

GRAND COMMANDERY AND ICEBERGS?

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Good morning everyone, my name is Jack Harper, and I am the Grand Junior Warden of the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas. On behalf of our Right Eminent Grand Commander, H. David Moore, I extend a warm (note the emphasis on warm, with the word iceberg in the title of this paper) and friendly Texas welcome to each of you.

I look forward to speaking to you this morning about some of the challenges that a Grand Commandery faces as it relates to effectively dealing with change. These fields will encompass its past history, its current status, and what the future might hold.

Now, about the title of this paper, “Grand Commandery and Icebergs?” you might be wondering what is the relationship between a Grand Commandery and an iceberg? Well, I must say that would be a very good question indeed, and one I will begin to answer for you. I would like to ask for a show of hands first. Has anyone here this morning read the book, “Our Iceberg is Melting” by John Kotter and Heger Rathgeber, if so, please raise your hand. Okay, thank you. This book is an amazing book that focuses on organizational change; what are the events that can lead to change, what happens during change, what can be done to properly handle change. The book utilizes a fable of penguins in Antarctica to help relate the authors’ concepts, and it is the primary tool I will use today for relating my message. What I will do is summarize the fable, then describe what is happening in our Grand Commanderies today, and then relate how the concepts contained within the fable are applicable to our very own Grand Commanderies. Finally, I will outline some suggestions as to how we can learn from the concepts in this book to effect proper organizational change within our Grand Commandery (or Grand Chapter, Council, Blue Lodge, etc.).

Now, let us begin. The setting for “Our Iceberg is Melting” is a colony of 268 Emperor Penguins near Cape Washington, Antarctica. The penguins had resided in this perfect setting for a very, very long time, and had never had any real issues, except the kinds of issues that families might encounter. Let me introduce the characters in the story for you. They are Fred, Alice, Louis, NoNo, Buddy, and Jordan, aka, the Professor.

Fred is a well thought of penguin, but usually considered “different” than the others. While he is a good husband and father, he did not socialize much, as he was both curious and observant. Thus, he would spend his time looking at things that interested him, and then taking notes on his observations.

Alice: Alice is a member of the 10 person strong Leadership Council, who is tough, practical, and has a reputation for getting things done.

Louis: Louis is the leader of the Leadership Council, and the Head Penguin of the colony. He is known as being wise, fair, and is very well respected by the colony.

NoNo: NoNo is an older bird, and member of the Leadership Council who is responsible for weather forecasting, and perhaps his attitude as evidenced by his name.

Buddy: Buddy is a quiet and boyishly handsome penguin that everyone likes. He is not necessarily known for his intellect, yet everyone always likes him, and believes what he has to say; he is a great speaker because of his ability to empathize and relate.

Jordan, aka “The Professor”: The Professor is a member of the Leadership Council, and the true intellectual of the Council as well as the entire colony. He could speak and espouse theories for hours on various topics and subjects, yet is well respected (Kotter and Rathbeger, pp. 6-47).

As I begin to summarize the fable, I ask you to consider the characters I have just discussed, and think about if your Grand Commandery has someone similar. Which of these characters would be helpful? Which character would be a hindrance? Which character are you?

For quite some time, Fred had been studying and observing many things, including the iceberg that the penguin colony lived on. During his swims, he noticed that there were large cracks and fissures as a result of melting, including a rather large one that was only accessible from the ocean, and underneath the iceberg. His concern was that when water would get into these open spaces, it could then freeze, and then because it would freeze, it would expand. And, once expanded, it could then cause the entire iceberg to be broken into many pieces. This greatly concerned him, and he truly believed something should be done. He knew, however, that many other penguins before him had tried to bring up certain serious issues, and sometimes their ideas were discounted, and the penguins themselves ridiculed. He did not want this to happen, but believed so strongly in his convictions, that he knew he needed to bring this to the attention of the colony so that a change could be made. He decided to approach Alice, as he knew she was someone who had a tendency for getting things done, and that most people would listen to her. Fred knew that if she would believe him, then he might have a chance. So, he approached Alice, and then after showing her the cracks, he was able to convince her. Alice in turn, knew she needed to get the attention of the Leadership Council, and have Fred make a presentation to them. Some were interested in what she had to say, some were somewhat interested, and some did not care at all. However, after much persuasion, she was able to convince Louis, the Head Penguin to allow Fred to make a presentation to them (Kotter and Rathbeger, pp. 6-22).

