

## Steel Elected 21st Master Of National Grange

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Steel has been in the Grange since he was 8, joining the Big Knob Juvenile Grange # 226, and still lives on the New Sewickley farm where he was raised.

"It's about 100 acres — the road came by and took a few out," Steel said. "When I was a kid it was called a 'general farm' ... chickens and pigs and cows. ... It's now planted in hay and small grain."

Steel was elected Master of the Big Knob Grange # 2008 in Beaver County while still studying at Geneva College. After finishing his degree in chemistry, he worked for seven years at the Shippingport Nuclear Power Station.

He has served as Master of Big Knob Juvenile Grange, Big Knob Grange # 2008 (present Master) and Beaver County Pomona # 66 (elected in 1985). He served as the Pennsylvania State Grange Assistant Steward from 1964-1970. He was elected Overseer of the Pennsylvania State Grange in 1992 and served as the Master of the Pennsylvania State Grange from 1996 through 2002.

Steel is not new to the National Grange scene in Washington, D.C. In 1969, he became the director of youth activities for National Grange. He also supervised the production and supply departments and organized the Grange-Farm Film Foundation. He was elected to the National Grange Executive Committee in 1998.

Grangers around the country are aware that the Grange membership has declined in recent years, in part because of the drastic decrease in numbers of people living in rural areas and the growth of competing claims on people's attention.

"The Grange is trying to renew itself by becoming a more open organization to the public," Steel said. "That's difficult, having been a closed, secret fraternity for 125 years or more."

"When it was founded, the Grange was viewed with suspicion, just as unions and other organizations for working people were," Steel said.

"In the early days, they had to know whether they were being infiltrated by the enemy, which was the railroads, the government."

"That habit of insularity has died hard," he said.

That, in combination with an aging population that is often "comfortable where they are and don't want to move," he said, has diminished the Grange.

"Believe it or not, I faced some Granges in Pennsylvania that had the attitude of, 'We've got our 12 people and that's all we want.'"

Steel wants to increase membership by attracting young people, and to work to make the Grange an effective advocate for rural dwellers on a variety of issues.

Under his leadership, the Pennsylvania Grange became one of the three largest in the country.

## Exotic Pest Introductions Take A Toll On America's Forests

Robert Martynowych  
DCNR Forester  
Tom Hall

DCNR Plant Pathologist

Non-native or exotic invasive species are entering North America at an alarming rate, and most of them through international trade.

More than \$25 million has been spent in New York, Chicago, and New Jersey in trying to eradicate and stop the spread of the Asian longhorned beetle.

There are those who would argue that fears of these invasive species are an overblown "Chicken Little" approach.

At one time many believed the gypsy moth would mean the end of oak in Pennsylvania. However, targeted programs to suppress gypsy moth outbreaks and the introduction of various biological control agents, including both a fungal and viral disease of gypsy moth larvae, have helped to reduce the severity of gypsy moth outbreaks.

Consequently the dire predictions for our oak forests have not panned out, although the gypsy moth does have significant economic and environmental impacts on forest ecosystems.

However, one need not look back to far in Pennsylvania history to find a situation where a non-native organism that causes chestnut blight, essentially meant the end of an important tree species, the American Chestnut.

A dedicated group of scientists and citizens, have volunteered

their time and resources to develop American chestnut sources with resistance to blight in an effort to restore the American chestnut to the eastern forests.

They have made substantial gains in developing a limited number of resistant American chestnut lines for field assessment.

Other exotic pest introductions have taken a toll on America's forests.

Dutch elm disease, ash yellows, dogwood anthracnose, and hemlock woolly adelgid are but a few non-native invaders that have forever changed the character and condition of our rural and urban forest landscapes.

All have been brought to North America in conjunction with movement of plant materials from other countries.

New non-native organisms are entering the United States at an alarming rate. The emerald ash borer and citrus longhorned beetle are some of the more recent arrivals.

The emerald ash borer was first discovered in Michigan and Ontario in 2002 and now has been confirmed in Ohio. A new fungal pathogen associated with "sudden oak death" is killing tanoak and California live oak trees in California and Oregon and may threaten eastern oak species if the pathogen can not be eradicated.

Most of these invasive species are carried into North America on imported wood packing materials, imported plant materials,

or timber products. The USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Department of Homeland Security are responsible for preventing these non-native species from entering the United States through product inspections at Ports-of-Entry and enforcement of plant and animal quarantines.

However, sufficient staff and funds to conduct more inspections are simply not available nor feasible in order to examine the huge quantities and diversity of trade goods entering the United States.

Flexible international trade agreements that encourage commodity trading stretch our ability to inspect goods entering the United States.

Landowners are advised to become better aware of potential exotic insect, weed, and disease pest problems and to practice integrated pest management control options on various forest pests whenever possible.

For the rapidly increasing and troubling new pest introductions, the only advice one can give is to become better acquainted with this issue and to support legislative initiatives to prevent the introduction of new pests that can cause severe damage to our agricultural and natural resources systems.

To learn more about the scope of the problem and what to do, contact your local forest district, or visit DCNR's website through the PA PowerPort at [www.state.pa.us](http://www.state.pa.us), PA Keyword: "forests."

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