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THE FIRST WORD - EDITORIAL

Last week, in the midst of the Pandemic and unprecedented heat wave, a fire broke out across a canyon about ½ mile from our farm. The fire was called in to our local volunteer fire department and Cal Fire, both of which sent out crews to hold the fire until air support arrived and got the situation under control. At our local park which serves as an evacuation assembly point, neighbors began arriving with trailers to help in evacuating livestock and valuables from threatened farms. Social media became one of the major sources of news regarding the progress of the fire, as well as the needs of the folks impacted. Thankfully all turned out well. The fire was put out, folks and animals returned to their homes, and many thanks were given to many people.

What I realized once again was, how privileged I am to be living in a small rural community where folks tend to look out for each other, especially in times of crisis. And it is a time of crisis with the Pandemic, the extreme weather from the climate crisis with the attendant lightning storms and fires; power outages; and social and political unrest.

One thing that seems apparent is that this crisis isn’t going away soon and that the complicated and complex systems we have come to rely on no longer work. The breakdown of traditional distribution systems makes it clear that we can no longer depend on centralized government and corporate institutions to take care of our immediate needs. Dependence on the orderly distribution of non-local and foreign goods needs to be rethought. We cannot return to business as usual. The dynamics of the workplace, the practice of education, and the growing and distribution of food will have to adapt to the new normal.

Just as the community shared their resources during our fire crisis, the same sort of self-reliance was exhibited in the early days of the Pandemic. When essentials became unavailable in the grocery stores, a local bakery became the source for flour and yeast, and restaurants and our Grange, which were closed down for business, made their supplies of toilet paper and disinfectants available to those in need. Individual community members provided surplus and homemade face masks and set up local food and clothing closets.

Communities, unlike large bureaucratic and corporate organizations, can quickly
adapt to the changing conditions brought on by a crisis. The time has come for communities to take the lead in achieving the self-reliance needed to navigate the future. And the Grange, with its network of halls across the state, is the perfect vehicle for accomplishing this change.

Self-Reliance is mentioned in several articles in this month’s edition of Granger. Lanny Cotler provides a historical perspective while President Kent Westwood and Sister Jini Reynolds show what Community and Pomona Granges can be doing now. Michael Foley talks about the role small farms have in establishing self-reliance, and an interview with Steve Heckeroth discusses the role of solar powered tractors and farm equipment as another tool for achieving self-reliance while reducing the carbon emissions fueling the climate crisis. In their articles, Michael Evenson and Michael Greene provide the framework for the Grange to help shape legislation in support of self-reliance and Annie Waters shows us how the Third Degree teaches us self-reliance through charity: “having enough and some to share”.

Be sure to check out the Convention Update compiled by Jan Saxton and Martha Stefenoni, and Ellen Taylor’s poem celebrating the visit of the comet Neowise to our constellation.

You may have noticed that the format of The California Granger has changed from a print to a digital format. This was the result of many comments we received from you regarding the ease of navigating the pages. We hope this change makes for an easier reading experience and look forward to hearing any comments you may have.

Buzz Chernoff is a member of the Granger Editorial Team. He can be contacted at toohighranch@gmail.com.

**PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE**

Brothers and Sisters, first I would like to thank everyone for their prayers, get well wishes, cards, and native American ceremonies. Something worked. I was declared healed on June 22nd and can return to my normal life.

Normal life? Probably not for me, nor for anyone else. I don’t think there’s a “return to normal” on the horizon. Is there any way to see this as a good thing?

We are now in an interesting period of history for the human race and the Grange. The Covid Pandemic has thrust the world and the United States into challenging times. We now have the highest unemployment since the last depression in the 1930’s. People are months behind in
their rents, running up high debt on their credit cards while trying to stay above water and feed their families. This is debt they may never recover from if they are low wage earners with high interest credit cards. Food banks are under stress with their number of recipients increasing. It’s hard to keep up with money and donations to feed the people in our society with nutrition. So if you can help your local food bank with money or volunteering, please do. A lot of Grange Halls are involved with food banks; my own home Grange houses our local food bank. It is a safety net for the under-served of your community.

The really important, rubber-hitting-the-road work is done by our community Granges. The State and National Granges exist to support us in our local work. And crucially, they put in a network to get our resolutions—our bucket list of laws and policies—into the chambers of government.

With our economy plunging into dire straits, some of our food systems are not functioning the way we have always expected them to. It is time for the Grange to move back towards our roots, endorsing the small family farmers of America. Let’s get them back into the Grange and create laws or policies through our governmental resolution process to make them competitive with the corporate farms that will fail us someday when they decide it is not profitable to them anymore. Support your local farmers markets where you are getting fresh, healthy, locally grown food and also supporting your small local farmers who are your neighbors and keeping your money circulating within your community. Grow your own food if you can. Get that garden going in your backyards. Participate in a community garden. Besides helping feed yourself you are helping our pollinators who are also in trouble in our world.

