



Connecticut State Grange

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State Master's Address **121st Annual Session • October 20, 2005**

To the Officers and Members of the Connecticut State Grange:

Last October 21st as I presented my second report to you as your Master, I challenged you to "Take the Road Less Traveled" and try new challenges if we wanted our Grange to grow. Have you tried taking a different road to help your Grange grow?

From the beginning of my tenure as your Master, I have used my slogans for the year to try to forge a direction for our Grange to move forward to the future. My first year's slogan "Building a Bridge to the Future" was used as a base to build on. Relying on the history of our order, I asked that we use that history with new ideas to bridge to the future. Using our past, to build our future. As I have said in past reports and reiterate now; our ritual and its teachings are an important part of our lives. Whether consciously or sub consciously helping to mold the direction of our lives and our Grange. The second year we were told to "Follow the Road to Success". Continuing to build on our successes and to build on that base that was established not only in my first year but the history of our order. The challenge last year was to "Take the Road less Traveled" Grangers were challenged to try new challenges to help our Grange grow.

Last year, I also suggested that each Grange should consider writing their own Mission Statement to coincide with the State Mission Statement. I asked three rhetorical questions of the officers and members.

- . In what direction do you want our State Grange to go?
- . Can we continue on the same path we are on now?
- . What are we willing to do?

These questions need to be considered again this year and in the future. Our organization prides itself on building from the bottom up. We establish our Legislative Policy from Resolutions brought forward from the Subordinate and Pomona Granges to be approved at our State and National Sessions. Modifications to our by-laws again usually start at our local levels. Ideas and programs are first thought of by the members and forwarded to the State to be molded into programs that we all can use and participate in.

Some of these new ideas can make our Granges stronger and grow. We have talked about ideas that some Grangers have used. Have you tried any of them? How about an open meeting each month with a pot-luck supper and program, remembering to invite guests to tell them about the Grange. Having an open forum for the community about an item of interest to attract people to your hall is another idea. Winchester Grange tried this last year and one of the discussions was on black bears in the community. They had an excellent crowd and hopefully interested some people to consider joining the Grange. You can also try a unique program to attract new members. Cannon Grange started having "Silent Movie Nights"; Cheshire thought it was a good idea and had one of their own to attract people and show that their Grange is active. This is just another example of a great idea from one Grange being used and built on by another to move their Grange forward. Riverton Grange tried a "coffee house". The idea was brought to us by a non member at one of our meetings. She is a vocalist and suggested using the idea to raise money for local charities. We had a large crowd and raised funds for the local food bank and ambulance. Granges from across the state and nation are being recognized for the Dictionary Project, is your Grange participating?

These are just some of the ideas that local Granges have used to draw attention to them selves and attract new members. Have you tried any new ideas or given people a reason to join your Grange? Are you staying in your comfort zone of doing the same thing you always did? So many times, I have heard "what is the State and National Granges going to

do to save our Grange"? The question should be; what are we as members willing to try to save our organization? We should all try new ideas and approaches to attract new members and after you have gotten their attention, remember the final step taught at every sales conference; Finish the Deal - Ask them to Join! We have been told this at all our membership conferences but so many times forget to close the deal.

Again this year we have tried some new things. Starting with last years State Session, we had a presentation on the Medicare Prescription Cards and tried a new procedure for election officers. It went well so this year some more new ideas will be used. A new location and some other changes are being tried, something new with speakers coming in on Friday morning. This is a way to add variety and interest to our State Grange Session. Schools of Instruction were also different with this year's schools emphasizing the Executive Committee Report, Honor Grange, and Grange Decorum. Next year will again be something new. You will have to attend the one in your area to find out what.

Again this year there have been exciting and happy times in our Grange life. I had the honor of presenting several 25 and 50 year certificates as well as many 55, 60, 65 70 and 75 year seals. It is always a special privilege to honor these members receiving those honors and hear how the Grange has affected their lives. The stories told at the alter at these ceremonies are always about the fun times they have had at Grange. Are your Grangers having fun? What will your members reminisce about when they receive their certificates? Let's remember to put fun back into our meetings.

Connecticut hosted the New England Leaders Conference in this very hotel in January. The weather was a little icy but the conference was well attended and enjoyed by the participants. My thanks to all those who assisted in making the conference a success. Sister Maureen and I also had the chance to represent our State at the National Session in Rochester, New York as well as attending New England Night at the New England Lecturers Conference held in Dudley, Massachusetts, attended the Master's meeting in Orlando, Florida and we were the National Representatives to the Florida State Grange in Tampa in January. It is truly a pleasure and honor to represent our State Grange.

