



Connecticut State Grange

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State Master's Address **119th Annual Session • October 16, 2003**

To the Officers and Members of the Connecticut State Grange:

Last October 26th we started a new page in the history of the Connecticut State Grange and a new journey in my Grange Life. The slogan chosen was "Building the Bridge of the Future." This organization is and always has been an important part of my life. The traditions we are built on and the lessons of our ritual are used by all of us in the every day decisions we make and the direction we take in our lives.

There have been many exciting times during this past Grange year. I had the honor of recognizing 2 past State Masters for their services to the Grange. Brother Donald K. Peck received a letter from the National Master for 80 years of service to our Order and I also had the honor of presenting Brother Duane Wetmore with his 55 year seal. Both men have worked hard to build the history of our Grange and we owe them our gratitude and thanks as well as the well deserved congratulations. Important meetings including our first pink sash meeting where new ideas were brought forward and the committees began their work and the regional schools of instruction where we defined our goals for the year.

Sister Maureen and I also got the chance to travel and represent our State at the National Session in Portland, Oregon, the Leaders Conference in Sturbridge, Master's meeting in Kansas City, where we even had to stay one additional day due to the winter weather our area enjoyed this year and the Lecturers Conference at Nichols College in Dudley, MA. It is always an honor to represent our State Grange.

There have also been some trying times. Two Granges Little River No. 36 and Rock Rimmon No. 132 turned in their charters. Many of their members did join other Granges but some were lost. Victory Grange No. 189 consolidated with Riverton No. 169. This approach transfers the membership to the consolidated Grange with continuous membership, a better approach. There are also 3 other Granges considering consolidating. Though this appears to be a cozy transformation, it still means the loss of a Grange. What are we doing to build our organization? Each Grange has to be pro active to bring in new members.

We must also look at positive changes to our order. Cannon Grange No. 152 has started the process of becoming an Action Grange. That will make 3 in the State. How will the rest of our meetings be changing? I believe National will be addressing this issue at its session this year. Is it necessary to work your way in and out of the hall? Is the password still needed? These are a couple of the many questions that need answering. We cannot be afraid of change but must look at ways of moving our Order forward.

Each Grange at all levels should be asking themselves these questions. We cannot continue to lose Granges and members for our organization to survive. "Dare to Do," a slogan from Past State Master Frank Warner is so true today. For our organization to succeed, we must all dare to do.

PINK SASHES

"What ever you do strive to do well." This phrase from the Subordinate closing ceremony, so exemplifies those people who agreed to be part of my team and the effort they put into their work. They planned programs and performed their duties with precision. Thank you for your efforts.

OFFICERS

To the 15 elected officers, thank you for accepting the challenge of fulfilling your office. Look to the opportunities your office provides and enjoy your term. You are all special individuals; look for ways of improving our Order.

SECRETARY

Sister Marion Beecher and I speak several times a week concerning the issues of the Connecticut State Grange. Her office keeps the Granges within our State well informed on the goings on of the State Grange and ensures that all reports are done on time. Thank you, Marion.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee meets monthly to discuss the business of the Connecticut State Grange. The Overseer is invited to attend to keep him abreast of the issues. The major concern in the interim between state sessions is the financial condition of the State Grange. The Executive Committee has proposed two resolutions to better position ourselves for the future. The first is the establishment of a Board of Directors which will include all the members of the current Executive Committee as well as the Overseer and Treasurer. This new board will be responsible for the operations of the State Grange. The second is a proposal to line up our dues structure with the National Family Dues Plan. This will streamline record keeping for both the State Secretary and Subordinate Secretaries. As part of this proposal is also a State Grange Dues increase. This is needed to balance the budget. Our State Grange cannot keep running deficits but must adequately fund our programs. We should all thank the members of the Executive Committee for all their hard work.

DEPUTIES

This dedicated group has served our Order with pride and distinction many of them carried on with extra work after the passing of our then General Deputy, Brother Dick Jones. Schools of Instruction went on without missing a beat and all the inspections were completed thanks to their untiring effort. General Deputy George Russell continued to do his duty by handling the inspections in Mountain County as well as picking up the General Deputy's role and taking on some of the inspections Dick was going to do. I, as all of you and Dick's family will miss him not only as a friend but for all the work he did for the Grange. I am lucky that such a good replacement was available and hope all of you join with me in thanking George for accepting the task. We all know how difficult the Deputy's duties are; thank you all for your dedicated work.

LEGISLATIVE

Whether it is testifying before a Legislative Committee on the Department of Agriculture, or open space land; preparing our legislative handbook or participating in regional meetings this hard working committee has represented the Grange well.

