

Grand Presidents Message

August-September 2019

As well as being a rancher, my father was a catskinner, a bulldozer operator. He worked his entire post-war life with, among other equipment of the same era, a WWII vintage Caterpillar D8 with a hand-cranked starting engine. The starting engine, or pony motor, had bad compression and was a miserable beast to get started. There was an electric-start up-grade that could have been installed but day after day I would watch him crank and cuss and crank some more, until the engine coughed to life. How many more productive hours would he have had in a day if he had modernized, even a little, can never be known. Perhaps the electric start was too expensive, and he felt it a “luxury,” but, honestly, I think that my dad just liked doing it the old way. I always found it amusing that he would joke about my mother’s family refusing to modernize when he was every bit as bad sometimes.

Native Sons are curious critters. We all see the challenges that we face, and we all know that some things have to change. As officers we hear that we need to do something, try something new, do some-thing different. And then we do. That’s when we discover that we have trampled upon someone’s favorite “tradition” or their sacred cow; “That’s not the way we have always done it!” Nope, sure isn’t.

Please understand that your officers do not operate in a vacuum. We talk about these challenges and how to meet them. We throw ideas at the wall and look for one to stick. Ideas are debated and refined, sometimes they die from some insurmountable flaw, sometimes they die because no one was willing to buck the opposition. But some develop and grow until they are rolled out when the time appears to be right. That’s when the ideas are tested by the real world and they live or die by their merit and by the energy that we are willing to put into them.

For several years we have been trying to move The Native Son newsletter to electronic distribution. This newsletter is the single largest line item in our budget, so two years ago the delegates to Grand Parlor were asked to make a choice between a digital newsletter for a relatively low cost, or to continue producing a printed newsletter at a much higher cost. Despite all of the benefits of a digital newsletter, the delegates chose to continue with the status quo, so we tried to just collect email addresses and let people opt out on their own. We have collected about 1400 email addresses from members, but few have opted to stop the printed copy.

This year, I have decided to try and turn around the approach. We are not going to try and take away your newsletter; you have said you want it, you will continue to get it. Instead, the Board of Grand Officers have voted to support my proposal to offer a \$3 per capita rebate to any parlor that entirely switches to digital and removes all of its members from the hard-copy mailing list.

Let me be very clear; this is not a penalty. It is a reward for moving forward.

Amador Parlor #17, totally unaware of my plan, has already stepped up and will be the first Parlor to be eligible for the rebate. Recording Secretary Harmston contacted me last month asking to have his entire Parlor removed from the snail-mail list. Al-most his entire Parlor is going digital and the Parlor will print and provide for the rest. I expect other Parlors will follow suit in very short order.

I should note, that a limited number of printed cop-ies will continue to be printed for archival and other purposes.

This rebate will only last for one year and then it will be up to the next Board to continue, to rescind or replace the initiative based on the results we see this year.

Many years ago, I worked for a neighboring rancher. He was also one of my high school ag teachers and, like most old cowboys, he always had wisdom to share (ask me why, if you rope a deer, never tie hard-and-fast, and never jerk it). One day we were building a long drift fence on the ranch and I had just accidentally broken a brand-new strand of barbed wire. I was feeling pretty dejected. Steve said; "Don't worry about it; you learned. I would rather that you did something, even if it's wrong. I can fix something done wrong; I can't fix nothing." Well, we've done something.

**In friendship, loyalty and charity,
James King
Grand President 143rd Grand Parlor
Native Sons of the Golden West**