There were also many other activities that we were able to enjoy in our State this year. There was a successful Grange Sunday with an inspirational church service in the morning, lunch by the Youth Committee and a nice program and talent contest in the afternoon. All those attending had a great day. I also helped with the Past Deputies Roast Beef Dinner at Camp in May, helped put the docks in on a cold blustery day and in August attended the 50th Anniversary celebration of Camp Berger.

There have also been the trying and sad times during the past year. A difficult decision was made by the members and Granges in Housatonic Valley Pomona #10 to turn in their charter. Until you have sat through the trying meetings, you don't know what a difficult decision this is. The board of Directors accepted their recommendation and redrew the Pomona Boundary lines so that Taghhannuck #100 would be included in Mt. County Pomona #4, Bridgewater #153 would join Excelsior Pomona #7 and Metichewan #190 would be in Fairfield County Pomona #9. I am sure that all 3 Pomonas will welcome their new members with open arms. We have also had to accept the charter of 3 Subordinate Granges. They were Washington #11, Plymouth #72 and Kent #154. I also had to take the charter of 2 Granges, Windsor #2 and Franklin #184. These were difficult decisions that had to be made and were done under the National By-Laws. There were also 2 consolidations, Washington #11 with Bethlehem #121 and Quinnatisset #65 with Senexet #40. This has made 2 Granges stronger but 2 communities have lost their Grange and the Grange lost a presence in the community. There are other Granges on the verge of closing their doors. We need to all work together to try and revitalize those Granges before their community presence is lost and we lose more members.

At the last State Session, a resolution was passed to have a committee appointed to look into whether we should consider changing the boundary lines for Pomonas? I appointed the committee which was comprised of the Pomona Masters, Pomona and General Deputies, the Worthy Overseer and I. Sister Irene Percoski was elected chairman and Sister Pat Palmer, Secretary. This group met several times and much work was done. They came up with a recommendation and presented it to the Board of Directors for their information. They will be reporting to this session and it will be up to the delegate body if any changes are to be made. They should be thanked for all the hard work performed and the ability to make a strong recommendation to this Grange. I truly appreciate their efforts.

The special scholarship committee appointed to look into changes to our scholarship procedure met and reached a final decision. The group consisting of Brothers John Waterhouse, and Charles Dimmick and Sister Nancy Weissmuller met with me and decided that scholarships would be awarded to Grange Members who have completed at least one year of college and are continuing their education at any college. They are currently working on an application and these will be available for next year. My thanks also to this group for their efforts.

These changes like so many others that your Granges are looking at follow our slogan "Take a Road Less Traveled". We need to make our Granges succeed, only then will we see the results of our efforts in the harvest.

OFFICERS

You all should appreciate the work of your State Officer Team. They are there to assist you when they are needed and we are lucky to have such a dedicated elected team. I challenge them in the coming year to make a more concerted effort to attend local Grange meetings as well as attending the usual State functions. At the pink sash meeting last year, I asked them to keep track of the number of Granges they attended and I would present a prize to the one who visited the most. I am looking forward to hearing their totals and awarding the prize tomorrow night. They were told it was going to be a small prize but the best part was that each one won because they enjoyed the fellowship of their fellow members.

GRANGE CENTRAL OFFICE

This has been a busy year at your State Grange Office. After the Credit Union left the office, the office was reorganized making a larger area for the Board of Directors to meet and an area for the State Master. It is getting more and more expensive to rent this facility but I feel it is necessary to keep it open. This is the focal point of our State Grange and is the conduit for keeping our Subordinate and Pomona Granges up to date on the issues of the Grange and ensuring all the reports are completed. It is also the communication link for the Granges to the Board of Directors. Sister Marion always seems to know how to reach me and the members of the Board. Marion, thank you for your service to our order.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This group made up of the elected members of the Executive Committee, the Overseer, Secretary, Treasurer and Master meet monthly to address the issues facing the State Grange. The Board changed its regular meeting date from the first Wednesday of the month to the fourth Wednesday this year. The change has had a positive effect. We also changed our time to the evening for a short period so that I could get settled into my new job. Starting with our November meeting, we will be returning to 1:00. This is a better time for most of the members. The major concern for this group between sessions of the State Grange is the financial well being of the State Grange as well as ensuring the by-laws are followed. This was difficult this year when it was necessary to make decisions on closing Granges as well as trying to meet the charitable gifts the Granges want to make when halls are sold. We take seriously our fiduciary responsibilities as spelled out in the by-laws but also respect the requests of the Granges.