As President of this organization I want you to know that, at 71, I walk my talk. My wife and I have over an acre of fruit trees, berries and vegetables providing a large part of the food we eat and passing on any extra to people in need.

Now I’m asking every community and Pomona Grange to simply gather—perhaps via Zoom—to talk about the needs of your communities. I don’t know what they are; but you and your neighbors do. Build your community’s resilience…as a community. In closing, stay safe, use good hygiene practices and we will get through this pandemic. It is our first viral challenge since the flu in 1918 and we will get through it.

**OVERSEER’S STATION**

Welcome back, Kent! It’s been an honor and a privilege to fill-in for you while you healed. I learned a lot and I got to talk with a lot of Grangers around the state. While we all focus on building resiliency at the community level, the State and National jurisdictions of the Grange are important, too.
One thing I’ve learned is that many California Grangers are not connecting with the National Grange on a regular basis. That’s too bad, because under Betsy Huber’s leadership the National Grange has been moving forward by leaps and bounds. Sister Huber, as our National President, has surrounded herself with a talented group of younger Grangers (Millennials, Gen X, Gen Y) who understand and utilize technology in ways that many of us oldsters appreciate, but haven’t quite mastered. On the digital communications front, they have taken the lead in providing Zoom meetings, trivia nights, talent shows, membership workshops and more.

Also, at the last two National Conventions, Kent and I both noticed that resolutions were being considered—and even passed—on subjects that didn’t seem possible just a few years ago. It’s a reminder that the Grange is not made up of buildings and grounds, it’s made up of people. And people can grow, learn and change their thinking and their vote on old subjects as new information becomes available. Also, albeit slowly, new faces are being welcomed as delegates to the National convention as some states are electing new (and sometimes more youthful) State Presidents.

Finally, in response to the Black Lives Matter protests following the death of George Floyd on May 25th, Betsy wrote a sensitive and beautiful message in the June 12 “Patrons Chain” newsletter, with this auspicious beginning: “The National Grange unequivocally opposes racism. The voices of Grange members across our country join those who cry out in sorrow for the lives lost to racist actions, for the divisions racism has cleaved between us and for the inequality that racism has spawned across our beloved nation.” Wow. She goes on to explain the history of our officer titles and why it is now time to change them. If you’re not receiving the “Patrons Chain” newsletter via email please contact Amanda Brozana, National Grange Communications Director for a copy of the June issue and get on the National Grange mailing list. It is also available on our State Grange website, www.CAStateGrange.org. Check the In The News Section for this an all issues of The Patron's Chain.

As summer peaks, we look ahead to the fall…and our convention. Martha Stefenoni and I will share with you some thoughts and agendas for the California State Grange Session in a section ahead. And it’ll be especially challenging as this year, due to COVID, we shall “gather” virtually by virtue of the Internet.
Before we can talk about the “how,” we have to start with that audacious claim that small farmers feed the world. What? Not “American Agriculture”? We small farmers are part of that, of course, but the truth is that here in the United States, the bigger farms, and especially the biggest, produce most of the crop calories in our country.

But where do those “food crops” go? The largest portion goes to animal feed and fuel. Corn production is huge in this country, but only some 12% of it goes to feed people directly (and that includes in processed foods). Forty-four percent goes to feed-grain, and another 44% to ethanol. And that animal feed is pretty inefficiently used. Only 4% of its food value ends up in our stomachs. Animals have to grow, too.

The fact is that 70% of the world’s food is raised on small farms, most of them under 5 acres. In Central America and the Andes, Africa, India, and most of East and Southeast Asia very small farms supply most of people’s food. And it’s not that they don’t eat meat, though they eat less than we do. It’s that there are more efficient ways to raise livestock than to stuff them full of feed-grains.

But to gain perspective on the advantages of small farming, we should start with the little told story of small farmers’ response to the pandemic. And by small farmers here I mean mostly farms of 5 acres and less, or with a couple hundred cattle or sheep or pigs or fewer – so-called “micro-farms” and livestock operations. At a time back in
March when the big guys were pouring hundreds of thousands of gallons of milk
down the drain, plowing under crops, and disposing of their hogs on the farm because
their markets had disappeared, small farmers around the country were quickly
remaking themselves.

