



# Connecticut State Grange

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## **State Master's Address** **122nd Annual Session • October 19, 2006**

To the Officers and Members of the Connecticut State Grange:

As I begin my last Master's Report to you, I look back and wonder where have the four years gone? There have been many challenges, but just as many rewards.

During my first year my slogan was "Building the Bridge to the Future" as a way of using our history and tradition to plan for our future. In all my monthly columns, I used a quote from our ritual as a basis for my column. As I have said many times our ritual is an important part of our lives and its purpose. In my second year, I urged you to "Follow the Road to Success"; continuing to build on our foundation but also looking to the future and being positive about the changes necessary to build our fraternity. The third year you were challenged to "Take the Road Less Traveled". We were challenged to try new ideas to move our fraternity into the future. Are we willing to take the more difficult path or take the easy road and just do everything the way we always have. Staying in our comfort zone rather than looking at what is best for our order. At last years session, I asked that you continue the battle by "Building on our Base." Taking new ideas and adding them to our traditions to make our Grange stronger. As stated then, we have always been proud to state that our ideas start at the Subordinate level and are brought to the State and National Level. Building from the ground up, that is true for not only our by-laws but also our Legislative Policy, Programs, and Community Service. That has always been our strength. I once again ask you the same three rhetorical questions, I have asked in the past?

- 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?

This year I would like to propose one new question for you to consider when looking at new ideas, That is :

- Is this best for our Grange rather than is this best for me?

That should be the base that we use to make the important decisions for our organization. Again taking the step outside of our comfort zone but looking to move our organization forward by making the difficult decisions.

Once again this year we tried some new ideas and came up with new thoughts. As in previous years we tried new ideas at the Schools of Instructions, trying to make them interesting as well as instructive. At the fall Pink Sash Meeting, we discussed the resolutions passed at National and at the Spring Meeting we discussed the role of Pomona's and what we all should do about increasing attendance. We again had a successful Grange Sunday with a nice church service in the morning and an enjoyable program in the afternoon.

Sister Maureen and I were proud to represent you at National Session in Columbus, Ohio last year and we served as National Representatives at the Rhode Island State Grange Session. I was also invited to several Granges to present membership seals and certificates as well as Citizenship of the year awards. These are always fun evenings. Leaders Conference this year was held in South Portland, Maine with a very interesting program. The Lecturers Conference was at Rivier College in New Hampshire and we attended New England Night. I also attended the Big E two days, as a Trustee. Speaking of the Big E, we should all give a special thank you to Jean Meehan and Prospect Grange #144 for donating the new Rug for the Connecticut Room. I hope you all had a chance to see it. The curtains and shade were also replaced and gave the room a new and brighter look.

There were also some difficult times, not all Grange related. I truly appreciated all the cards and prayers and wishes

for a quick recovery after my accident and being on crutches for twelve weeks. It is amazing how much longer it takes to heal as you get older. Hopefully a life lesson learned and never to be repeated. On the Grange front, I was forced to take the charters from two Granges, Mattabesett # 42 and Morris #119. Both of these Granges have not been having regular meetings as the digest requires and thus forcing us to close them. Wapping Grange # 30 consolidated with Enfield Grange # 151. Hopefully this will help both Granges. Wapping was having a difficult time meeting due to illnesses. Closing Granges makes it difficult to move forward. We must all try new and innovative ways to attract new members. Sometimes we are so set in our ways that it makes it difficult to find people to join our Grange.

This year we also had a first, other than for degrees, and that was holding a Special Session of the Connecticut State Grange in January. The reason for this meeting was to discuss the resolution passed at last year's session to change the boundary lines of our Pomona Granges. We had an excellent turnout, (maybe we need more contentious issues to generate interest) as well as spirited discussion. It was decided at the meeting to delay the implementation of the resolution until after this year's session and to have the Board of Directors report to each Subordinate on their decision on what action should be taken. The Board decided to recommend leaving the Pomonas the same. There is a resolution proposed for this year to accomplish that and I am sure there will be much debate on this issue. My feeling is that we should all look at this with the question I asked earlier. That is, what is best for the Grange instead of what is best for me as an individual? A tough decision that I am sure our delegates will evaluate and decide.

We need to "Build on our Base" so we can follow the tenet of the closing charge of the 4th Degree. "Let us treasure up the lessons we have learned, both by success and 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."

