



## Letters, Ideas & Thoughts

### *New Life for the Old Lodges*

- by *Steve Oliff*

In 2001, with only 3 active members, and a total membership of about 8, Garcia Lodge 240 was faced with extinction. The average age of the brothers was about 65, with a 35-year-old balancing out the 70-plus club. If the lodge did not get new members, it would have to close and sell the building. Sound familiar? Garcia Lodge 240 now boasts 36 members, has an active degree program, is working to preserve fraternal history, and is becoming a real force in its community. Situated on the California coast about 125 miles north of San Francisco in the town of Point Arena (pop. 475), it is defying the odds and thriving.

How is that possible? I am glad you asked.

Two main factors made the amazing growth of our lodge possible. First, we have one man who works harder than anyone at promoting Odd Fellowship. He organized a "Save-the-Lodge" initiation drive that brought in 13 new members at once. (It was one of the largest mass initiations in the last 35 years in Northern California.) Out of those initiated (of which I am one) we found a core group who are actually willing to work, and believe the lodge can help our small community.

The second factor is that Point Arena is unique in that it is a cross-generational town. People of all ages communicate and interact here, which does not happen much in larger cities. Age and economic strata tend to separate people. Here, since none of us are particularly rich, that is not an issue, and since it's small, we get to know each other.

Brian Riehl, our energetic organizer is 30, I'm 49, Ben Berlanger is 24, our patron, John Ferreira is a young 97, and our youngest member, although currently not active, is 19. We have since recruited members from their twenties to their late fifties. We all get along with a true sense of Fellowship. The elder members are seeing ritual and pageantry that they have not seen in years, and the new members are getting to enjoy the symbolism as it was originally intended to be experienced. The exchange of ideas and energy is good for all of the brothers individually, and for the lodge in general.

All the older lodges need to reach out to younger men and women to survive. In order to make Odd Fellowship appealing, it must be made relevant to younger people. It has to excite their imagination and their sense of purpose. Admittedly, the generation gap sometimes feels as if it has widened into a generation chasm, but it really has not.

Friendship, Love and Truth never really goes out of style!

### *50 YEAR JEWEL PRESENTED*

OXNARD – Mrs. Leola Cleek was honored at a luncheon held by the Fleur de Lys Rebekah Lodge #252 where she is an Associate member. The luncheon was held at the Temple on May 8, 2003. Mrs. Cleek was initiated in Bishop, CA in 1953. She received her 25 year jewel in 1978 and transferred to Bakersfield #47 in 1982. Willa DeLay was proud to present Mrs. Cleek with her 50 year jewel. Members present included Ester Flennikan, Ruth Cox, Barbara Hutchanso and Jacqueline Pugh. It was a fun filled afternoon for Leola, who was surrounded by her many friends!

### *WHEN THANK YOU IS NOT ENOUGH...*

GILROY – Each year at the Rebekah Assembly, College Scholarships for \$1,000 are awarded to two deserving students. This year's recipients were Jamie McCleary of Rohnert Park and Courtney Mason of Merced.

Both recipients sent Margareut Oleson, Secretary for the Rebekah Assembly of California a gracious thank you note and each asked that their thanks be conveyed to as many members of the Rebekah Organization as possible. Both Jamie and Courtney wished to let everyone know just how profoundly this scholarship means to each of them and how it is so much more than just financial relief. Each recipient indicated that this award has not only influenced their lives but has really helped to shape their future!

### *A Big Thank You...*

To all my friends and Order related family, I want to say a great big thank you for all your love and support in electing me into the office of Rebekah Assembly President for 2003-2004. Without your love and support, I would not be able to accomplish the task set before me.

To all who have given their time, effort, money, gifts, please consider this a special thank you to one and all. Worker Bees, you look lovely out there in your rose and black tops with black skirts. Very stunning.

Your attendance and support at my installation, as well as my reception, are greatly appreciated. I look forward to a productive and positive year with all of your team work.

Rowena Whitney  
PRA

*Success -  
Is not the position in which  
you stand, but the direction in  
which you look.*

- unknown