Small produce growers who had depended on farmers markets recreated themselves
as online businesses, taking payment online, making deliveries, actually hiring
people! Food distribution systems like the MendoLake Food Hub, created to link
small farmers with area restaurants and grocers, turned themselves into retail outlets,
mini-Instacarts but featuring locally grown foods. Community Supported Agriculture
grew while supermarket sales staggered. Even small grain growers like our
Mendocino Grain Project, run by former Little Lake Grange Master Rachel Britten,
flourished, filling niches left by national brands when the nationals couldn’t deliver.

What’s the secret of small farmer resilience and agility? There are three big ones.

The first is intensive production methods, whether growing crops or raising livestock.
The best small ranchers manage grazing intensively, breaking up pastures into small
paddocks that cattle can graze deeply without destroying the vegetation, then moving
them on. This takes boots, and eyes, on the ground. The result is a truly regenerative
agriculture: pastures rebound, native species reappear, diversity reigns, and stocking
numbers go up and up.

The same goes for intensive crop production, based on traditional organic gardening
methods but with lots of attention to planning. In the most regenerative systems, like
that of Paul and Elizabeth Kaiser’s Singing Frog Farm in Sebastopol, California, no
tillage is used, roots are left in the ground, and a bit of compost helps ensure
continuing fertility. The Kaiser’s keep plants in the ground continuously, often
replanting as they harvest. They farm year-round. And they plant several different
species, with different demands, side-by-side in the same row.

The second secret of small farm success is continuous innovation. I don’t know a
small farmer who isn’t trying something new every season. New seeds, new
techniques, new tools. Not huge, high-tech tractors, but hand tools or low-cost
machines. After all, the world’s small farmers created all the crops we currently grow
– not Monsanto or Bayer or university trained specialists. They invented hundreds of
techniques, many of them unsurpassed today. Small farmers innovate because they
love farming and the challenges it represents.

Finally, direct sales. Most small farms rely on sales directly to shoppers at farmers
market or a local restaurant or grocery store. The result is an enormous saving in the
cost of doing business. No packing house, no broker, no trucker in the middle. Little
to no advertising. Low transportation costs; low packaging costs. Contrast that with
the situation of larger farmers: According to the National Farmers Union, “farmers and
ranchers receive only 14.6 cents of every dollar that consumers spend on food at
home and away from home."

The situation for large-scale farmers can be disastrous, as the continuing toll of bankruptcies and suicides among American farmers attests. Without huge federal subsidies much grain farming in the country would be impossible. Corn farmers took losses, for example, every year since 2013, when they averaged $311 per acre. The new technologies they have embraced increase productivity but encourage over-production and ruinous prices.

Yet, while the average income per acre in the US is $400, there are numerous small vegetable operations like Singing Frogs Farm that report $100,000 and more in sales per acre. They employ people, and they provide a decent living for their families.

I’ve left out one secret of small farming, one that has guided the farming strategies of farmers throughout history: small farmers can feed themselves and others even in times of hardship. They manage diverse farms with food crops for the family alongside crops for market, livestock on a small scale, and rich ties with a community on which they can rely.

This was once true in the US: Wendell Berry notes that Kentucky’s population grew during the Depression as people returned to the farms they had come from where they knew that everyone got fed. Alas, most of those farms are gone. But there are small farms around the country and people in rural towns who still know how to feed themselves and help their neighbors. We need more of them, especially as times become more and more uncertain.

Michael Foley was twice elected President of Little Lake Grange #670, in Willits, CA. After twenty years in academia, he began farming first in southern Maryland, and then in Willits, California, where he, his wife, and oldest daughter currently operate the small, diversified Green Uprising Farm. Foley is co-founder of the School of Adaptive Agriculture (formerly the Grange Farm School), a farmer training and education program where he is a board member and teacher. He is also the president of the Willits Farmers’ Market and hosts a weekly radio show on KLLG, a low-power FM station owned and operated by Little Lake Grange.
Our nation, in fact, our world, is rapidly changing as we address the Covid-19 virus. The amount of legislation that will be needed to address the changes to “right our ship” is enormous and for that legislation to be effective, it will require everyone’s attention. Grange members can participate in shaping the recovery from the virus because we are uniquely situated historically and organizationally to get involved in this effort. We are familiar with defining our Policy and then taking action in the legislative arena. We are an experienced organization that speaks for rural California. Our history teaches us that when we perceive a wrong public policy, we work to make it right.

Each year at convention, the California State Grange, acting as a delegate body, considers Resolutions that adapt our Policy to the needs of the times. It is at convention that Policy is confirmed and where every Grange has two voting delegates to debate and pass or reject Resolutions.