This year we have renewed the New England Regional Legislative/Agriculture meetings. Three meetings have been held talking about restoring the Dairy Compact. They are now looking at new issues we can address. Brother Gibson and the State Grange continue to be supporters of the working lands alliance. My thanks to this hard working group.

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES

Happy Holi-daze was the theme of this group's work last year. Sister Betty Jane Gardiner has led this hard working group through all their projects and meetings. The only ones in a "daze" are all of us trying to keep up with this group. Contests this year included some on a regional basis with the other New England States; there was the New England Grange

Needlework Contest and the New England Grange Baking Contest. It was nice seeing our entries as winners at the Big E this year. We also had our Connecticut Craft Projects, Junior Projects and monetary donations as well as many more. I know that the Friendly Hands Food Bank and Foster Families appreciated all the Grangers effort. Thank you Sister Betty Jane and your committee for all your fine work.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the base our organization was built on. Our founders understood the importance of it to every person's life. We as an organization cannot afford to forget it now. The Committee was responsible for setting up a very fine Grange display at Ag Day at the Capitol, from a personal experience; I know the Legislature enjoyed the Grange Booth. Special thanks go to those who baked cookies; they were enjoyed by all. They also participated in the New England meetings on the Dairy Compact. Thank you to Brother Mike Molodich and his committee for all their efforts.

YOUTH COMMITTEE

The Youth Program in Connecticut is adapting to a new direction from the National level. Under the leadership of Jodi Ann Cameron, they are mixing new ideas with many of the tried and successful projects. Whether that is the Bowl-a-Thon, drill team, public speaking or ambassador recognition projects, we should all support their efforts. It is good to see that National has heard the states and brought back programs for 20-35 year olds. David Carter represented us at National in the new John Trimble Youth Experience. Programs where Youth served as special delegates on the sessions committees. This was a learning experience for him and the Grange benefited from his and the other Trimble representatives.

Allison Malo was our Youth Representative last year and it was a pleasure to see her at National. She did a fine job representing our State. The Youth will again be closing the Friday night session. It is always so impressive to see the fine job they do. To Sister Jodi Ann Cameron and her committee, we thank you for your work.

JUNIORS

The Junior Program under Sister Joanne Cipriano continues to be an impressive part of our State Grange. I know that we all look forward to seeing the Juniors on Saturday afternoon of our session. There is so much pride when they receive a prize for their projects. But the true reward is what they learn from the teaching and works of the dedicated leaders and parents. We should always thank these special people for their hard efforts. During the next year I hope every member will try and attend a Junior meeting and assist with their work.

The Junior Deputies once again had a booth at the Connecticut Agricultural Fair. They sold out of pies and water which lead to a nice profit. Their water during a hot fair day was the best buy on the Midway. I know I appreciated having them to quench my thirst. We must look at new ways of making our Junior Grange grow. This may be through affiliations with outside groups. Can we help our organization by finding better ways of including foster children groups and 4H groups into our program? This would only be a continuation of the programs we have at a Subordinate and State level. We need to find ways to help them make their goal "to increase our interest and membership so that we become the great organization we know we are". This is not a job for just a few Jr. Leaders, but for all of us.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

There is nothing more important to the future of our organization than our work in community service. I feel for us to remain a viable organization, we need to emphasize our Community Service. We need to incorporate members of the community not just Grange members in deciding the projects we do and how we will accomplish them. This is a good tool to help our membership grow. I have always been proud of the diverse projects our membership has accomplished in community service and the hundreds of thousand hours we contribute. We need to take one additional step and that is too make sure our Community knows. Blow your own Horn! Be proud of your good works. Let your community know the

Grange is alive and willing to help.

We are looking forward to again partnering with the Patrons Group on a Habitat for Humanity House next year. We will be looking for Granges to volunteer lunches and help for the project. Thanks to Bob and Marge Sendewicz for handling this important contest this year.

CONNECTICUT GRANGER

Since being elected Master, I have had the opportunity to read the other State's Papers. Our Connecticut Granger in my opinion is the best. However it is useless unless members read it. Like so many Masters before me I feel we need to get our paper into more households. Communication is the essential life blood of our order. Thank you to Todd Gelineau and the Connecticut Granger group for a job well done.

MEMBERSHIP

There are Granges in the State, both Action and regular that are adding new members. I am proud of them. This does not just happen but requires an effort by the members. Community Service Projects can help bring in new members but they have to have a reason to join. I challenge each Grange to create a new reason for members to join their Grange.

More and more Granges are obligating new members. Please remember that the official obligation ceremony should be used. Please contact the State Secretary for information about the obligation ceremony teams. If you are interested in forming a team let me know. We need more teams.