We should all take the time to thank the members of the Board of Directors for all their hard work.

DEPUTIES

This dedicated group under the direction of General Deputy George Russell works hard all year with pride and distinction. They performed their usual duties of Schools of Instruction and Inspections and also filled in for me when I couldn't attend a Grange. This year Sister Harriett Sanborn joined the ranks as Deputy of Central Pomona #1. Her experience made the transition smooth and we welcome her to our team. From the Deputy School to State Session this team's work seems to never end but they always have a smile on their faces and are ready to help.

We all know how difficult the Deputies duties are and I want to thank them for all their work.

LEGISLATIVE

Under the leadership of its chairman, Gordon Gibson, this group continues the important function of implementing our Legislative Policy. This is such an important part of our Grange operation and they keep our views in front of the State Legislature. This year they again had a tremendous victory as part of the lobbying team that worked to ensure that PA 228 which included funds to Preserve Agricultural Land was passed and signed by the Governor. This dedicated funding stream will mean that farmland continues to be saved.

They have participated in the New England Regional Legislative/Agriculture meetings and once again put together an excellent legislative handbook. I know from personal experience how respected this book is among legislators. My thanks to this hard work group.

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES

"Busy Bees" what an appropriate theme for this active group that are always buzzing around to make sure that the projects are being completed and contributions made. This year's special project was Covenant to Care a statewide organization that is dedicated to improving the lives of Connecticut's children. As always, I am sure that we will all be impressed when they give their report and we see all the donations and gifts that will be given out.

They continue their efforts at the Big E, spear heading the donations of knitted items and crafts for sale at the store. We all enjoyed seeing the New England Craft Contests at the fair and this years baking contest, Honey Bee Carrot Cookies were delicious.

My thanks to Sister Betty Jane and her committee of Busy Bees for all their efforts.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the corner stone on which our Fraternity was founded. It remains an important part of our organization today. I am sure that you were as impressed as I was with the Agriculture part of our pre-session banquet and the presentations that were made. I am looking forward to seeing the bird feeders, this years contest and see who the winner is and what their bird feeder looks like.

Brother Mike Molodich and his committee also participated in the New England Legislative/Agriculture Meeting. My thanks to him and his committee for their work.

YOUTH COMMITTEE

This year the Youth asked us to T.R.A.V.E.L (Take Risks and Value Each Lesson) with them. The first stop in their TRAVEL was hosting the Northeast Youth Conference at the University of Connecticut. Many of us enjoyed a nice banquet as well as a game night after the banquet. I had the honor of presenting one of the seminars on How to Run a Successful Meeting. There was a good turn out from the New England States and New York.

How many of you went bowling or entered their membership or poster contest? If you have youth in your Grange, get them involved with this successful program.

To Pat Palmer and her hard working committee, thank you for your efforts

JUNIORS

Like so many of you, I look forward to the Junior Program on Saturday afternoon. Having been a Junior Leader, I know the true enjoyment these young members feel when completing a project. My hat is off to Director Joanne Cipriano and her ability to come up with unique and interesting projects. From the talent contest to decorating a rock to look like an animal, so much fun and what a learning experience. I enjoyed seeing the "masks" at the Big E and seeing the winners from Connecticut. It is great to see that we have a regional judging where the kids have a chance to show off their handiwork.

Once again this year the Junior Deputies had a successful booth at the Connecticut Agricultural Fair. My thanks to all those who provided pies to go along with the soda, water and claim chowder. To all those who worked at the booth, thanks for your help.

My thanks to all the dedicated leaders, Junior Deputies and especially Sister Joanne.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Our forefathers understood the importance of community service. They formed co-ops and insurance companies to aid farmers in rural areas. We follow in the tradition. As I stated many times; There is nothing more important to the future of our organization than our work in Community Service.

As mentioned earlier, many of our Granges have participated in the word for thirds or dictionary project. This is an excellent way to promote your Grange while helping the students in your local school system.

The true strength of our community service contest is that each Grange chooses which project they want to do and identify the best need for their community. When identifying a new project for your Grange include community leaders to help in the decision. Get the community involved and use it as a membership tool.

Once again this year, I look forward to hearing about the winners, their projects and seeing their reports tonight. My thanks to Bob and Marge Sendewicz for once again running this important contest this year.

