



Connecticut State Grange

P. O. Box 1393, Glastonbury, CT 06033 • (860) 633-7550 • www.ctstategrange.org

State Master's Address **118th Annual Session • October 24, 2002**

To the Officers and Members of the Connecticut State Grange:

We are at a great turning point in the Grange. Statistically, the Grange is dying; we must face the harsh reality; we must resuscitate our organization before it is no more!

I stated last year that we must be receptive to change! Brothers and Sisters, the Action Grange program is working! The Granges have gone for a second three day Seminar where they receive inspiration, share successes and failures, and plan for the future! North Stonington and Ekonk Granges have enthusiasm, confidence and commitment. Enthusiasm is the driving force behind new ideas. Confidence allows the exploration of new ideas. Commitment is the guide to great achievement! They have all three!

The Seminars are costly to the individual Granges. The National Grange urged every State Grange to endorse the Action Grange program and assist those Granges in their States financially with costs incurred. I was extremely pleased that Connecticut did for last year, I hope partial reimbursement will be forthcoming this year as well.

Brother William Sanborn was selected from the Deputy force to inspect the Action Granges. He received copies of their ritualistic and other changes prior to Inspection. He was highly impressed with both Granges and the changes they have made. Many other Grangers have visited these Granges, either for interest or curiosity; most have been duly impressed.

Both Granges have taken in several new members. The Junior Grange is positively thriving as a result of the changes through the parent Grange "Action" process. Children adapt readily to change; we should take a lesson from these children!

The Granges represent the future direction our Grange will have to take to endure! They took a chance; they saw a vision, THEY AIMED FOR THE STARS!

PINK SASHES

"May your labors be pleasant, and your duties faithfully performed, to the satisfaction of all working under you."

I cannot thank enough those fine Brothers and Sisters who agreed to be on my team four years ago and have remained steadfast and true throughout my term. You did your jobs very well! Thank you!!

OFFICERS

"Placing confidence in you, that you will seek to add honor to your positions by correct department, your companions have selected you as their leaders..." (Installation/Installing Officer)

I thank those fifteen officers who served with me for the past four years; well done.

I strongly feel that the ascension tradition in Connecticut should be eliminated. We are one of a small handful of states that elect a Gatekeeper and sixteen years later he is elected Master. Because of this tradition, we have lost and will continue to lose extremely capable people, who could move this organization ahead and have enthusiasm.

I feel we should also change our election process. There are many ways to shorten election time. We could have a nominating committee, we could have interested candidates present written resumes, we could have ballots sent into local Granges prior to election— all of these are already being done successfully in other states.

I recommend that the State Executive Committee be authorized to change our existing election process and bring their proposals before the delegate body next year for your endorsement. In the length of time our present election process takes place, we could have worthwhile workshops, motivational speakers or other activities to benefit delegates and our local Granges.

SECRETARY

"The records of this Grange will be held as a memento of your labors long after the recording hand has crumbled into dust."

Marion W. Beecher and I have spoken several times a week, sometimes several times a day throughout the past four years; we have worked together through good times, difficult situations, questions that needed answering, sad times, stressful "opportunities," times of emergency and need. She has always been there. Thank you, Marion.

She is currently working towards a complete list of Fourth Degree members from every Subordinate Grange, which she will then have someone place on a computer disk to be updated annually.

LECTURER

"They are honest, faithful to their pledge, and diligent in their work." (Second Degree Assistant Steward)

Sister Edith Schoell continues to serve us with fidelity. You see her visiting around our state, assisting wherever she can, Installing, presenting programs; she is a model Granger.

I hope you have had the opportunity to visit East Central Pomona's hall in Glastonbury. The historic Grange displays arranged by Sister Edith are outstanding; she periodically makes changes; she wears two hats well; serving us extremely diligently as State Historian. My hat is off to you, Edith!

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

"...events occurring that we do not understand, and often encountering difficulties and obstructions in our way; but we should press forward..."

The Executive Committee has met monthly. They have handled necessary business in the best interests of the Connecticut State Grange in a proficient manner.

Of chief concern this year have been member benefits and to that end they have been meeting with Bankers Life and American Income Life.

It has been a pleasure to work with these dedicated leaders for the past four years.

DEPUTIES

"...should work be assigned you, labor with diligence." (First Degree Steward)

A finer, more dedicated group of men and women are not to be found than the outstanding Deputy Force that has served with me these past four years!

General Deputy, Jody Cameron, has indeed been a powerful leader of this group; order has been maintained throughout

the state sessions and degrees , and everything has run like clockwork. I will always remember the responsibilities you undertook, the superior performance of your duties and the gift of your friendship! Thank you.