In 2009, at convention, we refined our Agricultural Mission to state that we “support local small scale and family farms as an essential mainstay of local economies and food security, including support for farmers markets, farmland preservation, community gardens, and gardening & food education programs at Grange halls and in Grange communities.” With that in our collective mind, we found we could wholeheartedly support the local foods in schools program.

As schools jumped into action providing meals to disadvantaged children, the Grange and our allies fought to give schools incentives to purchase from local farmers. We prevailed in the new budget and garnered the Governor’s signature to help schools help their farmers who had lost their restaurant market which had shriveled with the pandemic. This measure provides food security for the community, high quality fresh food for the children, and a needed outlet for local farmers who will be there for their communities through thick and thin.

We also recently weighed in on the Prime Act in the US Congress.

Senate Bill S1620 and House Bill H.R. 2859, the Processing Revival and Intrastate Meat Exemption (PRIME) Act, would remove the federal ban on the sale of meat to you from custom processors within California. This is a bi-partisan bill, co-sponsored by both Republicans and Democrats. Passage of the PRIME Act would support small farmers who currently lack reasonable access to processing facilities, thus helping to
re-localize food systems, build more resilient supply chains, and improve consumer access to locally raised meat. These are Grange values and the California State Grange supports localized food systems in our Agriculture Policy.

We sent the Grange membership a Legislative Alert with more detailed information on the bill and contact information for the legislators, urging members to contact them. In this way, the Grange voice is amplified by the collective action of our Order and our allies. Each member contributes to the making of good public policy and the satisfaction of knowing their voice is heard. As we work with other organizations, our influence over public policy will grow even faster.

Do you have ideas that will make life better during this Special Covid Period? Do you know of legislation that is needed to address problems you see or foresee coming down the road? Have you heard about proposed legislation that you think should become law? If so, you are sifting the ingredients for successful public policy. To bake that cake, follow the recipe outlined by Mike Green in the article THE 5-STEP GRANGE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS in this issue of the newsletter. Share your ideas and thoughts with your Grange Brothers and Sisters. Discuss and refine them. Draft and adopt Resolutions to address the situation at your local Grange which can then be considered by the State Grange. If they become Policy, you can join with Grangers throughout the State to lobby the Legislature and Governor to make good law.

It all starts with you and taking your role seriously as a member of an Order that exists to “To Rescue for Human Society the Native Values of Rural Life.” At no time in our lifetimes has this been more important than now.

Please send me your ideas or proposed legislation you want the Grange to sponsor. The Legislative Committee will determine if the Policy adopted by our Conventions allow us to jump in and support the bills you hear about. And be ready to act for a better California.

*Michael Evenson is the California State Grange Legislative Director. He may be contacted at evenson@igc.org.*

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**THE 5-STEP GRANGE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS -**

*Michael Greene*
The COVID-19 has and will change many aspects of our lives. For example, the 2020 California Legislature got relatively little work done this year because of its frequent shutdowns but, if the virus abates this year, next year’s Legislature will have lots to work on dealing with the pandemic’s many effects.

Since 1873 the GRANGE has been an active presence at the meetings of the California Legislature. By implementing it’s 147-year-old process of inviting, discussing and voting on Resolutions, our 5 Step legislative program may be fully engaged in next year’s state legislature.

STEP 1
The process is initiated when one of the 5,000 Grange members writes a resolution that is voted on and adopted by their local Grange and forwarded to the State Grange for consideration at the Annual Meeting held each Fall.

STEP 2
Resolutions adopted at the annual meeting are next referred to the Grange Legislative Committee which is made up of active local Grange members appointed by the Grange President or their representative. Through frequent meetings and input from Grange members with interest in a specific resolution, the committee then decides which resolutions to focus the Grange’s resources on. These become the priority resolutions.

STEP 3
Priority resolutions are then circulated at the state Capitol, for feedback from the legislative staffs and Chairpersons of Committees to which the resolutions might be referred if introduced as a bill. This and subsequent steps are taken by the committee with the assistance of an outside consultant.

STEP 4
When a bill to implement a resolution is introduced, the next step is crucial: getting legislative support. Grange members are encouraged to write letters to the legislatures. The legislative committee works at connecting local Grangers, willing to work in support of the bill, with legislators representing their districts. The committee also encourages Grangers to be in contact in support of the bill, with their legislators who are members of the Committees which will hear the bill. Additionally, the committee will prepare and circulate informational materials in support of the bill and will recruit support from other organizations to help the GRANGE lobby for passage of the bill.
STEP 5
As the bill proceeds through both the Assembly and Senate chambers of the legislature, the GRANGE Legislative Committee will prepare supporting testimony for the bill and arrange for its presentation at Committee hearings and circulate other materials for public distribution in support of the bill.
If the bill passes the legislature, the GRANGE will then lobby the Governor to enact the bill.

