odd Fellows Lodges that distinguish this Order.

R

Rebekah – Odd Fellows were the first fraternal order to admit women. Schuyler Colfax, Vice President of the United States and an Odd Fellow, is credited with the proposal to create the Rebekahs. In the middle of the 1800's, Rebekah Lodges were formed to be "sister" lodges to Odd Fellows Lodges. The distinctions have lessened since Odd Fellows Lodge membership has long been open to women, and Rebekah Lodge membership has long been open to men. The Odd Fellows Grand Lodge of California and the Rebekah Assembly of California jointly operate a Children's Home in Gilroy, California, and a Youth Camp in Tuolumne County, California.

Ritual and Regalia – Harkening back almost 200 years, Odd Fellowship has developed a ritual including rites of initiation, a secret grip and secret passwords. The officers and members of the Lodge wear regalia during closed, ritual meetings. It's part of what makes Odd Fellows a fraternal order.

S

Sovereign Grand Lodge – The Sovereign Grand Lodge is made up of Grand Lodges throughout the world, including Independent Grand Lodges in Europe and Australasia. The officers are the Sovereign Grand Master, the Sovereign Deputy Grand Master, the Sovereign Grand Warden, the Sovereign Grand Secretary and the Sovereign Grand Treasurer.

Secretary – The secretary is an elected officer of the Lodge, charged with keeping accurate records of the transactions of the Lodge.

Service – Service to the community is an important part of the work done by Odd Fellows Lodges. Different Lodges have undertaken support functions of varying kinds – helping senior citizens, hosting fundraising dinners for charitable groups, bingo for the community, mentoring children, and the like.

T

Treasurer – The treasurer is an elected officer of the Lodge, in charge of all the funds of the Lodge. The treasurer pays on all orders drawn by the noble grand, attested by the secretary, and keeps accurate accounts of the Lodge finances.

Truth – The Degree of Truth is the third degree of Odd Fellowship. It is represented in the three links symbol of the Order as the link on the right.

U

Universal Justice – Odd Fellows believe in universal precepts such as friendship, love and truth, and working to elevate the character of Man. The motto of the Patriarchs Militant, a uniformed unit of Odd Fellowship, is Universal Justice. At the height of its popularity before World War I, it was common to see hundreds of Chevaliers in uniform participating in community parades. During the 1915 session of the Sovereign Grand Lodge meeting in California that year, over 10,000 Chevaliers marched in a parade observing the session in California.

United Nations Pilgrimage for Youth – Under the auspices of Odd Fellowship, the Order arranges for interested young people to travel to the UN each year.

United Kingdom – This is the place where Odd Fellowship began. Odd Fellows Lodges started as “friendly societies” in the 1700’s.

V

Veterans – The Odd Fellows and Rebekahs of California, desiring to honor veterans, donated a quarter million dollars to the State of California to construct an Occupational Therapy Building at the Veteran’s Home in Yountville.

Vice Grand – The number two elected officer in the Lodge is the Vice Grand. The main job of the Vice Grand is to support the Noble Grand, and fill in when the Noble Grand is absent. Often the Vice Grand is next in line to serve as Noble Grand of a Lodge, so service as Vice Grand is an important training period.

W

Willey – Thomas Willey is recognized as the person who brought Odd Fellowship from England to the United States. The very first Lodge was established in Baltimore in 1819, and then Odd Fellows Lodges spread like wildfire across the United States, particularly in the 1800's.

Warden – One of the key appointed offices in the Lodge is the Warden. This officer is charged to ensure that all persons attending closed, ritual meetings of the Lodge are members of the Lodge holding the appropriate degree. The Warden is also charged with the care and safekeeping of the regalia.

Websites – Many Lodges have individual websites such as davislodge.org. The Grand Lodge of California website can be found at www.caioof.org. The Sovereign Grand Lodge website is www.ioof.org.

X

Excellence – Odd Fellowship provides a number of checks and balances within the rules of the Order to ensure excellence in record-keeping of minutes and bookkeeping of funds. Each Lodge has a Secretary, a Treasurer, a Financial Secretary and a Finance Committee to ensure that the rules are followed.

Y

Youth Camp – The California Odd Fellows and Rebekahs own and operate a Youth Camp near Yosemite. Children and grandchildren of members and the general public can participate in a week-long summer camp, and greatly reduced rates.

You – An organization is only as good as its members. Every member – and that means YOU – has got to find his or her niche in the Order. Every member has got to find his or her way to contribute to the improvement of the Lodge and the fraternity.

Z

Zest – With sufficient “zeal” and “zest” there is nothing that Odd Fellows can't achieve.

By Dave Rosenberg, PG, and Don Smith, PSGM