LEGISLATIVE

"...Whatsoever you attempt to do, strive to do it well." (First Degree Master)

Brother Gordon Gibson was my choice as a Legislative Director four years ago. Under his tutelage, the State Grange is held in extreme high regard at our State Capitol. He is frequently called upon to lend his expertise or speak on a subject questioned. He has led a fine team of men in addition to serving as Deputy of North Central Pomona. Brother Gibson has attended the Legislative Fly-In. He has led workshops there and is now well-known in Washington, D.C.

In addition, Gordon is prominent in the Working Lands Alliance in Connecticut. He is highly respected in this rather new alliance.

Finally, Gordon has assisted numerous Subordinate and Pomona Granges by helping them draft resolutions, answering questions, offering encouragement or doing a program.

Our State Grange is highly visible, well-known and respected in Hartford. This is in large part to the efforts of our Legislative Committee. Thank you, Gordon and committee!

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES

"Remember the high position assigned to womanhood and sustain it with dignity and grace." (First Degree Lecturer)

"Angels." This has been the State CWA symbol and truly, Sister Jane Miller and committee are angels!

You all know Sister Jane. She always has a warm smile, a fine demeanor and an encouraging word. She truly is a wonderful lady and a dear friend.

Many times throughout my tenure she has headed and organized refreshments for state functions; this in addition to her other committee responsibilities.

Connecticut's CWA rallied together under Sister Miller and her team and held their contests. They even organized with the other New England states for a New England competition, which was on display at the Big E. This judging was under the capable leadership of Connecticut's own, Betty Jane Gardiner. You just beat these ladies for determination and pride in their work.

Webster has several definitions for "Angel." One fits each CWA member to a "T," "a kindly woman."

Thank you, Sister Jane, and committee for your outstanding dedication and service.

AGRICULTURE

"Since God placed man on Earth, agriculture existed. There is no occupation that precedes it, no order or association that can rank with the tillers of the soil." (Installation of Officers/Installing Officer)

Agriculture is a difficult occupation, demanding of a farmers' time, testing his skills. The loss of the Northeast Dairy Compact made this an exceptionally difficult year for dairy farmers. I attended a gathering with Ann Veneman, Secretary of Agriculture from Washington in August. She said some financial payment for milk would be forthcoming; for many it will be too late.

Water also plays a major role in the lives of farmers. This has been a difficult year for market gardeners, among others. The quality and quantity of vegetable and flower exhibits at Fairs have been down, lawns have turned brown, many cornfields looked like fields of pineapple and net yields were down at harvesttime.

The midwest grain farmers are in distress. Lack of a good crop sends grain prices up. Farmers here will (and are already) paying more for grain they must purchase to feed their animals.

Farmers are tough, they have to be to survive. Farm families are dedicated, hard-working Americans. I read in a county newsletter that stress is high among farmers. As a farmer, I know that stress is part of my daily life; we persevere.

It was my pleasure and honor to be asked to serve on the State Commissioner of Agriculture's committee for the first annual Agricultural "Distinguished Service Award." The State Grange submitted the name of Sister Norma O'Leary. She has a long list of agricultural credits and is a member and Agricultural Chairman of Quinnatisset Grange No. 65. Names were submitted by the Experiment Station, Farm Bureau, Farm Service Agency, State Grange, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the FFA. We met and selected Sydney Mintz, a farmer from the Middletown area. She received her award at the Ag Expo in Hartford earlier this month. She was also asked to be a guest at our Pre-Session Banquet.

This was an opportunity for the State Grange to participate in a unique statewide project with many other prominent state agricultural agencies.

Special thanks to those who hosted and arranged this year's Ag Day at the Capitol. Sue and I were unable to attend, although Sue baked the 45 dozen peanut butter cookies distributed and assisted in preparing the exhibit at home. I was home, recuperating from hip replacement surgery.

Thanks to Brother Gil Lassen and his committee for their work over the past four years. Many deserving agricultural achievers have received recognition at our pre-session banquets!

YOUTH

"Especially urge the young and diffident to become writers, readers and speakers in Grange meetings." (Installing Officer to Lecturer)

Bonnie Deojay deserves congratulations, praise and applause for her untiring efforts these past four years in the support of Youth programs and the youth!

She again was named Youth Director of the Nation, well deserved. CONNECTICUT REMAINS NUMBER ONE!!!

There have been numerous changes in the youth program on the National level. MANY of today's pink, green and blue sashes benefited or are still benefiting from experiences within the youth program and the opportunities afforded at the Youth Activities Days that were an important part of the National Convention. I would like to see a resolution reinstating programs for young couples and return the age of "youth" to where it was. The opportunities of the National youth experience are endless. In addition to the chance for travel, youth can meet other youth from around the nation and forge lifelong friendships, learn leadership skills and come home bursting with renewed Grange enthusiasm! As a family organization, we need this!