*Michael Geene is the California State Grange Legislative Consultant. He may be reached at `cdsconsulting@surewest.net*

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**CALIFORNIA STATE GRANGE ANNUAL SESSION UPDATE**

**CALIFORNIA STATE GRANGE ANNUAL SESSION**
October 3 - 4, 2020
Location - ZOOM - Grange Hubs - Headquarters - Facebook - YouTube

We're geared up and the clock is ticking down to the first ever virtual California State Grange Convention. Due to COVID-19 restrictions we are not able together as a large group, but don't despair! We are planning a two-day fully interactive streaming State Grange Convention. We are setting up satellite locations throughout the state where Grange delegates can gather in small groups and through the magic of meeting platforms like ZOOM and GoToMeeting attend the convention. If you are not a delegate you can also virtually attend from the comfort of your home. You will need to register and you will be sent information on how to login either as a delegate or an interested Granger.

**Important Dates & Information**

9/01/202 Resolution deadline (other than State Grange By-Law resolutions)
9/11/2020 Registration Deadline for all wishing to attend – Check the State Grange website, Facebook page, or look for an email from the CA State Grange Secretary.

9/11/2020 Expo Registration Closes – Check the State Grange website or expo@castategrange.org
9/26/2020 Virtual Showcase of Talent – Check with State Grange Lecturer, Katie
Squire
10/3/2020 Session opens & work begins. Election of Officers, Resolutions, 5th Degree short-form Obligation Ceremony & presentation of the 6th Degree (from a slightly different point of view)
10/4/2020 Memorial Service, conclude resolutions and Installation of Officers

Thanks to Jan Saxton and Martha Stefenoni for compiling the information for this article.

THIRD DEGREE - THE CHARITY OF CERES & POMONA
- Annie Waters

“The Third Degree symbolizes Autumn on the Farm, when the ripened grains and fruits are garnered.”

Candidates – Harvesters and Gleaners
Scene – a Farm in the Harvest Season
Lesson – Charity
Symbols – Autumn, Adulthood, Flowers, the Fruit, the Ripened Grain
Patronesses – Ceres and Pomona as symbols of abundance and gratitude for what has been given
Emblem – the Sickle “…it is ancient and honorable; as an emblem of our Order, there is none more so. It speaks of peace and prosperity, and is the harbinger of joy. It is used not merely to reap the golden grain for the sheaf, but, in the field of mind and heart and soul, to gather every precious stalk, every opening flower, and every desirable fruit. Thus shall the implement prove a reminder…of present prosperity and peace, and its prophecy of future plenty and re-sowing”.

The emblem of Ceres is the Sickle, giving attention to our harvests of joy and abundance, “having enough and some to share”, thus showing the concept of Charity. The emblem for Pomona is the Cornucopia, filled with abundance freely given, the generous Charity of fruits.

“Brothers and Sisters, since the last degree the seasons have changed again. In the First Degree – Springtime – you prepared the soil with Faith. In the Second Degree – Summer – you planted and cultivated, nurturing Hope.”
“It is now the Autumn, or Harvest time: We must reap for the mind as well as for the body, and from the abundance of our harvest, in good deeds and kind words, dispense Charity.”

According to the 1874 edition of the Subordinate Grange Manual, the Third Degree salutation means “A good Harvester dispenses Charity”. It may be to share your abundant harvest. It may be money, time or expertise, shared with a cheerful heart. And it may be by giving others the benefit of the doubt by actively working to understand them and giving assistance when needed.

The 3rd Degree teaches – “As flowers and vines cover the rough places in nature, so we urge you to cover the …failings of others with the mantle of CHARITY. Speak good of others. Gather up memories of others’ virtues, and pass by their faults...” Thus in the 3rd Degree, the concepts of gratitude for an abundant harvest, along with sharing and charity to others, are interwoven. Enough, and some to share.

~~Authors’ note: Except where noted, the words above held “within quotes” are taken directly from the 3rd Degree Language of the 1991 Manual of Subordinate Granges

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Annie Waters is a member of Little Lake Grange and a regular contributor to the Granger

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NEOWISE - Ellen Taylor
NEOWISE
BY ELLEN TAYLOR

A faithless comet promised luck
To Bonaparte's far-reaching eye.
The wavering Creeks watched, thunderstruck,
Ellen Taylor is a member of the Mattole Grange and a regular contributor to the Granger.

