



Connecticut State Grange

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State Master's Address **125th Annual Session • October 15, 2009**

To the Officers and Members of the Connecticut State Grange:

As this Grange year draws to a close I am again proud to have served and represented all of you as State Master. This was especially true at the 2008 Annual Session of the National Grange which was held in our home state. The compliments that I and others received from the delegates and visitors had me walking on clouds for a week. Although I received much of the accolades it was the dedicated work of a large group of you that made it such a success. It was one of the proudest moments of my life and I know you shared in that pride.

I trust many of you took advantage of the opportunity to attend some part of the session to witness your National Grange in action and to get a better understanding of how our Order functions.

After the National Session I conducted a Pink Sash meeting where the state committee's finalized their plans for the year and I met with the deputies to lay out the agenda for the Community and Pomona Granges. At the general meeting which followed I presented a plan for revitalizing the struggling Granges in Connecticut. This will be discussed in more detail further on.

In January the chairpersons of the committee's, along with myself and Sister Marge, headed to Fitchburg, Massachusetts for the North East Leaders Conference. There we met with our peers from the other six states to work out the details of the many joint ventures we have throughout the year and attended workshops to strengthen our leadership skills. It was there that I met with Rusty Hunt, the National Grange Leadership/Membership Director, to finalize the details of the plan I had.

Throughout the rest of the month and into February I conducted schools of instruction at the Pomona's in the state. Among the topics covered was the need for the Pomona Granges to get back to their roots as the legislative body of our Order and an aid to the Community Granges in their jurisdiction. This is where the policies of our Order begin. You are the Grange.

Normally in the middle of February Sister Marge and I attend the State Masters Conference, which was in Bentonville Arkansas this year. Well this year we never got past Philadelphia and almost spent the night at the airport. Luckily We got the last two seats back to Hartford that night. I really wanted to make this conference as the National Grange was presenting their programs for Grange Growth. Fortunately they will continue this program into next year.

In April we finally got our program under way. Rusty Hunt returned to Connecticut for three days. I assembled two teams to be trained in the program I discussed earlier. Before we did this I spoke with the two Granges that were involved explaining what would be done. One team attended a Grange on Thursday and the other team attended a Grange on Friday. The teams were well received at the Granges and the training went well. The members of the teams were very enthusiastic after the sessions.

To continue the training, three members were sent to a Grange Growth summit in Debuque, Iowa in June and two other members were sent to one in Wytheville, Virginia in September. They all gave glowing accounts of the training and are very enthusiastic and I plan to continue this into next year as long as National continues with these projects. The purpose of this is to revitalize, re-organize and start new Granges in our state. This program will continue even when I leave office next year as several of the team members are state officers in line to be State Master.

Throughout the year Sister Marge and I continued doing what we like to do best of all. We visited with many of our

Grange friends at their meetings. We attended many special Grange functions, picnics, awards nights or just a meeting to visit. We helped out at several Grange fairs also. I don't like to brag but I came away with several blue and red ribbons including a best of show for my sun flower.

We each spent three enjoyable days at the Big E. Although the weather wasn't that great on Grange Day I would have liked to see more Grangers there since I gave out quite a few tickets.

COMMUNITY GRANGES

As I read the evaluations of the Community Granges I was pleased with what I read. Twenty-four Granges took in eighty new members last year and eight Pomona's conferred the Fifth degree on thirty-three members. I realize this was due to National being in Connecticut but you have shown that it is possible. My hope now is that you keep these members interested and active. To the Granges that are struggling and I know there are many I encourage you to avail yourselves of the program we now have in place. Talk amongst your members and should you decide to try contact me and we will schedule a presentation.

My deepest regret is that I had to revoke the charter of another Grange. Hope Grange #20, the longest continuous operating Grange in Connecticut. I will give Granges every opportunity to correct their problems but I must enforce the by-laws of the National Grange.

PINK SASHES

Your Pink Sash family is humming like a well oiled machine. But you knew that as you saw the programs and contests they provide for you. They are a benefit to me and to you as they provide the mundane services that make our State Grange great. Give them your support and thanks for a job well done.

OFFICERS

I am sure you have called upon a state officer from time to time to assist at one of your meetings. It may have been a special event and I know they have complied because I have been to quite a few and many times the pink sashes have outnumbered everyone. They enjoy assisting you as much as I do and they carry out their duties diligently.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Though they meet only once a month this is where most of the work is done. I have received most of my experience as Master working with these six dedicated persons. Thanks to the marvels of electronics and the internet we are in constant touch with each other. We struggle with many of the problems of the Grange and because of the blend of their knowledge and experience we reach just and fair conclusions. They are truly an asset.

DEPUTIES

I continue to rely heavily upon this group. So much so that at times I am embarrassed to ask them to do more. They are my link to the Granges as no one knows you better. They work hard but I know they enjoy it. I ask you to rely on them as much as I do. They will do their best to help you if you let them. I am grateful for their loyal support.