## OFFICERS

To my fellow elected officers, I thank you for the pleasure of serving with you. The State Grange should be proud of your dedication and also thank you for your service. Keep up the good work.

## GRANGE CENTRAL OFFICE

Our office is the hub for the communication between our State Grange and the Subordinate and Pomona Granges. It also is where our Board of Directors meets. As I stated last year it continues to be expensive to rent this space, but I believe it is necessary to have a central office and we should keep it open. My thanks to Sister Marion for all she does and also her assistance to me. She always seems to have a knack of knowing how to find me. Thanks again, Marion.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This group made up of the three elected members of the Executive committee, the Overseer, Secretary, Treasurer, and Master meet monthly on the last Wednesday of the month to address the issues facing the State Grange. As in the past, the major issue facing our Grange is the financial well being of the Grange. One of our major costs is the Annual Session, the Board has suggested four resolutions to address some of these costs, the delegates will have to consider these and decide if changes are necessary.

This hard working group deserves your thanks for their efforts. I truly thank them for all their advice and guidance.

## DEPUTIES

Every State Master is sure that they have the best group of Deputies to serve the State Grange. I am sure that all my predecessors were wrong because I know that this team is second to none. Under the leadership of General Deputy, George Russell, this team completed their work with pride and distinction. As in past years, they performed their usual duties of inspection and schools of instruction as well as filling in for me when I couldn't attend a Grange function.

We all know how difficult their task is and I thank them for their service.

## LEGISLATIVE

Under the leadership of Gordon Gibson, Chairman, this group continues to bring our views before the legislature and ensures that we have a strong voice in the legislative process. We continue to be active with the CT Farmland Trust and Working Lands Alliance to help preserve farmland in our State.

They continue to participate in the New England Regional Legislative/Agriculture meetings and once again prepared an excellent legislative handbook. My thanks to this dedicated group.

## COMMITTEE ON WOMENS ACTIVITIES

These "Busy Bees Keep Buzzing", this is such an appropriate theme for this active group of ladies. They always seem to be buzzing around to make sure that the contests are entered and that we remember to make donations to their causes. Under the direction of the Queen Bee, Betty Jane Gardiner, they always are working.

They continue their efforts at the Big E with the regional knitting contests, it is always nice to see the entries in the Grange Building, as well as spear-heading the donation of crafts and knitted items for the sale table. Their special project this year was donations to Covenant to Care, Inc. which is dedicated to improving the lives of CT children who are abused and/or neglected. I am sure we will all be impressed with our Grange donations of backpacks and school supplies that will be given during the CWA Program.

My special thanks to Sister Betty Jane and her committee of Busy Bees.

## AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the base our organization was built on. Our founders understood the importance of it to every ones life. We as an organization cannot afford to forget it now. Once again the Committee set up at the Ag Day at the Capital. It was good to see them there as I hobbled in on my crutches. I am looking forward to the mini pumpkin contest as well as the other Agriculture awards at this year's session.

My thanks to Brother Michael Molodich and his committee for their outstanding work.

## MEMBERSHIP/LEADERSHIP

Thank you to all who entered the poster contest at the Ag Fair. All publicity about membership is important. We must all look at new ways of attracting members and to keep our members active. Have you tried any of the ideas presented by this committee? We have heard about some good classes of candidates this year and hope your Grange was one of them.

My thanks to Brother Bob Brockett and his dedicated team for all their efforts.

## YOUTH

This was a BANNER year for the youth. The slogan stands for Be A New Neighbor Everyone Recognizes. I hope you all tried to follow that slogan. Once again they held their bowling contest as well as their many other contests.

We all enjoyed an excellent lasagna lunch during Grange Sunday. Great job, Pat! If you have youth in your Grange, you should get them involved. From experience I know they will enjoy themselves.

To Pat Palmer and her committee, thank you for all your efforts.

## JUNIORS

One of the true highlights of our Annual Session is on Saturday afternoon when the juniors arrive. I can still remember being a junior member and coming to the session and being so impressed. As a Junior Leader, I know the enjoyment these kids feel when they earn a prize for their contests. Sister Joanne Cipriano, our Junior Director, always amazes me with her ability to come up with new ideas for her contests. From the talent contest, to donations to the Veterans Hospitals, to making an Angel or a Christmas tree or a necklace or key holder, to the creative writing and baking contest. I am looking forward to seeing the entries and seeing the kids pickup their prizes.