As a parent to a 23 year old, I know she was devastated when the "youth" age at National changed from 35 to 19; this hard working Granger, our Community Youth Director can no longer participate in youth programs beyond the New England level because she is too old! While this is a personal testimony, I know the story is the same in many families. We must let National Grange know our feelings on the Youth program changes before it is too late and we lose our enthusiastic young people, many of whom feel like the proverbial rug has been pulled out from under them! It truly would be tragic to lose this important part of our membership; they are the future of the organization and must not be ignored!

Allyson Malo will represent us in Oregon at National as our Youth Representative; she will experience the opportunity of a lifetime. Best wishes, Allyson!

David Carter will also be at National. I received word in late September that he was one of 4 winners of the John Trimble Youth Legislative Experience and will be participating in the Legislative aspect of the session. Congratulations, David.

Bonnie and her entire Youth Team have been superb to say the least; magnificent job!

JUNIORS

“As Husbandmen and Matrons look with earnest solicitude upon children and their welfare; and remember that they are to follow in our footsteps and occupy our positions.” (Fourth Degree Overseer)

We must listen and learn from our children and grandchildren. They are like sponges as they soak up knowledge daily and have abilities beyond our belief.

The Action Grange Program has enhanced North Stonington and Ekonk Junior Granges; the children have increased enthusiasm for Grange.

Debbie Barnes, Junior Director, has worked very hard these past four years. She had headed up a booth at the Fair, encouraged Talent entries and created contests for participation.

I cannot thank those dedicated Junior Leaders enough for their devotion, service and caring for our future Grange leaders and the Junior Deputies for their guidance and instruction.

We have only four Junior Granges in Connecticut: Winchester, Beacon Valley and the two previously mentioned.

I would like to see more Junior Granges started. America's children could greatly benefit from the wholesome, family values we have to offer. We should also open our doors to Foster Children in our communities, making for them a special place to feel welcome.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

“Good deeds are ever fruitful of yet more good” (Second Degree Lecturer)

One of the highlights of National last November was hearing the name of Totoket Grange in Connecticut named among the top five for Community Service! They donated books to their local schools, the inner city schools in New Haven and arranged for a nationally-known illustrator to come into the schools and talk!

We have all been inspired by the projects undertaken and the good that has been accomplished by Grangers who care!

Last December, it was my pleasure to ride on the Candy Cane Express. This is a special train ride with Santa for terminally ill children and their families. This was the dream turned into reality by Geoffrey Beard and his wife from Indian River Grange. The children were an inspiration; happiness prevailed that day. This is truly community service.

Each community has its own individuality, its own needs. It is up to each Grange to search out that need and fill the niche.

I am always awestruck by the hundreds of thousands of hours Connecticut's Grangers donate as they help their fellow man. We must make sure we let the community know we are there, we are making a difference; we are Grangers and we welcome them to join us!

Special thanks to Phil and Maureen Prelli for ably heading the Community Service effort for the State Grange for the past four years; well done!

CONNECTICUT GRANGER

“Note down the new and useful ideas that come to you that they be not lost; for new ideas are the material with which progress is made.” (First Degree Overseer)

This is my last Master's Address and every year I have stated how important I feel the Connecticut Granger publication is and what an outstanding communication tool it is. I hate repeating, but in this case it is essential! We need better communication! This is clearly an avenue we must pursue.

Thanks to Todd Gelineau, staff and volunteers for a job well done!

MEMBERSHIP

“So welcome to the Grange, as its doors of friendship swing side to receive you into its membership.” (First Degree Master)

I was so proud of the response to my request that you come to Cheshire and listen to Ed Luttrell, National Leadership/ Membership Director. True to my word, every Grange represented had 200 points added to their Honor Grange score and happily, 64 Granges were represented. Brother Luttrell and I were both very pleased!

The Action Granges are adding new members through a modified initiation process and use of the “Welcoming Ceremony.” Several Granges have called upon the State Obligation Teams to assist them in bringing in new members. We have four in Connecticut; Marvin Wilbur - Quinnett No. 65; Donald Beard - Indian River No. 73, Cindy Anderson - North Stonington No. 138 and M. Ross Stands - Old Lyme No. 162. Please call one of these good Grangers if you have candidates and are unable to confer the degrees; we do not want to lose potential Grangers!

Jeffrey Barnes and his committee are working for you and the Grange in trying to build membership. Thanks, Jeff and team!

PUBLICITY

“I exhibit to you now a memorandum book, a knife and a pencil.” (First Degree Overseer)

A major key to success is advertising! We must let the public know what we are doing, when we are doing it, who we are, where we are and how and why they should JOIN GRANGE!