PRODUCING AN ON-LINE CONCERT AT THE REDWOOD VALLEY GRANGE - Jini Reynolds

When this whole shelter in Place order showed up, we like many other community centers and local businesses were brainstorming, “How do we stay alive?” We pretty much depend on our hall rentals to keep our doors open. I saw an advertisement for a fundraiser to be held virtually for a local Children’s theater in Ukiah. I paid and watched this performance that not only raised money for their cause, but it raised my spirits.
I soon after contacted the players involved, three very talented technicians. Steve Wilson, our lighting tech that set up our lights at the Grange, was my first contact. He led me to Yanahay the sound guy and a young man who was not available to be our video person. I began the search for a videographer. Spencer Brewer one of our own Redwood Valley Grange (RVG) members has been involved and has produced many a show in our Valley. I needed to see what he thought of this idea. I wanted to have our very own virtual concert and set the stage for others to use our hall and equipment for some outreach, fundraising, awareness raising and let’s face it, MUSIC and FUN!

Spencer was all over it. Wendy our RVG president and the Queen of Boogie Woogie was definitely on board. She and her husband Kirk Harwood would play. We were ready to roll. Oh yes, the videographer. I had a young friend who did such things in the Bay Area. He was sheltering in place in the Sierras at a family cabin when he got the call and came right up. We started out with just an email thread with these players and it grew and grew. We soon added Clay to our thread, another RVG member that works with our local internet server. Soon into the game Steve and Spencer suggested Kirk Fuller, from the college as a team member. Spencer suggested that he would like to play along with Wendy and Kirk, and we needed Alex De Grassi whose concert had inspired this whole thing to begin with. Yes, Yes! Everyone was in.

Wow it really started to get exciting and I was feeling pumped and frightened at the same time. How can we do this and make money for our Grange. The team suggested a Master of Ceremony that could work a crowd. That is when we contacted Tom Allman, our recently retired sheriff. Of course, he was in. He had worked with most of us before and he is a great team player. Then we needed public relations (PR) and some stages set. That is when we added Marybeth Kelly our RVG Secretary and EC member. She was on the PR ASAP. I did a little recruiting of some young muscles and my husband and before we knew it the stage was out on the floor.

Steve had recommendations as to what the stages should offer to match up with his lights. I love to set stages, so we were off in the running again. Three stages up and built, amazing musicians tuning instruments, Spencer tuning the piano and we even touched it up. Wendy and Kirk set up their set and Tom brought in his Tuba lamp that Spencer had made. I made food for all and we had a run through on Friday night. All players were in place. We had three cameramen, one sound guy, Steve on lights. Peter was our timekeeper and kept everyone on track. Wendy and Marybeth set up to person the call ins, and then - OH NO!!

At the last minute Sunday, we realized that we needed to keep people off our internet to have enough bandwidth. That meant we needed security outside to keep folks from rolling up in our driveway and using our internet. So a call went out to Jeff and Charlie and we were back on. Our show started at precisely 5:00 and ended right at
6:00. The shout out in the room was fantastic. We did it, and we raised $3800!. Many thanks to all involved. We are looking forward to our next show. Stay tuned.

_Jini Reynolds is a member of the Redwood Valley Grange who keeps good things happening. If you have not seen this concert, you can check it out HERE._

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**INTERVIEW WITH STEVE HECKEROOTH, ELECTRIC TRACTOR PIONEER - L. Cotler & B. Chernoff**

[Image of a man in a cowboy hat driving an electric tractor]

**LC:** The Grange learned of your work at a demonstration of one of your prototype electric tractors. What is there about solar powered tractors that connects to the Grange and regenerative, sustainable agriculture?

**SH:** What electric tractors can do is get us off of fossil fuel, which is probably the biggest issue facing humanity right now. The transformation of the Grange to regenerative agriculture is a tremendous thing. And because of the climate change crisis that we’re facing, we have to define ways to stop burning fossil fuel. I’ve dedicated my life to finding alternatives to fossil fuel and I’ve been doing that for 50 years. We have the same goal, regenerative agriculture; making the soil the medium that grows the food rather than chemical fertilizers and pesticides and fossil fuel. From an efficiency and global warming standpoint, electric tractors are the perfect solution for regenerative agriculture.

**BC:** I have heard that your electric tractor can come as a kit.

**SH:** Yes. What makes that possible is the simplicity of electric vehicles. A diesel
engine has 300 or 400 moving parts, where an electric motor has one moving part that will run for 80 years without any maintenance at all. So, when you get in a disaster relief or mobile power situations you can plop a container down with a solar array, put it on top of the container—then pull the tractor out and be farming or have a mobile source of power for essential services needed in disaster relief.

