



Connecticut State Grange

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State Master's Address **123rd Annual Session • October 18, 2007**

To the Officers and Members of the Connecticut State Grange:

Seventeen years ago, when I was elected Gatekeeper of the State Grange, I thought about what it would be like and what I could do as State Master to build our Order. Last year reality struck. The past year has been a learning experience that I feel will never end.

Last year I promised to be more accessible to all the members. I think that I have started off on the right foot as many Grangers who have never met me noticed me showing up at their meetings. I will continue this in the coming years because I have found that I enjoy it as much as I hope you have. Aside from meeting new people it has always been an honor for me to participate in your meetings or present awards to Grange members.

Some of the most enjoyable experiences Sister Marge and I have had is representing the Connecticut State Grange at other functions. The first was the 140th National Session in Springfield, Illinois. A lot of learning took place there but I think we represented you well. Next was the New England Leader's Conference in Rhode Island. What I learned there was not to get your picture on the front page of the Granger holding a glass of wine.

Seriously though, it is a very important conference where the leaders of the New England States meet to plan together how to best improve our Order.

In February we were off to Reno for the Master's Conference. It was held in the same hotel in which National is meeting this year. It was not all fun and games. We attended workshops given by the National Directors which were informative. After that we finally got to spend some time in Connecticut where we were able to visit Granges, but not for too long as we represented Connecticut on Grange Sunday at the Cathedral of the Pines in New Hampshire. We both love this place. Lastly we went up to Dudley Mass. For the New England Lecturer's Conference. Here is where we have as much fun as work. The workshops are informative and the programs are fun. Representing the Connecticut State Grange is a duty that I hope will always be an enjoyable one.

COMMUNITY GRANGES

On a sad note, there were three Granges that turned in their Charters this year. On the bright side they all merged with another Grange. Metichewan Grange #190 merged with Bridgewater Grange, Indian River Grange # 73 merged with Cheshire Grange and Canterbury Grange #70 merged with Ekonk Community Grange.

The past years have seen many changes in the Grange and we know not where they will end. These changes have been made to help us grow. They were not force fed to us but were offered as options for each Grange to use in ways that would aid each individual Grange. It appears that not all Granges know what the options are that are available to them. I will see that the Deputy force works more closely with the community Granges to better inform them.

PINK SASHES

What would I do without them. Many changes were made to the Pink Sash family when I became Master. Although many of them are new, they have all done an outstanding job and the Connecticut State Grange just keeps rolling along. I thank each and every one of you for taking your responsibilities very seriously.

OFFICERS

Though the Officers are elected I look to them as partners in the leadership of the State Grange. I seek their advice and counsel and appreciate all the help they give me, and we will work together to lead you.

BOARD of DIRECTORS

These five gentlemen and one lady have been like my family this past year. They are the Overseer, Treasurer, Secretary and the three members of the Executive Committee. The Connecticut State Grange is very fortunate to have this body of officers. Although we meet only once a month we are constantly in touch with one another. Thank God for computer technology. This is where most of my learning experience is taking place. Aside from running the State Grange all year long they have to keep the new State Master in line.

Sister Edith has a double job. She also keeps our office running. All of you who ordered something or needed information or help got it promptly. She fit right in and is an asset to our organization.

Thank you guys and gal for all your hard work.

DEPUTIES

These men and women are something really great. A combination of experienced plus new Deputies seems to have worked out fine. They took to their work like ducks take to water. From the General Deputy to the Pomona Deputies and right on down to the Junior Deputies they have distinguished themselves.

When I took office I said I would not make many or any radical changes. So we made a few at our first Deputies school and everything was fine. The schools of instruction turned out to be fun. I don't know if they were so well attended because you wanted to meet the new Master or for other reasons but they did go well. The inspections were done this year with only a few hitches and we will iron them out for next year. The Deputies work hard all year round and there may be a few changes this year to ease their burdens and yours.