To Brother Bob Brockett and his team, thanks for all your work and keep the fish flying in our state.

PUBLICITY

People need to know that our organization is alive and well. That is why publicity is so important. How many of you have visited our State Grange Website? How many of our Granges have their own sites? This is a new communication medium we need to better use. National Grange has a program available to help develop a website for your Grange.

We also need to keep the lines of communication that we are currently using strong. Newspapers, cable access and weekly publications will inform the members of our programs but only if we send them the information.

Thank you to Brother Carl Bernhardt and his committee for their work. Though there are times, I wish Brother Carl didn't have his camera.

CAMP MAUD ISBELL BERGER

We are so lucky to have a camp as beautiful and special as Camp Berger. It is easy to take it for granted though. I know that the Trustees and especially Brothers Bud Beecher and Jerry Lemieux don't; they are tireless in their efforts for the Camp. This fall a replacement cooler is being installed as well as work to the Alta Don Hall. Donations to help fund these projects are always welcome.

The Trustees are meeting and looking into ways of increasing camp attendance. This has been down over the last couple of years and the camp has lost money. We need to increase the attendance for the camp to remain viable. It is a great deal if you know any children of camp age, urge them to attend. If you have any ideas, please forward them to Brother Beecher.

CORE READING

We see degrees less and less, so the significance of knowing the code book grows in importance. That is one of the reasons the ritual program was instituted this year. Talk with Sisters Mildred Bell, Gertrude Prelli or Brothers Carlton Platt or Marvin Wilber to learn how to read the code book, attend a class and be tested for the award. The Code book is the key to the ritualism of our Order.

CREDIT UNION

The Credit Union needs people to take loans to be successful. This is a problem for our credit union. That is why they are looking at finding a partner which will provide more extensive services such as ATM, on line banking and free checking. More discussion will be held on this during our session. This is an exciting time for the credit union and a great benefit for our Grangers. Brother Ben Barr and the Directors have had a trying year looking at all the alternatives but have been willing to make the tough decisions. Thank you to Brother Alden Ives and Dora and Bernie McQueeney for their work in the office.

STUDENT LOAN & SCHOLARSHIP

Our State Grange offers an excellent scholarship program for UConn students as well as an outstanding student loan program for all college students. Our thanks to Sister Alma Brooks and her committee for their tireless work. Should the Grange look at establishing a broader scholarship program in remembrance of all our Past State Masters? I think it is an idea worth exploring.

CONNECTICUT AGRICULTURAL FAIR

Once again this year we had a wonderful Ag Fair on the Goshen Fairgrounds. But we must look to the future to see how we can make it financially viable without losing its country agricultural fair image. I know that the officers and directors are looking at this important issue.

That is in no way meant as a negative statement at last year's officers or those who worked at the fair. They planned an excellent fair with great entertainment and marvelous exhibits. It is only a statement of fact. Nice job by President, Jody Cameron and Vice Presidents, Todd Gelineau and Ben Barr and all the Directors.

NATIONAL GRANGE HOSTING

The National Grange Hosting Committee has been selling items for the 2008 National Session in Connecticut. Do you have your TShirts, Truck or Apron? If not see one of the members, they will be happy to sell you one. Thanks to the members of that committee and especially Brother and Sister Gray for all their work.

MISSION STATEMENT

I wrote in one of my Granger Articles that we had to define the direction the State Grange was headed and ensure that we were all pushing it in the same direction, with that in mind, I received input on the mission statement and would propose the following:

The Connecticut State Grange, a fraternal organization services the rural community through programs for community service, family activities and legislation. We are bound by our history, our ritual, agricultural base and community Granges. As you can see nothing is said about membership. Increased membership will come as a result of following our mission,

working together and providing challenging and interesting projects.

IN MEMORIAM

Our Worthy Chaplain will pay tribute to the many Brothers and Sisters who passed away during the last Grange Year. The loss to the Pink Sash Family of Brother Dick Jones will be felt by all of us. Dick as mentioned earlier was a hard worker and a close friend. I am sure he is looking down on us and urging us to move forward and do our work. That is what he would have wanted.

We will also miss Brother David Seelye a Past State Grange officer. David always had a smile and enjoyed visiting Granges. We wish our deepest sympathy to the families of all who have lost someone this year.

IN CONCLUSION

I could not do this job without the help of Sister Maureen. She keeps me in line, reminds me to do my work and is a great listener when problems get me down. Thank you for being there for me.

We have all worked together to follow last year's motto, "Building the Bridge to the Future." Now let us look to that future to build our Grange and look to this year's motto, "Follow the road to Success" with our new mission statement as our guide.

*Respectfully submitted,
F. Phillip Prelli, Master
Connecticut State Grange*