**LC:** What size solar panels are you using and how many would you need?

**SH:** Well the modules today are about 300 watts each. So that’s about 24 modules. Every farm should have a barn roof facing south.

**LC:** Do you have the exclusive right to manufacture and make and distribute these tractors?

**SH:** For those we put together from kits, we have the exclusive right worldwide. For the ones that are made in India, we have exclusivity in Canada and several states in the United States. Our biggest issue is the battery cost. We’re spending about $7000 and even though it’s coming down it’s still way too expensive for developing markets. We couldn't even sell them to the farmers here. I've had to switch my focus to vineyards, equestrian centers and hobby farmers: markets that can afford the higher cost of electric.

**LC:** You said you had 12 orders. What's an order cost?

**SH:** Well, the CET is $25,800 for a 30-horsepower equivalent, four-wheel drive compact tractor. It's all on our website. The Utility Model is $45,000 but when we get the kit together, that price will come down quite a bit. We're working on an E-70. It is a 70-horsepower narrow tractor for vineyards and orchards that will go for about $75,000.

**LC:** Is there any working farmer using a tractor of yours right now?

**SH:** Absolutely. We've delivered five to Canada, and several to the east coast. We just delivered the first one to Santa Barbara, a couple weeks ago, and then the second one to Point Arena. And there's several more customers in California.

What is holding us back is the California Air Resources program. They aren’t certifying electric tractors. They are paying farmers 80% of the cost to replace their old diesel tractors for new ones. All the emission controls on the new ones are less efficient than the old ones because of more greenhouse gas emissions. We just got a grant from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District for half a million dollars to build the E-70 and turn the Utility into a kit. That's going to make certification of electric tractors possible.

**LC:** SH, how do you think the work you're doing can impact the Grange and regenerative and sustainable agriculture?

**SH:** The whole idea of regenerative agriculture is to be able to have a planet that can sustain life. And the way our monocultural industrial agriculture is going now that's not happening. The soil is dead. The plants aren't healthy. They're not good for use as food because they've had poison sprayed on them. Regenerative agriculture is about making healthy soil that makes healthy plants that makes healthy people and you can't do that with a diesel tractor. If you use a diesel tractor, you're putting more CO2 in the air than you're ever going to sequester in the carbon that you're putting into the...
roots of the plants in the soil. A plant's growth is a net zero sum. Over time, it grows and then it decays. It puts the oxygen and carbon back into the air so that the only way you can really sequester is to use electric tractors powered by sunshine. But the real solution is to leave carbon in the ground. It took billions of years to make the planet livable by putting the carbon in the ground for us to have an oxygen rich atmosphere. When you burn fossil fuels you're reversing the millions of year process that made this planet habitable. In less than 200 years we've learned to reverse that process. If we continue the way we're going, we're not going to be a habitable planet. We've got to stop putting CO2 in the atmosphere. The only way to have regenerative agriculture is to stop using diesel tractors and start using solar charged electric tractors.

**LC:** What can the Grange do to help your work, your company, your effort?

**SH:** Invest, buy a tractor. We've got a crowdfunding campaign to raise money to build out an assembly facility. And it's not only for agriculture. Cities are very interested because there are targets that they must meet in terms of air quality and greenhouse gas emissions. They can't do that with their diesel street sweepers, park mowers, and similar equipment. So, we've got a market that goes all across the spectrum of every tractor that's used.

**LC:** Let's just say Little Lake Grange wanted to buy a tractor to use collectively in the future? Does your tractor lend itself to that?

**SH:** You wouldn't have any problems in a sharing situation. The first tractor we ever sold was to a farmer in Canada that was funded by his customers. His customers all put money in for him to get an electric tractor because they wanted him to give them food that didn't have diesel exhaust on it. They got together, they created a fund, and he was able to buy the tractor. He’s slowly paying it back with lower cost food.

**BC:** What sort of legislation would you see as being beneficial to you?

**SH:** Any letter writing campaign. The legislature gets so few letters that a concentrated letter writing campaign, asking why the air district is paying 80% of the cost of a diesel tractor that spews more greenhouse gas emissions than the one they replaced, would do wonders. If you read the legislature's intent, it was to use the technology that produced the least amount of greenhouse gases and the least amount of pollution.

**LC:** Anything else cross your mind SH with regard to what you would like to get out into the world of the Grange.

**SH:** The main thing I want to suggest is that we use this pandemic as a way to realign people's thinking. In Hawaii where they import 90% of their food, farmers are starting to realize they can grow food for people in their own communities. If the community could get together, all the people would benefit from organic produce. That's what happened in Canada. That's what's happening in Hawaii. The people are getting together and they're supporting their local farmers by donating enough money to get a tractor and then they get the good produce. Currently we're catering to those markets that can afford the tractors: vineyards, equestrian centers and horse arenas, cities and the hobby farms. Those are the markets we have to cater to until we get big enough so that we can afford to make lower margins on the farm tractor. But by
all means, encourage your communities to support your local farms and get them into an electric tractor.

