

The Eagles Have Flown

by Phillip W. Weiss

The Grand Order of the Golden Eagle is an ancient fraternal organization consisting of men who fancy themselves spiritual eagles, a species of bird which they revere as the embodiment of everything that is good, glorious and holy. But one of their nests, Eagles Nest Number 203, founded in 1928, was in deep trouble. They didn't know how to reverse their dwindling membership and if this trend continued, the Nest could become extinct. The past Senior Bald Eagles remembered the good old days when the Nest was crammed with fellow birds. There was always a long line of fledglings waiting to earn their feathers. But in recent years, the Nest had hit on hard times. No matter how much they tried, they couldn't find enough new fledglings to replace all the birds who had flown the coop. One old timer Senior Bald Eagle, highly respected in the Nest, speculated that the membership was dwindling because of the shortage of candidates who are worthy for admission to the nest.

"We want to make good birds better but there simply aren't enough good birds out there and we just can't admit any bird. After all, we must maintain our high standards upon which our nest is founded," this wise and learned Senior Bald Eagle said with conviction.

Another learned Senior Bald Eagle, who had formerly served as the Supreme Bald Eagle for two hundred nests located in seventeen jurisdictions

known as Territorial Realms, suggested that the Nest needed to replace the worn-out jewels and furniture that made the Nest seem shabby. He explained, “When I first entered this Nest, everything was sparkling and shining. It was something to be proud of. Unfortunately, and sadly, this is no longer the case. So, I propose that we contract with a reliable cleaning service, for instance the cleaning company owned by my brother-in-law who himself is a member of this Nest but unfortunately could not attend this meeting tonight, to give our Nest a thorough scrubbing and make it look as good as new because, and I’m certain you’ll agree with me on this, appearances do matter.”

Then another learned Senior Bald Eagle, who had recently been awarded the prestigious Soaring Eagle Award for his years of service to the Nest, having guided the Nest while the bird flu raged causing the fledglings to avoid the Nest like the plague, suggested, his voice quivering with emotion, that an ignorant and corrupt world was to blame for driving away worthy birds.

“The Nest is a victim of a sustained effort by malicious heathens to discredit and destroy us,” he said as tears of self-righteous anger welled up in his eyes. The other Senior Bald Eagles nodded their heads in agreement. They too had the unpleasant experience of being on the receiving end of pointed comments from the unenlightened who questioned and even laughed at the pomposity and ridiculousness of a bunch of men who gather behind closed doors, give each other fancy titles, and come off like a bunch of snobs while admiring birds which, although wonderful creatures, are not known to possess the largest brains or intellects.

This discussion continued for hours. Bird after bird, all eager to display their oratorical skills known in the Nest as chirpings, came forward to express their concerns and offer ways to attract more fledglings. One suggested that they should move the Nest to a better location. Another proposed that they convert the Nest into a combination gambling casino and bingo parlor. Another suggested that the Nest form a glee club called The Tweepers to attract new fledglings through song. Each suggestion was received with joy by the Senior Bald Eagles who carefully monitored and recorded the proceedings.

Finally, the last speaker took the floor. He was the Eagle First Class or EFC, the bird who was the head of the Nest. The members of the Nest had elected him to be their leader. He took his responsibilities seriously and had promised to act in good faith to promote the interests of the Nest. He cleared his throat and said, "My fellow birds, after being elected as Eagle First Class for this Nest, it became apparent to me that this Nest has a lot of problems that has placed the future of our Nest at risk. Our ritual work is shoddy, half of our fellow birds have failed pay their membership dues, the nest has failed to pay several outstanding bills, several birds are doing work for other nests, our messaging to the public is poor, that is, the public sees us as elitist and hostile to women and we seem to have strayed away from the lofty principles upon which our Nest is founded. I am determined to act promptly and decisively to resolve all these problems but to succeed I will need your support and cooperation. Only by working together can we save our Nest." The Senior Bald Eagles received these comments with stone cold silence. They had installed this Eagle First Class with the understanding that

he would do their bidding since it was they, Senior Bald Eagles, who knew what was best for the Nest. Chagrined and with a growing feeling of alarm, one of the Senior Bad Eagles leaned over to the other two Senior Bald Eagles and whispered, "Who the bleep does he think he is, trying to make us look bad." Out loud, the Senior Bald Eagle suggested that due to the lateness of the hour, the Eagle First Class should suspend his comments to a later date. The EFC paused for a moment and then ruled the suggestion out of order and continued.