Thank you all for your dedicated work.

LEGISLATIVE

This Committee continues to work very hard for you. They are old pros by now since they have been together for many years. Brother Gibson and his committee represent our State Grange not only in Connecticut but also in the other New England States and in Washington and they are intertwined with many of the Agricultural organizations in these states. They are always available to assist the community Granges in writing resolutions and in helping with legislative issues in their communities. They do ask that you support them when they need you to respond to your legislators.

I thank this hard working group.

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES

Talk about old pros, this group has really been together a long time. I do not say this lightly as they are the envy of State CWA Committee's. This year they faced adversity with the closing of the Connecticut Agricultural Fair. So what did they do? They said "Let's Celebrate!" And they did. They tried something new and it worked out fine. Many entries were made and judged and the winners went off to the Big E and will go to National. Although there was some confusion a lot was learned and plans are being improved for next year. No one was left without a seat in the musical chairs.

Thank you Sister Betty Jane and your committee for all your great work.

AGRICULTURE

When I asked Sister Janet Healy to head up this committee she asked if I was serious. She had second thoughts but with a little convincing she took it. She has flourished in the job. With her committee they put on a great display for Ag day at the Capitol. They even impressed the State Commissioner of Agriculture. They have met with other state Legislative/ Agriculture committees and she and Brother Richard went to the Legislative Fly-In, in Washington and they enjoyed it.

Thank you Sister Janet and your committee for keeping Agriculture a primary concern for our Grange.

YOUTH COMMITTEE

The theme of this committee fits their objectives well, "Fun and Fellowship". I'm sure they accomplished that on their winter fun day. I know they did the day they had their Bowl Across America. This was the first time in the last three years that I didn't have the high score. The list of activities this year was long and impressive and I'm sure it won't stop there. I know you all appreciate the goodies in the hospitality room across the hall. Thank the Youth Committee.

To Brother Don Lanoue and his committee, thanks for all you have done this year.

JUNIORS

What our Junior Grange lacks in size they make up for in enthusiasm. You can see that in all the contest entries in the display room each year. Sister Joan Perry sparked their creative thinking this year with her different projects. Their enthusiasm will be evident Saturday afternoon when they receive the ribbons, but most importantly the envelopes, for their hard work. Without the Ag Fair this year the Junior Deputies had less to do. They did inform Granges of their projects and they collected money for bicycle helmets and they will be put to work Friday night. The loss of the Ag Fair does crimp their fund raising abilities though. Sister Joan and Sister Helen Forrest sold hot dogs and soda at "Lets Celebrate" and that will help a little.

I was going to say well done girls when I realized there is one Junior Deputy that is male. So well done all.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

As a past Co-Chair of this committee I realize the important part it plays in our Order. It rewards us all knowing we have done some good for others and it enables us to interact with other organizations for the betterment of our communities. For the past four years I have been amazed at the different projects that our Granges do and they are all so worth-while. This year Brother Jody and Sister Jodi Ann Cameron will have this honor. They have come up with an idea that will allow the smaller Granges to participate on an equal level. All Granges, whether they win a prize or not, are winners and so is our Order.

My thanks to Brother Jody and Sister Jodi Ann for the innovative way they are chairing this committee.

MEMBERSHIP/LEADERSHIP

This important committee ran several contests this year. What would be really great is if every community Grange had an entry. Throughout the year Sister Joanne Cipriano and her committee have been giving you suggestions and support by way of their articles in the Granger. Several Granges have been taking in new members and it will be interesting to see which ones are contest winners. All of their work for the year will be for naught if you, the members in each Grange do not do the hard work. The tried and true way of getting members is to talk to people and inform them of the opportunities the Grange has to offer them.

Thank you Sister Joanne and your committee and just keep trying.

