

## GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Unexpected Stay in Chicago

"Unbelievable" is the only way to describe what happened to our travel plans after we arrived in Chicago! With Reagan National Airport closed Saturday and Sunday because of a historic snowfall, our Sunday flight to DC was cancelled and we were rescheduled to leave Chicago at 7:30 pm Monday Night. Arrangements were made for us to stay at the Airport Hilton on Sunday night, which we were able to walk to from the terminal. Then, with most of the runways closed on Monday and thousands of flight cancellations, our Monday night flight was also cancelled. We could not arrange another flight into either Reagan National, Dulles, or Richmond until Wednesday morning. And, even then, we could not book two seats together.



Outside The Elks Grand Lodge Headquarters



Elk statue outside the Elks Memorial Building

Three unexpected days in Chicago! What to do? We took advantage of the "down time" on Sunday afternoon by trying to accept what was happening, catching up, calling home, and watching the NFL Playoffs. Monday morning we went into Chicago to visit Grand Lodge Headquarters and Ron's office at the Elks National Veterans Memorial Building. A monument in the truest sense, the Veterans Memorial was built in 1926 to honor Americans whose profound sacrifices for the



Rotunda entrance of the Memorial Building



Ceiling in the Social Room behind the Rotunda in the Memorial Building

Nation can never be recognized by mere words. With its massive dome, heroic sculptures, and intricately detailed friezes, the Memorial is a distinctively American interpretation of Classical greatness, which every Elk should plan to visit and experience.



Grand Secretary Bryan Klatt and Ron behind a model of a former Rose Parade Float. Maybe next year???



Ron in Headquarters Lodge Room with chimes from The Elks National Home in Bedford, VA

Grand Secretary Bryan Klatt picked us up Monday morning and we spent the day touring the Memorial and Magazine buildings, visiting with staff, and discussing various Programs and Issues with department heads Sheldon Staubitz (Insurance), Anna Idol (Magazine), Joe Baker (Newsletter), and Jim O'Kelly (ENF). Rick Gathen (Membership) was snowed-in in New Jersey, but we communicated by phone. GERs don't typically have a lot of time to spend in their Memorial office, so it was a treat to actually do a little work from my "official" workplace. For lunch we provided pizza for all staff members as a way of giving thanks to them for their work and their support throughout the year.

While at Headquarters, we learned that the Rivers Casino was near our airport hotel, so we had Bryan drop us off at the Casino on his way home. What better way to kill a little more time? Nancy's challenge at any casino is always to win enough money to cover Ron's losses! We ate dinner at the casino and stayed until about 10:00 before returning to the hotel. Tuesday morning Ron went to

the hotel Business Center for several hours, catching up on e-mails and communicating with Lodges about the need to "Finish Strong" on Membership. With a real chance to have a Nationwide gain in Membership, Ron wants to do all he can to encourage the Lodges to do everything they can to help achieve the elusive Plus-One goal.



*Lester C. Hess, Jr. Grand Excited Pastor 1991-1992*

Portrait of our State Sponsor Ted Hess in the Magazine Building at Grand Lodge



Ron sitting at his "Chicago" GER desk at Grand Lodge Headquarters. "My work is never done."



Des Plaines Lodge 1526 Exalted Ruler Don Kovilic and House Committee Chair Mary Ann Lafler with Ron and Nancy

We took a taxi to the nearby Des Plaines Lodge 1526 for lunch, where we were joined by ER Don Kovilic and House Committee Chair Mary Ann Lafler. After lunch we were treated to a tour of their very nice facility. We had the opportunity to meet a number of Lodge Members, including several Bingo workers and their top recruiter, Aug Schwiesow, a forty-two year Member. Aug’s secret to signing up new Members? First, he’s a proud Elk, he always carries several “pre-printed” applications with

an insert of Elks information, and he’s not afraid to ask! While at the Lodge we noticed the Queen of Hearts Jackpot was at \$163,000 with only five cards left!! We resisted the urge to participate, but did help the cause by spending a little money on Lodge pull tabs. Des Plaines is a big Lodge, with 1,250 Members, they are active in the community and they are looking forward to a ten percent membership gain this year.



Top recruiter of the Des Plaines Lodge 1526 Aug Schwiesow with Ron

On the way back to the hotel, we made one last stop at the Casino for some revenge, and were somewhat successful. After dinner at the Casino, we returned to the hotel to re-pack for our scheduled morning flight to DC Reagan Airport.



Watching the plane next to ours being de-iced. We are next!!!

We left the hotel at 7:00 am Wednesday morning and walked back to the airport terminal in a very light snow (Thank Goodness it was light!), and after discussion with one of the airline agents, we were able to be seated together on the plane. When we arrived in DC, while the runways were clear, there was snow piled everywhere, and many vehicles at work, trying to get things back to normal. The airlines were still dealing with the weekend cancellations and planes were lined up in every direction trying to get in and out of the terminals and off the ground.

We arrived home about 2:30 pm and immediately readied ourselves for our drive to the South Carolina State Convention.

Submitted by Ron and Nancy Hicks

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