

# Grand President's Message

February/March 2018

As I write this, I'm almost exactly four months until the opening of the 141st Grand Parlor. As I advanced through the chairs, I heard a common refrain from many Past Grand Presidents that my term would fly by, but be sure to enjoy it along the way. As I enter the last third of my Grand Presidency, I find that they were right on both counts.

As I've made my rounds to as many parlors as I am able, I realize that I'm closing the loop of my first year as a Grand Officer. In my first year, then Grand President Dave Allen told me that he assigned my visits so that I'd see that "not every parlor is like Excelsior". It was a good lesson then, and is a better lesson now and I've tried to imitate that philosophy in my own Visiting Officer assignments. No matter the common threads that we share as Native Sons, regional, geographic, historical and social differences mark each and every parlor as unique. Whether those differences began a century ago, or ten years ago, they are both our strength and our weakness.

Strength, in that every locality has that one specific element that attracts and retains members. Whether it is a bingo game after the meeting; running a local museum; managing a parlor owned business; implementing a local plaque and dedication program; Pedro before a meeting; marching in local parades; having a parlor open house tied in with community events; or local charitable endeavors; these are the glue that hold a parlor together and build the fabric of success.

Weakness, in that if we are too insular we miss the greater mission that makes us all Native Sons. Dedication to the preservation of the Spirit of '49, that it should not fade from the memory of man; preservation of the history of our great State, whether it be a dedication of an historic site or restoration of an historic building; support of the two, fine Native Sons charities; or participation in broader, regional, and Grand Parlor events and activities. Building fraternal bonds throughout the Order, sharing the successful ideas of your parlor with other parlors is the key to our future success.

It is not to say that homogeny is required among our parlors, but I would suggest that observation of our most important traditions and rituals, adherence to our stated mission, are integral parts of what make Native Sons who we are both as members and as an Order. This means local, PPA or Grand Parlor initiations; performance of our beautiful funeral ritual at the passing of a Brother; observance of our meeting ritual; or becoming involved with preservation of California history. Whether it manifests itself as a dedication or support of preservation and restoration of a historic site it is imperative we not lose sight of our original mission.

This year I asked that each Supervising District Deputy arrange at least two dedications in their district with mixed results. As of today, I have performed eight dedications with

seven more in the works, which brings me halfway to my goal. If any Brother has a potential dedication, please bring them to the attention of your SDDGP, or me directly at [grandpresident@nsgw.org](mailto:grandpresident@nsgw.org). This is one item in the budget that I think is the most worthwhile in spreading the fame and mission of the Native Sons, and I hope to bring that line item sliding in, gasping for air with not one red cent left.

Finally, I'd like to come full circle with John C. Fremont #293 in Gustine. This was one of the very first parlors I visited as a Grand Officer, and as PGP Dave Allen hoped, it was eye opening for the differences from what I had perceived the Native Sons to be as an organization. However, I think PGP Allen's plan worked better than even he hoped, as I have made a visit to John C. Fremont every year since then (except one!) for their official visit, and I plan to continue to visit them even after I become a has-been. This was where I first learned about Pedro (and the Central Valley rules); this was where I found that not every parlor follows the ritual line by line; this was where I felt very much welcomed and at home because the members were so much like my family who comes from this area; where I received my first perk as a Grand Officer (thanks for the duck hunting invite, Bill); this was where I got my first idea to implement if I ever became Grand President (thanks for broadening the concept of a membership award beyond a belt buckle); and most importantly, this was where I realized that no matter our differences or distance, that the Native Sons are a great bunch of people and I'm lucky to be one, and you are too.