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**THE FINAL WORD - EDITORIAL**

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**THE GRANGE AS COMMUNITY INCUBATOR**

What was there about the Grange that, in the late 19th century, took off like wildfire? Membership exploded. The right idea at the right time. An organization to help the farmer stop the gigantic corporate monopolies, especially the railroads, from taking the lion’s share of what the farmers grew. Does the Grange have such a serious purpose today? Today, Big Ag’s approach to feeding us is destroying the land…and the rivers, and the forests of this nation. Yes, the Grange has a serious purpose today! The Grange must lead in teaching and supporting food production practices that nurture and improve the health of the soil…the rivers and the forests….

All the while, there are millions of people across this land who want to grow, or support those who grow, healthy food from healthy soil. Is this part of our Mission Statement today? Absolutely!

Few would deny that we’re going through a profoundly unstable and dangerous time. And with COVID, our society will never be the same. There is no going back to “normal.” There is only the new normal creating itself right now. It’s complex; it’s dangerous. Are we prepared? It was more than a rhetorical question we asked in our last issue: “Can the Grange Survive the Coronavirus?” We believe our Mission Statement can help guide us towards a sustainable future. It must start at the grassroots level— with our community Granges.

The Mission Statement of the CSG is comprehensive, concise, practical.
Since 1873 the mission of the California State Grange has been to serve, steward and teach the virtues of the land to our children and community. We maintain our commitment to grassroots advocacy, supporting farmland preservation, farm development, community service, sustainable and regenerative agriculture, and the consumer’s role in the food production system.

The opening lines to Charles Dickens’ great novel David Copperfield begins thus: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show." We believe that the next few years will determine whether the Grange will be a viable and significant organization in our “brave new (post-COVID) world”.

Food: The Gift of the Granger. We have to start looking at the processes of creating food for ourselves…and helping others to build resiliency into the communities in which they farm. The yield per acre is no longer the gold-standard to be sought. Now it is the health of the food which depends on the health of the soil. Many Grangers are recognizing the importance of REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE.

Regenerative agriculture is a conservation and rehabilitation approach to food and farming. It focuses on topsoil regeneration, increasing biodiversity, improving the water cycle, enhancing ecosystem services, supporting bio-sequestration, increasing resilience to climate change, and strengthening the health and vitality of our arable land. This perspective must underlie Grange efforts to achieve our Mission. There are many ways the Grange can support this.

Educating our communities how to improve their diet without spending too much money is a worthy goal. There’s no need to break the bank and go to special stores in order to lead a healthy lifestyle. Everything you need is available; you just need to know where to look. Helping communities do this must become a mainstay goal of our community service. One way is to form a Resiliency in my Hometown Committee. Pick two co-chairs. Seek volunteers both inside and outside Grange membership. Building resilience in a community is a collective action. Imagine a dream team, made up of leaders and first responders in your community.

As we said, most of us know, intuitively, that there’s no going back to the old normal. Climate, Soil Depletion, Black Lives Matter, lost jobs, closing businesses, Police…COVID. However dangerous COVID-19 proves to be, there are too many very wealthy people and huge corporations profiting from the Pandemic right now. No one knows what the future will bring, but we can speculate and prepare. There are no laws against that…yet. Could the Pandemic shape the world, as much as World War II and the Great Depression did?

Our National and State Grange offices cannot make our communities more RESILIENT against whatever hard times are ahead. It’s up to us at the community
Grange level. The State and National Grange jurisdictions are there to help us in that. The good thing about the communities we live in is that in a more-or-less unified effort, we can stand up to the exploitative threats in the most efficient, incorruptible, and democratic ways—the very way we conduct Grange affairs.

The early Grange was quite successful in increasing the RESILIENCY, EDUCATION, AND WELL-BEING of the American farmers. The need today, in the new normal, may be to refocus our communities on building up RESILIENCY. Our Mission Statement speaks directly to this. If our work exemplifies building local RESILIENCY, there’s no doubt in my mind that friends and neighbors will find ways to join the effort. If we can create a meme that excites the younger generation—our future is assured.

_Lanny Cotler is a member of the Granger Editorial Team. He may be contacted at lanny@lcotler.com._

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Officers, directors and deputies can be contacted through our website at: www.CAStateGrange.org

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