



Halls Were Built to Stay in the Grange Family

By Bob McFarland

When it comes to the question of what happens if a Grange wishes to *sell, encumber or transfer* real property, such as a Grange hall, our bylaws are clear. Such an action requires a process to be completed by the membership of that Grange and the approval of the Executive Committee and Master of the State Grange.

This process is spelled out in the National Grange Digest of Laws, Article XI. These bylaws are available for viewing and downloading from the members' log in section of the California State Grange website: californiagrango.org

When we take our Oath of Obligation, we pledge to abide by our National, State and community Grange bylaws. Our community Grange bylaws and articles of incorporation also provide that we will abide by the National and State Grange bylaws.

We take great pride in knowing that many of our halls were built by the hands of our Grange ancestors. And they must have felt great pride in knowing they created a marvelous resource to be enjoyed by generations of Grangers yet to come. With respect for their original intention and purpose, it is our responsibility to see that these halls remain in the Grange family.

You want to believe that a Grange membership would not consider selling or transferring its hall unless it is the only option available. And if it truly is the only option available, the Executive Committee and Master should approve the sale without prejudice.

Granges should not sell their halls simply because they have less than thirteen members. There are many Granges that have six active members or less and are still carrying-on in the Grange tradition and serving their communities.

Nor do I support the selling of a Grange hall by a membership that has grown tired and simply wants to liquidate and cast-off the assets. I respect the many years of service and dedication of these members, and I must believe that, given a choice, they would rather see those doors remain open and pass the torch to a new

generation of Grangers to carry on their good work.

And in particular, I am bound to do everything within my power to prevent and prosecute any individual who seeks to sell a Grange for personal profit.

If you sell your hall, do so knowing that those Grange doors will never be open again. And perhaps years and decades of faithful service to that community will blow away like dust in the wind. If you don't believe me, come to our State office in Sacramento and I will give

you a sad tour of fading regalia, photo albums, books of minutes, and gavels stacked in dark rooms and closets, never again to see the light of day.

"We are not real estate agents. We are in the business of serving communities."

To my way of thinking, the moon, the sun and Venus must line up in the heavens before we sell or transfer a Grange hall. Witness the recent re-organizations of vacant Grange halls in Biggs, Eastlake, W. Visalia, Rutherford, Fowler, and Sacramento, and soon to come, Davis Creek and Lucerne Valley.

We are not real estate agents. We are in the business of serving communities. It is very difficult to do so, without a hall. Just ask the several Granges that now meet at restaurants and pine for the days before their hall burned down, or they handed it over to a church, or they sold it.

As brothers and sisters, we must help faltering Granges. At the State Grange, it is our duty to find the enthusiasm and resources to lead this effort. We stand ready to encourage and assist a Grange, when they need help to rebuild their membership.

It is our shared responsibility to ensure that our bylaws

are respected and to prevent misguided members from deliberately or accidentally *selling, encumbering or transferring* Grange property without following the process. In support of this effort and to dissuade anyone with less than honorable intentions, the Executive Committee has established a legal trust fund with an initial balance of \$50,000 that will be used in the event legal action is necessary to uphold our bylaws.

If we work together with mutual respect and understanding, such measures will never be necessary.