Once again this year the Junior Deputies had a successful booth at the Ag Fair. My thanks to all those who baked pies for the booth and all those who worked in it. I know the clam chowder, pies and sodas were enjoyed by all who tried them but most of all the water was there to quench our thirst.

My thanks to the Junior Leaders, Deputies and especially, Sister Joanne for all their dedicated labor.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

Community Service has always been the cornerstone of our fraternity. From co-ops to Insurance Companies, we have always done our part to give back to our communities. That tradition carries on. Many Granges have participated in the "Words for Thirds" program. The joy in the eyes of the children when they receive their books is all the reward you need.

The strength of our program is that we allow each Grange to decide how it can best serve its community. Each project meets a special need and provides a service to the community. Whether you start a new program or continue an existing one, get your community involved. This is a great membership tool and also shows that your Grange is alive.

Once again this year, I look forward to hearing about the winners, their projects and see their reports tonight. My thanks to Bob and Marge Sendewicz, for chairing this committee again this year.

## CODE BOOK

Can you read the code book? There is a dedicated team that would be happy to help you learn. As we see degrees less, the importance of being able to read the code book becomes 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 how to read the code book. My continuing thanks to them for their work and love of the ritualism.

## PUBLICITY/INFORMATION

Did your Grange consider entering the Honor your Newspaper Reporter Contest? What a way to make inroads with local reporters. The scrapbook contest is also a way to emphasize your newspaper coverage and remind people of what your Grange has done. These 2 important Publicity/Information contests help emphasize the importance of publicizing your local Grange.

Keeping your Grange name before the public is an important way to promote your Grange and attract members. Emphasize your Community Service and Activities and invite them to be involved.

Brother Carl Bernhardt and his hardworking committee is always there to assist. Thanks to the committee for their dedicated work and enthusiasm.

## CAMP MAUD ISBELL BERGER

Your camp is a jewel of our State Grange. We need to find ways of attracting more campers to enjoy this unique setting and interesting activities. We can't keep subsidizing its operations and must consider either a rate increase or new programs or both to keep our camp viable.

I want to thank all those who helped in the clean-up. It was the first one I missed in many years. I didn't want every one worrying about the fool on crutches trying to help with the clean-up. I ask you all to join me again next year to help with the clean-up.

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

#### CONNECTICUT AGRICULTURAL FAIR

Rain, hot weather and wind what else could have gone wrong? The entertainment was a hit, excellent concessionaires, nice displays and lots of hard work was not enough to carry the day. A tough decision had to be made and was. We now need to enter a new phase and new challenges.

Thanks to President Todd Gelineau and all the Officers and Directors of the Fair.

#### STUDENT LOAN & SCHOLARSHIP

It is always a pleasure to see the winners of the Scholarship at our pre-session banquet. Many of you and your Granges have contributed to the Scholarship and Student Loan account, many thanks for your generosity.

To Sister Nancy Weissmuller and Brother John Waterhouse, thanks for your efforts.

#### BIG E

What a beautiful building we have at the Big E. Again this year the Connecticut Room was manned each day. We also had many volunteers in the store, selling raffle tickets for the quilt and answering questions. My thanks to all that helped and a special thank you to Sister Doris Shaw for coordinating the room assignments.

#### IN MEMORIAM

Our Worthy Chaplain will pay tribute to the many Brothers and Sisters who passed away during the past Grange year during his annual Memorial Service. All of us have lost friends but our special thoughts go out to Sister Betty Jane Gardiner on her loss of Brother Bill. I served as a Deputy with Brother Bill and know how much he will be missed. We also remember Sister Joan Perry on her loss and know our thoughts are with her.

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

#### IN CONCLUSION

As I have stated many times, I could not do this job without the help of Sister Maureen. She is the steady effect on my life. I thank her for being there for me.

In closing let me say again, thank you for the honor of serving as your State Master for the last four years. It has been truly a great honor and I appreciate everything that each of you have done for me. I would like to paraphrase a President from the 1960's to emphasize how we should approach our Grange Life. That is "Ask not what the Grange can do for me but what I can do for the Grange". Following this creed we can all make the Organization better.

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