LEGISLATIVE

This committee continues its excellent work in carrying out the legislative policies of the State Grange. The members are knowledgeable of the workings of the state government. They have an amicable relationship with the National Legislative Director and they are a great asset to me and to you.

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES

The busy bees just keep humming along. They do their thing so effortlessly you don't know it's being done. They had another successful "Let's Celebrate" day. With the central office taking up space in their area it was a little crowded though. They are looking for another location and I am sure next will be bigger and better. After all they are led by the best queen bee.

AGRICULTURE

Brother Ernie Finch took to the leadership of this committee as a duck takes to water. Along with his members they put on a great show at the capitol on Ag. Day. They also came up with a good Ag. Contest. As I mentioned earlier my sun flower received a best of show at the Cheshire Grange fair. They are already hard at work with their plans for next year.

JUNIORS

Sister Joan Perry has taken our three Junior Granges under her wing and will nurture them. Along with the junior deputies she had another successful fund raiser and has given many bicycle helmets to the Pomona Granges for distribution. I look forward to another great junior program on Saturday afternoon. I would encourage more adult members to support the Junior Granges.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

One of the most important functions of our Order is community service. I know I can count on our Granges to make the report this year an outstanding one. This is the best way for the Grange to remain known in the community. Not to mention the satisfaction each of us gets by helping others. We all wait with anticipation for Brother and Sister Cameron to give their report and announce the winners.

MEMBERSHIP/LEADERSHIP

It was mentioned earlier of the plans to grow the Grange. Our membership committee is an integral part of these plans. After seeing the results of last year's activities it appears that some of you have been following their suggestions. Sister Joanne Cipriano was a part of the initial planning meetings and she is well aware of the objectives of the program. Let's all work with her committee to continue the drive that was so successfully started last year.

PUBLICITY/INFORMATION

Everyone agrees that publicity is essential to Grange growth. Your Grange can receive good publicity if you follow the advice that Brother Carl Bernhardt and his committee publish in our paper every month. Or you can contact one of them for information. They are there to help you and they will.

STUDENT LOAN & SCHOLARSHIPS

Here is another committee willing to help you with an important benefit. The State Grange can provide financial aid for furthering your education. Brother John Waterhouse and Sisters Nancy Weissmuller and Nancy Strong will be glad to assist you with the requirements for applying to these programs.

CAMP MAUD ISBELL BERGER

Last year the Board of Directors unveiled a five year plan for re-invigorating our camp in Winchester. The beginning of the plan has been put into effect with noticeable results. An in depth report will be given at this session regarding the outcome thus far. We continue to look to the physical needs of the camp to insure its safety and function. I must thank the trustees

of the camp and all those who have devoted so much of their time and labor to keep our camp in top notch condition.

NEW ENGLAND GRANGE BUILDING

This building is a gem to the Granges in New England. Those of you who have visited it during the fair realize this. The thousands of people that enter each year learn about the Grange and realize that there is still such an organization. Many return year after year to buy the hand made products and jellies that we sell and at each visit learn more about the Grange. Thanks to all of you who volunteer to give your time during those seventeen days to promote the Grange and a special thanks to Sisters Betty Jane Gardiner, Irene Percoski and Doris Shaw for their efforts in organizing it all.

CODE READING

This is one area that many people think is no longer relevant, I disagree. I encourage members to study this as you would our history, and I encourage Community Granges to present programs during the year exemplifying our un-written work as most of it is no longer a part of the degree ritual. In studying our history you can find out why these signs and challenges were used. If you wish to learn more about reading the code book contact me and I will refer you to someone that still teaches it.

CONNECTICUT GRANGER

I have said many times that Connecticut has the best Grange newspaper in the nation. This is true because President Todd Gelineau and his staff have great pride in it. The articles submitted by the various Granges and state committees make it a must read paper not only in Connecticut but in other states. Those who contribute to the Granger Trust Fund make it possible for future publication. Please continue to support our great paper.

IN MEMORIAM

Once again our worthy Chaplain will pay tribute to our Sisters and Brothers, of the Pink Sash Family, who have gone to the Great Grange Above. Their labors in this life are complete as it has benefited our Order and aided in its growth. " Well done good and faithful servant".

I extend my deepest sympathy to all the families, of the Grange, who have lost loved ones this year. Don't be saddened but rejoice in their life.

IN CONCLUSION

After three years I am still proud to be Master and enjoy serving the members of the Connecticut State Grange. Sister Marge and I appreciate and I sincerely thank you for the opportunity you have given us. I cannot thank, enough, all of you who do so much to help, from the highest officer to the person who pours me a cup of coffee at a meeting and welcomes us. We love you all.

The one person who helps me the most and who makes this so enjoyable sits beside me. Many people say that Marge is the best half and they may be right, thank you Marge.

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