



Connecticut State Grange

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State Master's Address **124th Annual Session • October 16, 2008**

To the Officers and Members of the Connecticut State Grange:

As my first two year term as Master of the Connecticut State Grange draws to a close, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Master and that is what I mean. I am in this office to serve you. I know that there have been some differences between us these past few years but every decision I have made has been for the betterment of the Grange in Connecticut.

Sister Marge and I have been proud to represent the Connecticut State Grange at numerous functions. The first was shortly after our 2007 Annual Session as we headed out to Reno, Nevada for the National Session. These sessions, like our State Sessions, mix work with fun and the chance to strengthen friendships and ties with the other State Delegates.

We were able to get all of the Connecticut resolutions passed except one, which I withdrew and can be presented again this year with more information. We could not delay the National dues increase. I did learn more about the workings and politics of these sessions and I am gaining experience in dealing with them.

I conducted a Pink Sash meeting after the National Session to inform the officers and committees of Connecticut as to what transpired and how it would affect us. In the meeting with the Deputies, I explained how the new evaluation process of the Subordinate Granges was to work. It appears that it went smoothly as most of the reports on it were favorable and there was no significant drop in Granges conferring degrees.

Next it was up to New Hampshire for the Northeast Region Leaders Conference. The leaders of the Connecticut State Grange met with the leaders of the other six states to plan programs for the coming year. We were fortunate that the new National Master and Leadership/Membership Director were at the conference to assist us. This is where I got the idea for another project that I started this year and will explain later in this address.

With little time to catch our breath we were off again to Irving, Texas for the Masters Conference. There we went to workshops to strengthen our leadership skills. The National Master also told us of his plans to strengthen Community Granges around the country and organize new ones. Here I learned more about the programs Rusty Hunt has available for State Granges. If there was a down side to this conference it was that air travel in the winter is not an enjoyable experience.

In the spring and summer Sister Marge and I continued our visits to Granges. I enjoyed presenting awards and anniversary certificates at your halls and added to the list of Granges I have finally visited. I took part in a membership drive at Glastonbury Grange #26 and was very pleased when they took in eight new members. I had the special honor of presenting seventy-five year certificates to three of our Past Voting Delegates. We also honored three one hundred year anniversaries at Riverton #169, North Stonington Community # 138 and Norwich # 172. Meeting with many of you, and especially those of you for the first time, is extremely enjoyable.

In June Rusty Hunt made his first trip to Connecticut. He was here for two days and met with two groups I had selected to form leadership teams. He evaluated us and determined that we were willing and able to take on this role. In January 2009, the National Leadership/Membership team will be in Connecticut to formally train these two teams to aid our Community Granges in developing their leadership and membership skills to improve their Granges. I am hoping this will strengthen the Granges in Connecticut.

In August the National Master came to Connecticut and presented two workshops on leadership and membership to

members of our Community Granges. Those that attended were very impressed with his presentations and if they act on his teachings we will strengthen the Grange in Connecticut.

Sister Marge and I helped out at a few local Grange fairs this year. This is where you see Grangers in action. If we could put as much effort into improving our Granges as we do in running our fairs there would be no membership problem in Connecticut.

I spent five days at the Big E, working in the New England Grange Building and attending Trustees meetings. I had the special pleasure of meeting with Governor Rell on Connecticut Day at the fair.

As I have said at the beginning I enjoy representing the Connecticut State Grange in these duties.

COMMUNITY GRANGES

The annual evaluations had good news and not so good news. Some Granges are improving or remaining solvent and others are struggling. I hope that the new program we have started will be able to help the struggling Granges and improve other Granges.

I had the sad duty of revoking the charter of Highland Grange #113. I wish to not have that experience again. It is imperative that the leaders in the Granges understand the Constitution and By-Laws of the Grange. I plan on discussing some of these in more detail at the up-coming schools of instruction.

PINK SASHES

There have been a few resignations in the Pink Sash family and I have made several other changes. I thank those of you who have served so diligently the past two years and I am sure the members appreciate the efforts you have contributed to the committees you are on. You have come together as teams and have been a benefit to the State Grange.

OFFICERS

The officers of your Grange have been extremely helpful to me over the past year. I appreciate the help they have given when called upon and thank them for it. If not for their help I could not accomplish much.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

This is the group that really runs the State Grange. I am only one/seventh of the group. Under the guidance of the Chairman, Phil Prelli, we run as a well-oiled machine. We do have differences of opinion but we understand the unique knowledge and experience each of us has and we always seem to come up with the proper course of action. It is a pleasure for me to work with this wonderful group and I thank them for their dedication to the Grange.

DEPUTIES

Talk about a dedicated group, they are it. They are my eyes and ears in the Granges. I relish the feed back and the counsel that they give me and their advice. All I need to do is tell them I need a meeting or schools of instruction and they make all the arrangements with the Granges. When asked, they will instruct your Grange in the proper conduct of the meetings and the duties of the officers. Always remember that they are there to help you. They help me and I am grateful for that.

LEGISLATIVE

This committee was depleted recently by a death and a resignation. I will personally miss Art Hanlon who was a close friend. Many years ago when I became Pomona Master he was my Legislative Director and he held that office at the state

level also. I know the members of the committee and the State Grange will miss him.

Richard Healy has submitted his resignation and I have accepted it and I thank Richard for his contributions to the committee. I am sure that with the new appointees this committee will continue its excellent work in carrying out the legislative policies of this State Grange.

Thanks for the great job you have been doing.

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES

The CWA Committee did another great job this year with their "Let's Celebrate" day. With the assistance of our State Lecturer they had much more entries than last year. It seems it is growing each year. They had to do double duty this year. Along with their usual program they had to increase their output because of National Grange meeting in Connecticut. As usual they were up to the challenge and we will see their fine results in November.