PUBLICITY/INFORMATION

Why have publicity? Why indeed! If no one knows who you are or what you are doing, they certainly are not going to be interested in you. This was the lead paragraph for the Publicity column in the July/August issue of the Granger. Brother Carl Bernhardt and his committee continue to spread the word. Tell people about the Grange. Let them know there is an active Grange in their community. I know your Granges are doing things, so lets let the public know. If you want to know how to get articles in your local paper Brother Carl and his committee will be glad to assist you.

I thank this committee for their dedicated work and enthusiasm.

STUDENT LOAN & SCHOLARSHIP

Many members have benefited from this committee and tomorrow we will learn of more recipients of your generosity. It is the contributions that all of you make which allow us to help so many.

I want to thank Brother John Waterhouse, Sister Nancy Weissmuller and Sister Nancy Strong for their stewardship of this committee.

CAMP MAUD ISBELL BERGER

This camp is an asset to the State Grange and many of you have spent numerous hours to keep it in the fine condition that it is. I'm proud to say that I started my State Grange journey as a Trustee of the Camp. Brother Bud Beecher was the chairman then and he still is now. He and the Trustees do an excellent job in running our camp and I thank them for their dedicated labors. The last several years have seen a decline in the number of campers and the viability of the camp is in question. Some serious thought must be given to this situation.

As I said many of you have done much in cleaning and repairing the camp through the years and I thank all of you.

BIG E

The pride and joy of the New England State Granges is the Grange Building at the Big E. This is the closest setting the general public has to being at a Grange meeting and if they ask they get loads of information on the Grange. And ask they do. Once again the Connecticut Grangers answered the call and manned the Connecticut room for the entire fair. On top of that you worked every day in the store downstairs.

I thank Sister Doris Shaw for rounding up all of you for the Connecticut Room and Sister Betty Jane Gardiner for doing the same for the store.

CODE READING

When you mention the code book people say "that's old and out of date". That is the history of our organization and its ritualism. I take pride in the fact that I can read the code book. This is something we cannot let fall by the wayside. For years Sisters Mildred Bell and Peg Prelli and Brothers Carlton Platt and Marvin Wilbur have offered to teach interested parties how to read the code. I thank them for their love of the ritualism and their efforts to teach others.

CONNECTICUT GRANGER

We in Connecticut are fortunate to have one of the finest Grange newspapers in the country. I mean in the country. Since becoming State Master I have received the newspapers of all the other State Granges and they pale compared to ours. The timely information on the Granges, the committees and the happenings in the state are outstanding. I hope each member uses it to the fullest

Many thanks to Todd Gelineau and his dedicated staff for this great newspaper.

CONNECTICUT AGRICULTURAL FAIR

For many years the Officers and Directors of this fair have labored long and diligently to make our fair a great one. Some years were profitable and some years were not but our fair has always been successful. Because of financial conditions there was no fair this year. I know the disappointment we all felt but those are the hard facts of life. The report of the President of the Connecticut Agricultural Fair will tell what the future plans are.

I hope all of you will join me in thanking the Officers and Directors for the dedication and love they have given to our fair.

IN MEMORIAM

Once again the circle of our Fraternal Order has been broken. Our Worthy Chaplain will pay tribute to all our Brothers and Sisters who left us this past Grange year, for the Great Grange Above. We were specially saddened by the loss of two of our Past State Masters. Brothers Carl "Bud" MacLaurin and Frank Prelli. We say to them "Well done good and faithful servants".

I extend my deepest sympathy to all the families who have lost loved ones this year.

IN CONCLUSION

I have spent this whole report thanking everyone who has aided me this year and I really do thank you.

Now I must thank the one person who I think makes everything I do possible. My confidant, my cheerleader, my shoulder to cry on. My wife Marge. Thank you for everything Dear.

In closing let me say that it has been an honor and privilege to serve you as State Master. I continue to seek your comments and advice and I am always ready to listen to all of you. Working together we can build our Order and I say thank you to all my Brothers and Sisters.

*Respectfully submitted,
Robert J. Sendewicz, Master
Connecticut State Grange*