Fred realized that everyone on the Leadership Council was different; each had their own separate qualities, characteristics, likes, and dislikes. So, he visited with other penguins to learn more specifics about each of the Leadership Council members. He learned that some loved statistics, some loved to debate, some slept during presentations, some did not understand so they always nodded their heads, some only like to tell, and not be told what to do (Kotter and Rathbeger, pp. 22-23).

He finally decided the best way to get their attention was to provide both an overview, and an example that he could use as an analogy. Fred related the entire story about what his

observations were, what they meant, and that he had shown Alice. Alice then picked up the story and urged the rest of the Leadership Council to take action as she had seen firsthand the cracks, and knew that something needed to be done, and done now. At this point, NoNo inserted himself into the discussion. He pointed out that the iceberg had always been here, survived all the storms, and would always be fine. He argued that Fred was such a junior penguin that there was no way he could know all of this, and that there was no way Fred could be 100% sure that the cracks would break the entire iceberg. As the tide began to turn towards NoNo's way of thinking, Alice reminded everyone that it was their duty as the leaders of the colony to protect everyone. How would that play out if something bad did happen, and the leaders of the colony knew about it, and did not act? (Kotter and Rathbeger, pp. 26-33).

Several penguins thought nothing should be done, some thought a committee should be formed, however, Alice asked that a General Assembly be held, and that all penguins of the colony should be informed and asked for input. As you can imagine, great consternation was had concerning a General Assembly (most thought it would be political suicide). Fred asked to be able to prove his point to the Leadership Council and if successful, would they allow a General Assembly to be held. He was able to prove his point by filling a glass bottle with water, putting a stopper in the hole, and then allowing the bottle to remain outside overnight. If the bottle cracked (from the expanding ice), then the penguins would call a General Assembly; if the bottle did not crack, then there would be no need to call for the General Assembly. The next morning, upon inspection, it was found that the bottle was indeed cracked. At the General Assembly, Alice, Fred, and Buddy all spoke, discussing what they had seen and the steps they had taken to validate Fred's theory. Finally, Louis stated that he believed that something should be done immediately, and that they would work on a solution; although one was not known yet (Kotter and Rathbeger, pp. 40-43).

The next morning, Louis, realizing that he could not handle all of this by himself, held a meeting and created a team. The team consisted of himself, Alice, the Professor, Fred, and Buddy. He asked the group to perform a task, but the group failed. However, the Professor realized that the reason why they failed was because they acted as individuals and not as a team. Louis then had the penguins go squid hunting. At first they again failed, but then as they got used to everyone's skills and talents, they succeeded in getting a squid. The point was that by working in concert with one another, and playing to each other's strengths, while recognizing weaknesses, it is possible for teams to accomplish a great many things; especially if compared with individual efforts (Kotter and Rathbeger, pp. 46-55).

After the team was formed, they began searching for solutions. They also listened to possible solutions from other penguins that were not on the Leadership Council. After much advice (some good, some not so good), it was finally decided to do as Fred had originally done: to carefully observe their surroundings, and take note of what they had found; then decide on a plan. While walking around they came across a seagull, which was very surprising to the penguins that a seagull would be in Antarctica. They spoke with the seagull, and discovered that

he was a scout for his seagull colony, and that he was constantly on the lookout for suitable places to live for short periods of time. He would only look for places that would be good for the colony, by having plentiful food and shelter. The penguins realized that perhaps they too could become nomads. This was discovered by Alice who said, "I can almost see how we might live. We'd learn to move around. We wouldn't stay in one place forever. We wouldn't try to fix melting icebergs. **We would just face up to the fact that what sustains us cannot go on forever** (emphasis added) (Kotter and Rathbeger, p. 67). So, as can be heard, that is a very powerful statement that while I will come back to it later, I want to repeat it again: "...We would just face up to the fact that what sustains us cannot go on forever" (Kotter and Rathbeger P. 67). The penguins believed that the nomadic existence would be the route they would need to take; thus, they had their vision (Kotter and Rathbeger, pp. 58-69).

Now that they had their vision, Louis realized that he needed to get the message out to the entire colony. So another General Assembly was called. Louis had tried to think of the best way to get the message across, and his team tried to help. The Professor created a 97 page Power Point presentation; however, Buddy said he got lost in the presentation.....on slide #2. At this juncture, Louis as the Head Penguin boldly addressed the colony, and set the stage for what their vision would be. At that point in time, he turned things over to Buddy, who had a masterful way with words. Buddy was able to convince nearly the entire colony of the merits of the plan (NoNo did not agree however). After Buddy was done speaking, Louis closed the meeting with these words: "This iceberg is not who we *are*, It is only where we now *live*" (Kotter and Rathbeger, p.77). All the penguins then began to make preparations towards how they would move except NoNo; he had other plans (Kotter and Rathbeger, pp. 72-77).