MEMBERSHIP/ LEADERSHIP

We need to look at new ways of increasing our membership. As I stated at the beginning of my report our organization is built from the bottom up. It is up to each Grange to try new unique, fun and inventive ways to attract new members. Our State Membership/ Leadership Director, Bob Brockett, and his committee are ready to assist your Grange with new ideas and concepts. There is not one quick answer to membership but making your meetings interesting and having entertaining community service projects is a good first step. Remember it takes a team to build your Grange.

To Brother Brockett and his team thank you for your Work. If your Grange needs help, they are there to assist you.

CODE BOOK

As degrees are performed less and less, the ability to read the code book and understand its meaning becomes more and more important. Sisters Mildred Bell and Gertrude Prelli and Brothers Carlton Platt and Marvin Wilbur would be happy to set up a class or help anyone who wishes to learn to read the code book. My thanks to them for their continued effort and love of our ritualism. Remember the code book is the key to the ritualism of the Order.

PUBLICITY/ INFORMATION

Did your Grange enter the Scrapbook Contest or the Reporter/ Correspondent Contest? Doing the background work for these are just a couple of ways to build a better relationship with your local newspapers, radio stations or cable TV outlets and get your Grange name and activities out to the public.

Keeping your Grange name before the public is one way to help promote your Grange and find new members. Tell the people of your town about your Community Service Projects or about special programs coming up and involve them.

Call on Brother Carl Bernhardt and his committee for assistance. They have some great ideas and my thanks to them for their work.

CONNECTICUT GRANGER

For so many years we have used our great paper, the Connecticut Granger, to inform our members of upcoming events and projects. Each month, I look forward to reading the news from the Granges and feel that we have the best Grange paper in the country and it is a great deal. We need to continue the effort to have this important communication device reach each Grange household. Does your Grange provide a copy of the Granger to your local Library? This is a great way to publicize what your Grange and our Order is doing.

Thanks to Brother Todd Gelineau and the Connecticut Granger group for their continued efforts.

CAMP MAUD ISBELL BERGER

Our Camp celebrated its 50th year of service this year. The trustees have been working hard to increase participation. They revived the brochure, up dated the website and are getting posters out but they can't do it alone, they need all our help. We cannot afford to keep subsidizing the operation of the Camp. I feel it is necessary to look at another increase in the weekly rates to help offset rising costs.

I want to thank all those who helped in the clean-up. It was rainy and cold but we were able to rake most of the leaves. Many hands make light work, pitch in and help next year.

My thanks to Brother Bud Beecher and the trustees for all their hard work.

CONNECTICUT AGRICULTURAL FAIR

The weather was great, the crowds good and the fair a success. Many people enjoyed the exhibits, entertainment and food. From the Saturday before to the day after the fair, many people put in a lot of effort to make the fair a success. They are already starting the planning for next year. Lets hope the weather I just as good.

Thanks to President Todd Gelineau and the officers and directors of the Fair.

BIG E

Once again this year, the Connecticut Room was manned each day of the Big E. We also had many volunteers working in the Store, working on the Float, and serving as hostesses. My thanks to Sister Doris Shaw for coordinating the room assignments and to all the volunteers for helping.

STUDENT LOAN & SCHOLARSHIP

All of us will miss Sister Alma Brooks and all she gave to the Connecticut State Grange and especially the Scholarship & Student Loan Committee. For as long as most of us can remember she was announcing the Scholarship winners at the Banquet. Our thanks to Brother John Waterhouse and Sister Nancy Weissmuller for taking up the slack and doing a fine job.

IN MEMORIAM

Our Worthy Chaplain will pay tribute to the many Brothers and Sisters who passed away during the past Grange year at his Memorial Service. It will be very unusual to look around State Session this year and not see Past State Master Donald Peck. We will miss his smile and knowledge of Grange history. Our best wishes and sympathy go out to Sister Ruth. As stated above we will also miss Sister Alma Brooks and all that she has done for the State Grange.

I extend my deepest sympathy to the families of all who lost a loved one this past year.

IN CONCLUSION

As I have stated many times, I could not do this job without the help of Sister Maureen. She keeps me on a level keel and is a great sounding board when problems arise or the problems with the job get me down. Thank you for being there for me.

As we look forward to next year, we must continue to look at new ideas to build our Grange. The new motto will be "Building On Our Base." Trying new ideas but keeping the tradition of our Fraternity, as the base, to grow on.

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