Today, we can communicate easily through web sites, faxes and e-mail in addition to newspapers, magazines, posters, newsletters and “snail mail.”

Carl Bernhardt and his committee continue to “Lead the Way” as they urge you to be leaders in your community and get your information out to the public!

DEAF

“The buried seed wakes to life...” (First Degree Master)

When a deaf child learns to communicate, he literally wakes to life! The Grange in Connecticut is truly blessed with Cindy Charbonneau’s dedication to the deaf, her outstanding reports in our Granger, the packets she created for each Grange and her visitations to the American School for the Deaf. Thanks, Cindy!

CONSUMER SAFETY & ECOLOGY

“You will guide those consigned to your charge over the fields, and guard their minds and hearts from misconceptions, and their feet from stumbling.”

This year, Sue Addison and her committee stressed recycling in their contests and projects. Recycling is re-using items in another way, in like manner, our Grange is being recycled.

I would like to see a resolution this session regarding the safety of America’s children. Any person who jeopardizes the safety of a child should suffer the maximum penalty the law allows. Too many innocent children are permanently scared or murdered; this must end!

Sue has always done her job well and with a smile. People like her make my job easier!

CAMP MAUD ISBELL BERGER

"Look with earnest solicitude upon children and their welfare." (Fourth Degree Overseer)

Camp Maud Isbell Berger is a delightful spot, nestled among stately trees on Park Pond in Winchester Center. This offers reasonable rates for summer camping and its opportunities for children. Thanks to Bud Beecher, the Trustees, the volunteers and those who operate the Camp.

CODE READING

"The ceremony you are about to witness is to introduce you to the Ritualism of the Grange." (First Degree Master)

When you think about "The Code Book," think about the history of our organization. The American Indians passed on their heritage through signs, codes and stories; this is also how the slaves saved their history for generations. The Code Book represents our sacred "roots." Every active Granger, anyone in this room is capable of learning, reading and passing on our "code." We have extremely qualified teachers (Mildred Bell, Gertrude Prelli, Carlton Platt and Marvin Wilbur). Please contact one of them, learn from them, take the test and be proud to receive your reward.

CREDIT UNION

"...the funds safely secured and ready for needed payments." (Installation of Treasurer)

Our Credit Union remains alive and well! We have toll free access to Bernie and Dora McQueeney five mornings a week. They oversee daily operations from their office in the Patrons Mutual Insurance Company in Glastonbury. Call them for information.

STUDENT LOAN & SCHOLARSHIP TRUSTEES

"Before they enter upon their labors, it will be necessary for them to receive instruction." (Third Degree Master)

Our State Grange offers tremendous scholarship opportunities for UConn (or any of its branches) students who maintain a 2.7 grade point average and are Grangers. Thanks to Alma Brooks and her committee for their efforts on behalf of our college youth.

EDUCATION

"Man and woman are the educators of youth and co-students through life." (First Degree Overseer)

Sister Nancy Weissmuller does her job as State Education Chairman in an exemplary style. She faithfully has a column in our Connecticut Granger and as an educator herself, she is acutely aware of the need of a solid educational background as future leaders develop. Thank you, Nancy!

CONNECTICUT AGRICULTURAL FAIR

"History proves that where agriculture has been fostered, that nation has prospered."

The Connecticut Agricultural Fair has truly magnified these past four years. Top entertainment has brought record-breaking crowds to Goshen! This year the weather, except Sunday, cooperated, exhibits and vendors were magnificent; everything went well.

A successful event is the result of careful planning, coordination, staffing and publicity; your Fair had it all! President Jody Cameron and Vice Presidents Todd Gelineau and Benjamin Barr deserve special thanks; they led the team effort!

IN MEMORIAM

"Once more our Fraternal circle has been broken..." (Grange Memorial Service)

Our Worthy State Chaplain will pay tribute to the many Brothers and Sisters we lost this past year among our "Pink Sash" family. I have told Brother Wilbur on many occasions this past year, "Sometime I will call you with good news."

We have suffered great losses this past year. I will always miss my dear friend and our Past State Master, Frank H. Warner, who was called to his reward August 16th. His devotion to Margaret, family, church, fire department and, of course, Grange was phenomenal.

IN CONCLUSION

This has been a worthwhile, yet difficult journey. I had a vision, some things came to fruition, many did not. I had disappointments, heartaches, yet many good times, many friendships forged. I say to you, hold on tight, dare to take the plunge, venture towards tomorrow!. We have all been given the ability to make a difference. "Let us treasure up the lessons we have learned, both by successes and by failures, plan wisely and hopefully for the future and strive to make our lives as harmoniously beautiful and bountiful as are the works of Nature's God." God Bless You!

*Respectfully submitted,
Russell M. Gray, Master
Connecticut State Grange*