"To set our Nest on the right track, I hereby order the following: one, that we immediately convene a committee to improve the quality of our ritual work; two, that the senior Eagle in charge of collecting dues act promptly to ensure that all members in arrears pay their dues in full; third, that we initiate a study on ways to streamline the process of admitting new fledglings into our Nest; four, that we revise the basic qualifications for becoming a fledgling; five, that we seriously consider allowing hens to play a more active role in the activities of the Nest; six, that the Eagle in charge of collections and disbursement provide a detailed report on the financial condition of the Nest; seven, that all birds who want to provide services for other Nests first discuss their intentions with me; and eight; that the Nest initiate an advertising campaign to attract new fledglings. My fellow birds, I am confident that by faithfully implementing the program I have set forth, our Nest will survive and grow in strength and numbers."

The next day, the Senior Bald Eagles requested an emergency meeting with the EFC. At this meeting, they told the EFC that while they had the highest respect for him, it is vital that before he acted, he clear it with them first so that

he may benefit from their wisdom as he governs the Nest. The EFC pointed out that while he valued their input and would seek it as needed, nevertheless according to the Nest's bylaws, it is he and not they who was in charge of the nest and that he would decide when to go to them for counsel and that his decisions, once made, were final. Nothing more was discussed. The meeting was adjourned and afterwards they all went to a local eatery for food and refreshments. Next day, he sent the Senior Bald Eagles a message thanking them for bringing their concerns to his attention and assuring them of his commitment to lead the Nest in a responsible manner.

Five days later, the EFC received a summons from the Grand Eagle of the Northeast to appear at the Grand Eagle's office. He appeared as ordered. In the office were the three Senior Bald Eagles who in the presence of the Grand Eagle served the EFC with a bill of charges. The charges accused the EFC of dictatorial conduct, conduct unbecoming a bird, sacrilege against tradition, ritualistic profanity, and wanton deceit, each bringing dishonor and disharmony to the Nest and disgrace to the office of Eagle First Class.

The EFC was surprised. He said, "I thought all of this was settled," One of the Senior Bald Eagles said, "Nothing was settled. Apparently you did not take seriously the request we made to you. Let me get right to the point. You want to use your office to destroy the Nest and we won't let you do that."

Shocked, the EFC replied, "My fellow eagles, there must be some kind of misunderstanding here."

“No misunderstanding,” another Senior Bald Eagle asserted. “You want to transform the Nest into something unrecognizable and terrible.”

“No, I don’t,” replied the EFC. “I want to make the Nest stronger and the only way I can do that is by making certain changes in the way we operate. To do this, I’m going to need your help. So, are you willing to help me?”

“Not unless you first agree to accept our guidance,” said the Senior Bald Eagle who was the recipient of the Soaring Eagle Award.

The EFC was taken aback. He thought to himself, “These guys are crazy,” and then said to the Senior Bald Eagles, “I respect you guys but I’m the bird who was elected to mind the Nest which is exactly what I intend to do. I will not perform as a skill for you or for anybody.”

“Then we will have to act to remove you from office,” said one of the Senior Bald Eagles in a voice that quivered with indignation.

“What does that mean?” the EFC asked, his anger beginning to rise.

“You’ll find out,” the Senior Bald Eagles warned. “So, we need to know whether you will cooperate.”

“I’ll let you know soon,” said the EFC.

The meeting was adjourned. This time they did not gather afterwards for a meal. They had thrown down the gauntlet and it was up to the EFC to respond.

The following day, the EFC resigned his office and left the Nest. That was the last they heard from the EFC. In the meantime, the Nest continued to debate on ways to save itself, but now leaderless, nothing was done. Attendance continued to decline, dues continued to go unpaid, and ritual work continued to

be deferred. Soon scheduled meetings were canceled and eventually even the Senior Bald Eagles stopped showing up. Bills went unpaid. Finally, the Grand Eagles Nest declared the Nest Number 203 insolvent, dissolved its assets, such as they were, and then published a notice informing that the Eagles of Nest Number 203 had flown away and that their Nest was no more.