At this point, there was a great many penguins working towards getting the message out about moving. But, issues began to arise. NoNo told everyone what a big, colossal mistake a move was, others began to wonder how would they scout for future locations, and who would be a scout? Also, the kindergarten teacher began telling the young penguins about the dangers of whales, and they might get eaten during the move. Finally, how would they all have enough food? This was an issue because heretofore, it was custom that penguins only got food for their own family, not for anyone else outside their family; thus it would be insulting to gather food for another penguin. Louis as the leader was able to step in and quell these issues. He had Buddy talk to the kindergarten teacher and get her to be more comfortable; he assigned the Professor to NoNo, who got so tired of the facts and figures that the Professor would always be discussing that he just got so fed up he wanted to be alone. And, a young penguin was able to solve the food issue by having a gathering called Heroes Day, with the price of admission to be 2 fish each for attendance (Kotter and Rathbeger, pp. 79-97; 103).

Louis then assigned a group of scouts to go out and find a new iceberg for them to live on. This was to be a long, dangerous, and arduous journey. NoNo worked hours and hours, for days on end to predict that none of the scouts would come back; and that all was for naught. As it came closer to the time for the scouts to return, Heroes Day was set to be for the same day. Much to

NoNo's surprise, all scouts were able to return; some were battered and bruised, but they all made it. With their return, NoNo was rendered virtually nonexistent. The scouts returned to a hero's welcome, with fish that had been charged as admission, and presented with medals. They stated that they had found several potential icebergs that they could inhabit. Louis then sent out another party of scouts, who were able to narrow the choices down to just one. The Professor then scouted the island, and declared it perfect! The penguins then ended up moving their entire colony to this new iceberg. The move was not easy, and there was a great deal of adjustment for everyone, and it was traumatic for many. However, as the year went on, everyone was able to survive, and truly prospered in their new environment. The surprising thing is, is that the colony continued to send out scouts, and even though they had only been in this location for one year, they found an even better iceberg, and chose to move again. This second move was much easier than the first, and accomplished in an easier, less stressful manner. As time continued to pass on, the colony remained successful. It did this by continuing to live a nomadic lifestyle of constant change; never staying in one place too long. During this time, these changes were embraced by many, and still refuted by a few (Kotter and Rathbeger, pp. 100-122).

Truly, "Our Iceberg is Melting" is an extremely powerful fable that has much to teach us. At the core of the fable is an 8 step process for successful change:

1. Create a sense of urgency: Help others see the need for change and the importance of acting immediately.
2. Pull together the guiding team: Make sure there is a powerful group guiding the change- one with leadership skills, credibility, communications ability, authority, analytical skills, and a sense of urgency.
3. Develop the change vision and strategy: Clarify how the future will be different from the past, and how you can make that future a reality.
4. Communicate for understanding and buy in: Make sure as many others as possible understand and accept the vision and the strategy.
5. Empower others to act: Remove as many barriers as possible so that those who want to make the vision a reality can do so.
6. Produce short term wins: Create some visible, unambiguous successes as soon as possible.
7. Don't let up: Press harder and faster after the first successes. Be relentless with initiating change after change until the vision is a reality.
8. Create a new culture: Hold on to the new ways of behaving, and make sure they succeed, until they become strong enough to replace old traditions (Kotter and Rathbeger pp. 130-131).

Now let us discuss what is happening in our Grand Commanderies today. To begin with, we are probably having some of the best Templar education ever. The Grand Encampment has done a superb job at increasing Templar awareness and education among all the Sir Knights within its jurisdiction. Furthermore, there has been renewed interest in Templary due to popular culture such as from the National Treasure movies, Rosslyn Chapel, and all other documentaries currently making the rounds on cable/satellite channels. Despite all this, in Texas, for example, we have been in a membership decline for quite some time (since 1961). At one point we were nearly 30,000 Sir Knights strong, and now we are right around 9,000 Sir Knights. We have lost the majority of our members due to deaths, but also suspensions for non-payment of dues, and probably some due to lack of interest. While we are receiving fine new Sir Knights, we are not creating enough to compensate for the ones we are losing due to the aforementioned reasons; and this has been the case for years. I ask you Sir Knights and Companions, is our iceberg melting? Are we letting our iceberg that we are on define who we are? Or, are we treating things as just the place where we now live?

How many of you were able to recognize Fred, Buddy, Alice, the Professor, NoNo, or Louis within your own Commandery, or Chapter/Council? I asked the rhetorical question earlier of which character were you? We must ask ourselves, what we are doing to be a part of the solution, rather than continue to dwell on the past. Do we believe that our iceberg is melting? If so, what are we doing to solve the problem? Have we called a General Assembly to discuss and ask for input? Have we assembled a diverse team to come up with solutions?

