

GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Trip to Alaska

Our Elks Travel Team, composed of PGER Roger True, Grand Lodge Trustee Mike Luhr and his wife Barb, Washington State President Dennis Ramsey and his wife Huey, and Ron and I left Seattle for Wrangle, Alaska on a beautiful Monday morning, August 20th. The GER visit to Alaska does not coincide with their State Convention, so the Grand and First Lady are treated to a number of lodge visits and fantastic adventures. All of our travel was done by airplane as there is a very limited road system in Southeast Alaska, the area of our visit.



Our traveling group in Alaska in front of the Wrangell Lodge.



Outside the Chief Shakes Clan House in Wrangell.

Upon our arrival in Wrangell, we were met at the airport by Alaska State President Jon Shennett and his wife Cathy, State Secretary Paul Whitney and his wife Jeanne, Southeast District Deputy Kerry Tomlinson and a number of other Alaska Elks.

We dropped our luggage at the Stikine Hotel and walked to the Wrangell Lodge where we were treated to a delicious lunch.

Following lunch, our group toured the Nolan Center Museum on local history and visited a reconstructed 1700's Chief "Shakes" Clan House. Then Mike took Ron to view the unique Wrangle Community Golf Course, carved out of the woods, with narrow fairways, artificial tees and greens, and built over wood chips on otherwise unusable boggy land.



View of the Stikine River from our hotel in Wrangell.

Unfortunately Roger True had to fly home Monday evening due to a son's unexpected illness. (After several days in the hospital, his son was able to return home and was resting comfortably.) The rest of the group returned to the Wrangle Lodge that evening for a Reception and Dinner Hosted by Adam Morse, Exalted Ruler, and his wife Tasha. Ron spoke briefly to the attendees about membership and Community Grants. He also congratulated the Lodge on their membership gain and ENF contributions.

Early Tuesday morning we left Wrangell and traveled by jet boat about 30



Black bear fishing for Salmon in Anan Creek.



Brown bear in Anan Creek.



Ron and Nancy with one of our guides hiking out after seeing the bears at Anan.

miles to the Anan Creek Observatory to observe bears in their natural habitat as they hunted for salmon. We were accompanied by two guides with rifles just in case we encountered trouble along the trail. The weather, salmon, and bears cooperated and we had a great experience. Before



The observation deck at Anan Creek. Beautiful and very peaceful spot to enjoy nature. Also saw several bald eagles flying in this area.

returning to Wrangell, we enjoyed a picnic lunch on the boat in a beautiful Alaskan bay with snow capped mountains all around. Volunteer Chef Carrie Wallace, Treasurer and a PER of the Wrangle Lodge and Past State President of the Alaska Emblem Club, prepared the picnic and all of the food we enjoyed while in Wrangle.

We flew from Wrangell to Juneau Tuesday evening, with a two hour layover in Ketchikan. At the Ketchikan airport, we were met by Lodge Trustee Dave Blick, Exalted Ruler Ed Kahle and his wife Amy, and Chaplain Joni Bates who provided a delicious lasagna dinner with all the trimmings at the airport. We arrived in Juneau about 9:00 p.m., where we were greeted by Rick Mourek, Lodge Advisor and Larry "Honey Bear" White who transported us to our hotel, where we retired directly to our rooms after a long, eventful, and enjoyable day.



Dinner at the airport in Ketchikan provided by the Ketchikan Lodge.

Wednesday morning after a much appreciated late and leisurely breakfast, we were off to watch the whales. The great weather continued as we encountered a number of whales and a few seals during our two hour excursion. We had to be back at the Juneau Airport by 1:00 p.m. for our next flight, this time by small plane (a 10 seater) over the awesome mountains and Juneau glaciers and ice fields to Skagway. In Skagway we were met by Brittney Thomas, Exalted Ruler of the Skagway lodge, and taken to the lovely



Whale watching in Juneau.

White House Bed and Breakfast.



Flying over glacier and ice fields between Juneau and Skagway in a 10 seat plane on a gorgeous bright and sunny day. More of God's beauty in Alaska.



Ron getting his ticket for the narrow gauge rail trip up White Horse Pass.

Wednesday evening we enjoyed a Reception and Dinner at the Skagway Lodge where we cooked our own steaks over the indoor open pit grill. Thursday morning we



Ron and the conductor on the train.



Ron and the young ladies entertainment at the Skagway Lodge.

boarded the narrow gauge railroad for a trip up in the mountains to Carcross, Canada, and returned to town for a tour of the Red Onion, a famous brothel during the Gold Rush days. We had lunch at the Skagway Lodge before heading to the airport for our flight back to Juneau. Thursday evening we joined the Lodge members of the Juneau Lodge for dinner and a celebration of the grand re-opening of their Lodge. We were hosted by Exalted Ruler Roxie Starr.



View from our hotel window in Sitka.



Mud slide area in Sitka.



Black bear orphans.



Brown bear orphan.



Bald Eagles recovering from accidents.

Early Friday morning, we boarded a plane for Sitka and the home lodge of State President Jon Shennett. After dropping off our luggage at the hotel, we were off to visit

The Fortress of the Bears, a sanctuary for brown and black bears who have been rescued. Then on to the Raptor Center, home to many injured eagles, owls, and other birds of prey. The center rehabilitates the birds and, when possible, sets them free, back into the wild. Friday night dinner was with Lodge Officers and Past State Presidents at the Sitka Lodge, which was within walking distance of the hotel.

After a rainy Friday, Saturday started off as a cloudy, overcast day, but soon cleared. Our group took two boats out towards the ocean for a day of fishing. Among the



Ron's fishing experience in Sitka.

numerous playful whales in the bay, our boat was able to catch 10 coho and pink salmon as well as many rock fish. Saturday evening we returned to the Sitka

Lodge for a dinner of fresh king salmon and steak hosted by Exalted Ruler Ricardo Morales and his wife, Galadriel. Ron congratulated the Lodge for their support of ENF, their membership gain, and their work in the community, including their recent support of first

responders to the recent mudslides that took the lives of three Sitka residents, and the planned support for the victims' families.



Sunday morning we were off at 5:45 a.m. for our flight to Seattle then onto Denver, Colorado. Rather than fly back to Virginia for two days, we opted to stay out west and enjoy

some of the sites around the Denver area before the start of the Colorado Elks State Convention.

Submitted by Ron and Nancy Hicks

Send comments to webmaster@virginiaelks.org