



Connecticut State Grange

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State Master's Address **114th Annual Session • October 24, 1999**

To the Officers and Members of the Connecticut State Grange:

As I reviewed in my mind the events of this past year, a similarity became apparent to those of past years of my term of office. The active Granges, no matter the size, received new members and were able to keep their membership stable, even though some members departed to that great Grange above. Many others remained constant with neither a loss or gain, and no applications received to lessen the tasks of the faithful few. While others continue to lose members on a yearly basis without benefit of applicants, soon arrive at the position of being unable to fill the stations at regular meetings. Under those conditions it becomes obvious that in the near future the charter will be surrendered and another Grange will be just another memory of the past. Not a bright outlook for the years ahead, as this affects the total Grange future from Subordinate to State level.

Most scheduled visitations, either by invitation or by unannounced drop-in were truly enjoyable, in presenting opportunities to confer honors of varying nature to many deserving members. Earned rewards for their efforts of a well done community service project in the name of the Grange, or recognition for the many years of service to the Order. It is certainly a pleasure to be asked to share in these presentations, to the many honored during the year. In truth, these moments are but a few of the factors that keep one searching for the solution to the dilemma of falling membership and loss of charters. Not to be negative, but even a "quick fix" might be too late for the many Granges at or near the breaking point.

OFFICERS

The officers of the Connecticut State Grange are to be commended for their participation in all phases of our endeavors. Not only in fulfilling the duties of the office, by being available on many occasions to take on added responsibilities, no matter how trivial they may seem. We of Connecticut are truly blessed to have such dedicated members to lead us into the future, and their efforts are gratefully acknowledged, but this office and all members state-wide. I might add that their faultless rendition of the Sixth Degree does much to inspire those portraying the lower degrees to achieve the same perfection and share in the accolades given them.

The Sixth Degree is by itself a beautiful, meaningful presentation. Add to this the Rose Drill, so expertly performed by the ladies in its intricate maneuvers, only enhance the evening. Sister Alma Brooks each year, presents a new interpretation and we are indebted to her for the group's presentation. The applause at the conclusion of the drill, attests to the enjoyment of all.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

In the past years I have praised the committee to the utmost, and they richly deserve the honors. These dedicated members meet on a monthly schedule to mediate on subjects of importance to the Order, and their expertise in most matters is next to infallible. Their input is highly respected by this State Master and their sage advice has aided in the smoothing of some troubled areas. The State Secretary is present at these meetings to duly record the decisions for the future and present any materials received through the Central Office for necessary action. The State Overseer sits in on these occasions as well he should, for this is an excellent opportunity to become familiar with the workings of this group in preparation for his term as State Master. On behalf of the Granges throughout the State and myself, thanks of gratitude

are expressed.

DEPUTIES

The Deputy force, under the guidance of General Deputy Barr, has again performed to their utmost, covering all areas, even with less personnel. This past year found one Pomona without a Deputy for the simple reason that none would accept the position (yours truly covered). Many did double duty throughout the state when asked and not one complaint was received from them, as they willingly took on the added responsibilities. To one and all, huge thank you's are extended from this office. For the past two years, Brother Barr has added the Safety/Ecology contest to his duties (as if he needed more) and I am indebted to him for fulfilling that task. Another thank you to be added to his list.

JUNIOR DEPUTIES

Director Pat Grandy has again fulfilled all aspects pertaining to the Junior Grange, even with fewer Deputies to assist in the many phases she was involved in. Assign a task to Pat, and stand back, as she and her crew, prodded by her enthusiasm, will scurry hither and yon to ensure a successful completion of the project. Though few in number, the Junior Grange members are well versed in their duties and readily and easily pass into the Subordinate Grange of their choice. Sister Pat, I thank you, and I am positive that both the Junior Grangers and members of the State Grange are of the same accord. Her report will contain much more information as to the progress of the Junior Grange under her direction.

COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S ACTIVITIES

The tasks of the CWA seem endless. It appeared that director Norma DePietro and her committee were toting in, setting up, tearing down and lugging out endless contest materials or displays. Subordinate, Pomona, State and National projects all received the same strict attention, down to the last detail, as many have noted and commented upon. Congratulations to these ladies who have earned the thanks of all for their efforts. Her report will cover the complexities and scope of this very active committee.

LEGISLATIVE

Director Art Hanlon and his committee certainly deserve much praise for their efforts in regard to the State Grange's resolutions at our annual sessions. I am sure that our legislators are on a first name basis with the committee members after four years of seeing and hearing from them. Some might have thought them to be full time lobbyists, due to their being present at so many sessions. Their opinions have been presented at the quarterly meetings of the New England Leaders Conferences, and are thought of highly by all of its members. My personal thanks seem a small reward for the endeavors of that dedicated group. I'm sure Brother Hanlon's report will be as complete, as the actions of the committee as a whole.

MEMBERSHIP-PUBLICITY/INFORMATION

Sister Nancy Ebbs has surely earned her "E" for effort, for her endeavors. She and her committee have presented every conceivable plan to aid in the procurement of new members. Unfortunately, no great gains are apparent as new membership continues as in past years. A few Granges have set up "Visioning" program meetings and more will follow. The worth of this program can only be noted in months ahead as more give it a try and results are obtained. I'm sure Nancy's report will be very informative as it relates to this subject.

AGRICULTURE/CONSERVATION

The basis for the founding of our Order will always be the prevalent issue of our Fraternity. George Russell and committee deserve much praise for their endeavors in the field of agriculture and in the closely related conservation of our natural resources. The fields of agricultural pursuit continue to wane in our state, even with the founding of oceanic farming, the growth of tree farming and that of horticulture in flora and fauna. Brother George might wish to correct my line of thinking as he makes his annual report during the session.