Sir Knights and Companions, the first thing we must do when we return home is to remember the lesson of the penguins, and create a sense of urgency. We need to get with others who are of the same opinion, and do our best to try and effect change. We must have a sense of urgency as to how much longer can we sustain ourselves by remaining on the same melting iceberg?

We must pull together a guiding team comprised of individuals with different skill sets, yet each strong and complimentary in their own way. The Grand Commandery of Texas created a Long Range Planning Committee (I know, a committee), 3 years ago under Grand Commander W. David Melear, and has been carried forward by Grand Commanders Paul Wunsche and H. David Moore. The committee was tasked with: 1. How do we stabilize and grow membership, 2. How do we stabilize and grow Grand Commandery finances, 3. Should we change the way we conduct inspections, and 4. To create a mission statement. This committee is composed of Sir Knights from each of the 9 Commandery Districts in Texas. The average age of the members of this committee is under 50. This committee was later asked to examine each and every policy, custom, tradition, etc. that we do, and to leave "no stone unturned." Granted, as we are subservient to the Grand Encampment, we realize that we adhere to those specific items, yet, there are nevertheless issues in Texas that are under our purview. We have developed our mission statement, and are currently working on our strategy, as well as to how we will do our communicating for effective buy in. Obviously it will be done at our Grand Conclave, but in what manner would it be the most effective? Our new mission statement is: "To bring additional

light to all Masons, by fostering an environment that promotes leadership, self-improvement, discovery, and education in our Masonic and Christian values.”

We have already been empowered to act, but it is important that we still continue this mantra; especially as it relates to the “Fred’s” in our Commanderies. We need to ensure that any and all ideas are studied and analyzed, and that nothing is outright disregarded. After listening to the penguin story, it seemed so logical what the penguins should do to preserve their existence, yet they had not thought of it; they would have just kept their heads in the ice, and pretended that things were okay, or that someone “smarter” than they were must be thinking and analyzing such things. Producing short term wins is very important, especially as it relates to finances. Past Grand Commander of Texas, Paul Wunsche helped bring a Permanent Endowment Fund campaign to Texas. It provides for the issuance of a very beautiful jewel that can have diamonds added to it; and be legal to wear on the uniform. This has been very successful, and is doing a fantastic job at bringing money in to the Grand Commandery of Texas. We have also now instituted a registration fee for Grand Conclave to assist in recovering associated costs. Membership is an issue we are still working on. Again, we are getting some great new Sir Knights, but we are first dependent upon them becoming Masons, and then York Rite Masons; thus this is an issue we are still dealing with. Perhaps the most difficult step is to not let up. Also, it can be difficult to sustain momentum, especially if it seems as if it is the same Sir Knights every time doing all the work. That is why it is important to have short term wins. For example, one can ask the popular question, “How do you eat an elephant?” The answer is with many small bites. We all need to realize that we need to have a sense of urgency to make change, but to remember that it takes successive steps to make change.

Sir Knights and Companions, I truly believe that many of us are residing on icebergs; whether it is professionally, personally, or Masonically. It could be our Lodge, Chapter, Council, or Commandery, but one of them is probably today on an iceberg. Have we listened to our “Fred” and heard what he is telling us, or are we listening to our “NoNo’s”? Have we sent out scouts to look for other icebergs that are more stable, and suitable for our existence? In the case of the penguins, it is fairly easy to predict what their future would have been without leaving their iceberg. Granted, like Fred, we could not be 100% sure of the time, date, or place where their iceberg would fail, but fail it would. And, once it failed, it would completely break up into millions of pieces and fall into the ocean. One is unsure of how many penguins would survive or not. What we do know is that their lives would be forever changed, and changed in a reactive manner.

Today, we have the ability to proactively effect change. Granted, our icebergs might be melting, but they have not completely melted yet. We might be listing to port or starboard, but our iceberg has not wholly collapsed or capsized into the ocean. Texas is not ready for our iceberg to melt. We have brought together a strong team that is working together in unity to develop a guiding change and vision strategy. Is your Grand Commandery doing the same?

I would like to close with the immortal words of both Louis and Alice: the iceberg is not who we are, it is only where we now live. And, have we faced up to the fact that what sustains us cannot go on forever? Are we willing to make a change?

Thank You!

REFERENCES

Kotter, John and Holger Rathgeber. "Our Iceberg is Melting." 2005. St. Martins Press, New York, NY.