

GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Visit to Hawaii

On a sunny Saturday morning, January 2, we left "The City of Roses" and drove to Los Angeles Airport for our flight to the "Aloha State" and the Island of Oahu and our visits with three of the five Elk Lodges in Hawaii. We were met at the Honolulu Airport by a large number of Elks, including PGER and Co-State Sponsor Tom Brazier and his wife Venita, California-Hawaii Elks Association PSP Wayne Howard and his wife Coleen, PDDGER Ron Mizuno, Pearl City Lodge Exalted Ruler Peter Machado and his wife Pat, PR Chairman John Brown, CHEA Vice President Greg Sylvester, PER Dave Bell and his wife Gwen, and District Deputy Tom Bentkowski and his wife Ruby. Everyone greeted us with a fresh Lei and a hug or kiss, and a big "Aloha!" Tom Bentkowski, who to reduce confusion, became "Tom #2" for this trip, would be the driver for Tom, Venita, Ron, and me during the entire visit.



We arrived!!! Great reception at airport. We were "leid"!!!

We stayed at the Honolulu Sheraton on Waikiki Beach, with a nice view of the ocean and Diamond Head from our room. Saturday night we enjoyed dinner with State and GL leaders at Honolulu Lodge 616, where we were met by Exalted Ruler Hiram Keliipio and other Lodge Officers. The Lodge has over 3,000 Members, is very active in the community, and recently received the



One of two sand sculptures in the lobby of the hotel



View from our balcony, Diamond Head and Waikiki Beach. Great way to wake up each morning.



Pool at Honolulu Lodge



Canoes in front of the Honolulu Lodge

GL Award for Best Website Design. Sunday morning we returned to the Lodge, where PSP and Member Wayne Howard gave us a tour of the beautiful facility, built in 1959 and located right on the beach. The Lodge has appeared in a number of movies and its open-air bar was featured often in the "Hawaii Five-0" TV show.

We spent the rest of Sunday morning touring the East side of the Island around Makapu'u Beach and Hanauma Bay, stopping along the way to take advantage of the gorgeous views of the mountains, bays, and ocean. We observed a number of para sailors along the coast and saw some of the many



Hanauma Bay

gun emplacements that protected the deep-water of Hanauma Bay during WWII. We went to Kailua Lodge 2230 for lunch, where we met Exalted Ruler Rich Anderson and a number of Lodge Officers, who gave us an impressive presentation on the history and community activities of the Lodge. The Kailua Lodge has been able to increase membership by 158% over the last five years.



Cake at the GER Banquet at Pearl City Lodge

Sunday night Pearl City Lodge 2669 and Exalted Ruler Peter Machado hosted the GER Banquet for all Hawaii Lodges, which was MC'd by Tom #2. All of the Hawaii



Ron eating a "Musubi" (spam sandwich)

Lodges have had exceptional gains in membership over the last five years and always make the ENF Per-Capita Goal. In fact, all have already exceeded Ron's Goal of \$4.65 for this year. Ron encouraged Lodge Leaders to find a reason to be positive, not dwell on the negative, be optimistic, and look for success.

During his talk, Ron mentioned that a good example of being positive and looking for a Silver Lining took place just down the road from the Lodge in December 1941. Immediately after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor,

Admiral Nimitz was appointed Commander of Pearl Harbor. Following his initial tour of the destruction and devastation, and with everyone expecting a down-hearted speech of despair, he stood tall and found a silver lining, and spoke in positive terms of recovery and rebuilding. Nimitz explained how the Japanese had made three mistakes: they attacked on Sunday morning when 90% of the crewman were on leave, otherwise the loss of life could have been ten times worse; they focused on the planes and battleships, completely ignoring the dry docks, thereby allowing repair work to begin immediately and allowing the ships to return to action much sooner; and they ignored all of the fuel for the Pacific which was contained in above-ground fuel tanks only 5 miles from the Harbor. One of the more emotional moments of our visit was when Past Exalted Ruler of Honolulu Lodge Patrick K. Keli'inui prayed the Lord's Prayer and the Irish Toast in his native Hawaiian. "No

ka mea, nou, ke aupuni~A meka mana, a meka Ho'onani ia, a mau loa aku ~ Amene!" And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hands.

Monday we toured the Punchbowl, the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, where Ron and I laid a wreath at the monument to the Elks who died during WWII. Then we went to Pearl Harbor to visit and lay another wreath at the USS Arizona Memorial. Of the 2,500 sailors lost during the attack, 1,200 died on the Arizona, and most of them were entombed in the sunken ship. Only 310 crewman of the



Ron on the USS Arizona



Ron and Tom Bentkowski laying the wreath on the USS Arizona



At the top of the Memorial Wall at the Punch Bowl Cemetery



Ron and Nancy put a lei on the BPOE marker at the Punch Bowl Cemetery. "Dedicated to those who fought the wars of our great Nation, so that we may live in freedom under God."



USS Arizona Memorial,
Pearl Harbor

Arizona survived the attack, 150 were away on leave, and the other 160 were on board and somehow lived through the ordeal. Through the years, as these survivors have died,



Looking down from the
Memorial Wall at the
Punch Bowl Cemetery

each has elected to have their ashes entombed in the ship with their fellow crewmen. Only seven survivors of the Arizona remain alive today.

While at Pearl Harbor, Ron met Sterling Rice, a survivor of the attack, who at the time was assigned as a pharmacist mate at the shipyard dispensary. He had just gotten off duty when the attack began, and he, along with other seamen, took a small boat into the Harbor, dove into the fiery waters and pulled over forty badly wounded and burned men to safety. On the Wednesday following the attack, he was assigned to lead a party in the removal of bodies from the USS Arizona. The removal of bodies and body parts lasted for six weeks and they were able to recover an estimated 120 men. He believes that he probably spent more time in the waters of Pearl Harbor after the attack than any other seaman and has since written a book about his experiences. Ron presented him with a star from a retired flag as part of the Star Project, thanked him for his service, and explained that with the Order of Elks, our veterans are never forgotten.

We attended a Luau and show Monday night at the Hale Koa Hotel, an active duty and retired military hotel located on Waikiki Beach. Tuesday morning we went to Ford Island for a tour of the Pacific Aviation Museum,



Dancers at the luau at the Hale Koa Hotel

the only Museum actually located on the site of a battle. Retired Sergeant and PER Joe Penn escorted us onto the Base. Our tour was led by Ron Murashige, an Air Force veteran, who had a wealth of knowledge about the aircraft

displayed and the events surrounding December 7, 1941. During this tour, Ron had the opportunity to speak with another Pearl Harbor survivor, 94 year old Dick Girocco, who serves as a volunteer at the Museum three days a week. Ron also presented him with a star, thanked him for his service, and told him the Elks support of veterans. After lunch at the Aviation Museum, we returned to the hotel for a little down time. Ron and I went to the beach, then spent some time lounging around the pool, simply relaxing in the Hawaii sunshine before the evening activities.

We had a quiet dinner Tuesday night with Tom and Venita, Tom #2 and Ruby, Wayne Howard and Ron Mizuno at a local restaurant. Wednesday morning, Tom #2 and Ruby drove us to the airport for an early morning flight to LAX, where we had an over-night layover before proceeding to Casper, Wyoming, and our visit with the Wyoming Elks.

Submitted by Ron and Nancy Hicks

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