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

AGRICULTURE

Sister Janet Healy has decided to take a break as director of this committee. She has done an excellent job the last two years especially since she accepted this position as a novice and I thank her for her dedicated service and the committee for their splendid work.

I will be filling several vacancies on this committee but I am sure they will be up and running soon and continuing the fine job that they do.

YOUTH COMMITTEE

This committee has been extra busy this year. Aside from running the different programs and projects that they do so well they have been gearing up for the National Session. I am happy to announce that one of the committee members, Victor Salazar, has been chosen as Master of the National Youth Officers, which will open the National Session on Friday morning. This is a great honor for our state and the entire youth committee will be involved in activities throughout the Session.

Thank you Brother Don Lanoue and your committee, I know you will make us proud in November.

JUNIORS

On September 19, 2008 I had the honor and the pleasure to present Hillstown Junior Grange #87 with their charter. The children of this new Junior Grange are enthusiastic and doing their best to learn the ritual. Sister Marge and I, along with many parents, became honorary members of the Junior Grange that night. Sister Joan Perry was instrumental in helping Sister Helen Forrest start this new Grange. Sister Michelle DeDominicis is the Junior Leader.

Although the Junior Deputies have less to do without the Agricultural Fair, they are eagerly helping other committees and other parts of our organization and I thank them for their continued efforts.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

The backbone of our Order is Community Service and I am sure there will be much participation in the program this year as usual. I am also sure that Brother Jody and Sister Jodi Ann had difficulty picking out the best reports to be judged. If last year was any indication I know they took their responsibility seriously and we will hear of the great reports at the presentation.

I thank them both for the dedication they give to this task.

MEMBERSHIP/LEADERSHIP

I mentioned earlier in this address that Rusty Hunt was in our state on a fact-finding mission. Sister Joanne Cipriano was involved in these discussions and was impressed with his presentations and when he returns in January she and her committee will be a part of the training.

For the past year they have been giving you tips and moral support in your efforts to increase and retain members. This committee will help you in any they can in planning and setting up programs that your Grange wants to use.

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

PUBLICITY/INFORMATION

Has your Grange had an article in your local paper recently? No? Then why not?

Brother Carl Bernhardt and his committee members will aid you in preparing one and teaching you on how to get it published. It's not as hard as it seems. Publicity is one of the best aids you have in letting the public know about your Grange and the internet is even easier than newspapers. Contact someone on this committee to get help. They are waiting for you to ask.

Thank you Brother Carl and your committee and I hope you get a deluge of calls.

STUDENT LOAN & SCHOLARSHIPS

Speaking of help, here is a committee to aid you in your pursuit of higher education. Because of the many donations of caring Grangers we are able to offer this service to our members. I thank Brother John Waterhouse, Sister Nancy Weissmuller and Sister Nancy Strong for the fine effort they put into this program. Please contact one of them to see how you can participate.

CAMP MAUD ISBELL BERGER

The past several years have seen a decline in the use of our camp. Some think it might be time to quit. The Board of Directors realizes that this camp is an enormous asset to the Grange. We have developed a plan for the camp and later during the session the Chairman, Phil Prelli, will give a presentation on the plan.

I thank the camp Trustees and all who have worked so hard to make the camp a success and with your support we will bring it back to the greatness it once was.

THE BIG E

I cannot thank enough the people who worked at the New England Grange Building this year, either in the store or in the Connecticut room. Through your efforts over \$25,000.00 came into the building during this year's fair. I don't know how much of it is profit at this time. I will learn at the Trustees meeting later this month. It is a great reward for the effort so many from all the New England States have made. I was there for four days and there were always large crowds.

In addition, \$2,955.00 was raised for Hasbro Children's Hospital in Providence, Rhode Island with the quilt raffle. The winner of the quilt was Karen Bowers of Connecticut.

I thank Sister Doris Shaw for rounding up everyone who entertained visitors in the Connecticut Room and Sister Betty Jane Gardiner for getting so many volunteers for the store.

CODE READING

Learning to read the Code Book is developing an understanding and love for the ritualism of our Order. Sisters Mildred Bell and Peg Prelli and Brothers Carlton Platt and Marvin Wilbur have spent years teaching the code to their fellow Grangers. The unwritten work is an integral part of the Grange even as much of it is no longer used and those who teach it to others deserve our thanks.

CONNECTICUT GRANGER

I still receive compliments for our wonderful newspaper. Many Grangers who can no longer get to meetings tell me how they eagerly await its arrival each month and they read it front page to last. Many of us take it for granted not realizing the tremendous amount of work that goes into it each month.

Many thanks to Brother Todd Gelineau and his dedicated staff for this wonderful publication.

HOSTING COMMITTEE

This is a new addition to the Master's Address but it is an important one. The people who are on this committee have spent the last few years putting in an extraordinary amount of work that will culminate in one fabulous week in November.

Under the Chairmanship of Brothers Phil Prelli and Russell Gray and the management of Brother Jody Cameron you will witness one great National Session. The hardest part is yet to come. Stay tuned.

IN MEMORIAM

Our worthy Chaplain will once again pay tribute to our Brothers and Sisters, of the Pink Sash family, who have gone to the great Grange above. Their labors in this life are complete.

All of us mourn the recent passing of Sister Peg Prelli, a Past Voting Delegate, and Brother Al Goodson, our State Chaplain for many years. Their leadership has benefited our Order.

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

IN CONCLUSION

Sister Marge and I have greatly enjoyed the past two years and we thank you for this opportunity you have given us. We share your love for and commitment to our Order and will do our best to keep your trust. I continue to seek your advice and counsel and promise that I will always listen to what you have to say. I thank all of you, deeply, for whatever part you have played in making this past term so enjoyable.

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