CONNECTICUT STATE YOUTH GRANGE

The future of this group is not certain as of this writing, though a slate of officers, not in total, were elected at their last meeting. Hopefully younger members will join our organization and will become members to solidify their ranks and carry them into the future. We can all be proud of the conduct and presentations of our youth in the many and varied contests this past year. No matter the outcome of how they placed, they shall always be winners in my eyes. Thanks to Cindy Charbonneau and the committee for their efforts over the past years. Her report will attest to the admiration they all so richly deserve.

STUDENT LOAN & SCHOLARSHIP

This group, spearheaded by Sister Alma Brooks, continues to be a quiet hardworking unit, in the field of education. Yearly they process the applications of those seeking loans to further their educations, and select those who qualify. My thanks will surely follow Sister Alma's for your generous donations to this fund, that ensures its continuance, for the benefit of those in need.

GRANGE SERVICES & CREDIT UNION

Definitely an asset to our Order, this unit serves us well and provides many benefits and privileges, often at great savings of time as well as money. Being only a phone call away and staffed by great personnel, I quote this phrase- "Try it - you'll like it."

CONNECTICUT AGRICULTURAL FAIR

To those who labored in any capacity during this event, we are indebted. A small loss was experienced this year and I know that the Fair committee will endeavor to reverse the situation. I wish to thank those that sold tickets at the Raffle booths, as well as those who purchased tickets, enabling the raffle to realize a sizable profit. As you may know this is split three ways between Camp Berger, Connecticut Granger, and the Fair itself. We thank Goshen Grange for sponsoring the Raffle and to David Seelye and Cindy & Bob Charbonneau for the necessary work securing the permits, tickets and all other necessary arrangements.

CAMP BERGER

A full camping season blessed with fine weather was enjoyed by happy campers and staff, with only a few empty bunks one week. The camp is physically in fine condition now that the front porch has been replaced, leaving the replacement of the dish washer to finalize the needed projects. Thanks to the Camp committee for maintaining and staffing the Camp worthy of the praise of all. Drop by the Camp and enjoy the facilities for a day in the beautiful surroundings. One last thought would be for the Directors to look into a slight increase in campership fees, as many so-called day camps charge much more without receiving the benefits of meals and lodging.

CODE READING

During my travels about the state, it became obvious that many are uninformed as to the proper wording in many areas, from opening and closing, and even more so in degree work. As some 300 new members have joined this past year, it becomes apparent that they alone would make classes a must, if they are to learn the correct wording. If a Grange wishes to have individual classes, I am sure the state committee will gladly oblige in setting up dates for that purpose, if contacted.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Through the efforts of Brother and Sister Gray, Connecticut has again scored high in total Grange participation in this project. The total hours devoted to the welfare of the communities is mind boggling as is the amount of funds raised to promote many of these activities. Unfortunately these totals are seldom, if ever, viewed by the general public. What a tool it could be as a selling point of the Grange! But I had better let the committee's report speak for itself, and you can thank them for their efforts in a job well done.

CONNECTICUT GRANGER

Plaudits to the Connecticut Granger staff for the expertise which makes our paper one of the best published. How nicely it enables the Granges across our state to learn of the activities of their sister Granges, be kept abreast of State and National matters, and serve as a reminder of special events in the offing. Thanks must also be extended to the Grange correspondents for their monthly reports of Grange activities.

STATE SECRETARY

An efficient Secretary is definitely an asset to any organization and we are privileged to have such a person serve the State Grange. I, like so many of us, rely on her to supply needed information, remind us that reports or payments are due, and see that mailings of any nature are sent to all Granges. Many thanks Marion, from all of us statewide.

IN MEMORIAM

Each issue of the Connecticut Granger lists the names of dedicated members called to that great Grange above. Whether a relative, close friend, or a casual acquaintance, their absence will be noted as well as their contributions to the Order and to mankind. In memory of all I repeat, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

GOOD OF THE ORDER

As we close our meetings on every Grange level, we call upon any and all for remarks, visitors state that they have enjoyed the evening and thanks are extended for the courtesies extended to them. I also am obliged to remark on this year's events as well as those of the total four year term, now coming to an end. The decline in membership is noted by the sparse attendance at regular meetings, many have difficulty in meeting the required quorum without the aide of members holding dual membership with them. Halls are being sold as the cost of maintaining them becomes an unbearable drain for the diminishing membership to cope with. Unfortunately, this is usually the last step before the Charter is surrendered and the membership may or may not transfer to another Grange. Again, I must remind all, that they alone must be the recruiters of new members. One can write volumes on the why and how to, but unless a one on one conversation actually occurs, these writings prove valueless. In one of my writings I urged all to talk it up, not just among ourselves, but with relatives, friends and neighbors. The expression that talk is cheap, may be true, but a new member far outweighs the cost. So spend a few pennies, spend a few minutes, and hopefully receive the reward of

obtaining a new member.

Not all is on the down side however. This year new members far out numbered those in past years, and the trend shows promise of continuing. Then there are the really active Granges busily engaged in so many causes that they attract new members who wish to share in the activities, mainly by word of mouth. Attend one of those meetings and the enthusiasm is such that one leaves the meeting revived with the feeling that nothing can or will deter them. An added plus- a new team will be leading the Grange into the future and hopefully their fresh ideas will prove fruitful.

THANKS

To all who have worn the pink, elected to an office, or appointed, my personal thanks for the aid given, this and past years. Not only in the performance of your duties, but also for the many gestures of faith in my leadership as Master, especially during those periods of frustration. To all the members, thanks are in order for your support and cooperation. The privilege of serving as your Master, the many new friends acquired, will be among the cherished memories of my Grange life.

God bless you all.

*Respectfully submitted,
Carl P. MacLaurin, Master
Connecticut State Grange*