

GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Visit to Iowa

We left Fredericksburg on a foggy Thursday morning, November 5th, on the way to Reagan National Airport and Des Moines, Iowa, for the Iowa Elks State Convention. Our chauffeur for this trip was Steve Ravinsky, Chairman of the Fredericksburg Lodge



Steve Ravinsky, Chairman of Fredericksburg Lodge Transportation Committee loading luggage into trunk to take Ron and Nancy to airport.

Transportation

Committee, which handles our transport to and from the airports on our State visits.

We arrived at the Des Moines Airport about 4:00 pm (CDT) and were greeted by PGER and State Sponsor Ted Callicott and his wife Betsy, Iowa State President Roger McQueen and his wife Julie, and SDGER Ralph Buster and his wife Barb. At the hotel, which was directly across the road, we were met by more Elks, including State Trustee Chairman PSP Neil Crossland and his wife Karen, President-Elect Dan Ockenfels, Past Grand Lodge Trustee Pete Nelson and his wife Sue, PSP Jerry Long, and Past Grand Forum Chief Justice Mark Huegel. Thursday night we enjoyed dinner at a nearby restaurant with several Grand



Ron and Nancy with Julie and Roger McQueen, State President and First Lady of Iowa.



Ted Callicott, Ron, and Special Deputy Ralph Buster.



Kim Burch, PGER and State Sponsor of Iowa Ted Callicott and wife Betsy, Nancy and Ron, and Past Chief Justice of the Grand Forum Mark Huegel.

Lodge and State Officers and PSPs.

Friday morning Ron went to iHEART Media, radio station WHO 1040, with State President McQueen for a live interview on the popular "Van and Bonnie" morning program. Ron had the opportunity to speak about the Elks Motto "Elks Care - Elks Share" and how our 2,000 Elk Lodges and 800,000 members are changing lives every day with our Grand Lodge, State, and Lodge programs. He talked about November being Veterans Remembrance Month, our Veteran's Day Programs, and how we support the military and Veterans throughout the year. He also sent a special message to all hunters about the Iowa Hides/Leather Program, one of the top such programs in the Nation, and how Elks collect deer hides, turning them into gloves and other leather goods for our Veterans.

Returning to the hotel, Ron attended meetings with the PSPs and State Trustees and heard about the State Major Project "The Fire Safety Initiative" and the Elks ongoing partnership with the Iowa Firefighters Association to help educate children and adults to recognize fire hazards, install smoke detectors, and what to do in an emergency. There were also Reports from State Officers, and discussions about the State Elevator Speech Contest, the Iowa Charitable Trust, Grant writing, and the afternoon's Membership Seminar. Ron urged the State Leaders to stay active in their Lodges and use their talents and experience to help their Lodge



Ron at the I HEART radio station WHO 1040 for an interview on the "Van and Bonnie" morning program.



Ron with Mark McNees, State President Iowa Firefighters Association, Iowa State Major Project.

Officers make their Lodges successful. Friday afternoon he attended the State Secretaries meeting, a New Lodge Development meeting, and meetings with designated Lodges.

Iowa is a strong supporter of Elks National Foundation with almost every Lodge annually making the GER Goal. Last year twenty-seven Lodges received ENF Community Investment Grants, led by Estherville and Shenandoah Lodges with four Grants each. Iowa is pushing towards a Plus-1 in Membership this year, with the Burlington, Sioux City and West Des Moines Lodges leading the way, and John Eveland (Waterloo) and Judi Hoffman (Estherville) being the top recruiters to date. Friday night we attended the PSP's Reception and Dinner, followed by some meet and greet at the Iowa Hospitality social and dance held in the hotel atrium.



Barbara Buster, Nancy, and Betsy Callicott.

Friday morning Nancy attended a Coffee hosted by Julie McQueen, First Lady of Iowa at the hotel. After the Coffee, most of the ladies traveled by car to a small town in nearby west Des Moines, Valley Junction, which had a number of specialty shops. After having an hour or so for shopping the ladies met for lunch at Coopers Tavern. Barb Buster drove Nancy, Betsy, and Susan Jacob and after lunch they headed for Valley West Mall for a little more retail therapy after checking out a yarn shop in Valley Junction. (Many of you know Betsy likes to fill her spare time doing needle work, knitting and crocheting, so this was a must stop.)



Elks Drug Awareness Program National Director Kent Gade and Ron.

Saturday morning Ron attended the Exalted Rulers meeting and had photos taken with the ERs. The General Business Session got underway at 10:00 am with Officer, DD, and Committee reports. Comments heard during the Session included from Ann Fuller: "Small things to some are big things to others; touch a child, thank a vet, aid the needy" and from Dana Johnson: "Lodges are moving, growing, being creative and enthusiastic, using social media and sharing ideas." PSP Kent Gade spoke about the DEA invitation for the Elks to join the "DEA 360 Strategy" to combat heroin and other drug abuse, quoting a former Deputy Director of Office of National Drug Control Policy as recently stating, "If we don't have the Elks, we can't win the war on drugs. They are our boots on the ground."

Ron also heard about Engage America, a new movement with its roots in Iowa, which seeks to identify and assist veterans suffering from PTSD. Dennis Walker was presented a plaque in recognition of Iowa achieving Second Place in the GL Hides/leather Program for Vets, and Carl and Susan Jacob received Presidential Achievement Awards



Ron with District Deputy Carl Jacobs and his wife Susan who received Presidential Service Awards.



Ron with Iowa Hide Chairman Dennis Walker accepting plaque in recognition of Iowa Second place in Hide Production for Veterans.

in recognition of their over 4,000 hours of Community service.

Nancy attended a Coffee for the Wives of Leading Knights in the Hospitality Room. Jerry Long, Convention Housing Chairman spoke

with the ladies and provided information regarding the Grand Lodge Convention in Houston as their spouses will be Exalted Rulers attending the Convention in July.

Saturday afternoon, Tom Maher, Dana Johnson, Frank Armstrong and Dan Olsen conducted a very entertaining and

informative

Membership

Seminar with a

PowerPoint

Presentation that included a number of creative graphics and inspirational messages from Diane Gleason's Facebook page, the fifty ideas offered by Rick Gathen to use in seeking new members and other suggestions for recruitment and retention.



Tom Maher, Dana Johnson, Frank Armstrong, and Dan Olsen presented Membership Seminar.



Ron with Roger McQueen.

The Ladies Luncheon was held in the hotel Saturday afternoon. Julie McQueen chose Christmas as the theme for her decorations which were lovely and quite festive. Before lunch was served, State President Roger McQueen welcomed the ladies and introduced SDGER Ralph Buster and he

introduced PGER and Iowa State Sponsor Ted Callicott. After making a few remarks Ted then introduced Ron. Ron spoke to the ladies and thanked them for supporting

their husbands in their Elk endeavors. The ladies were then entertained with a selection of Lite Jazz music and song by Steve Maynard and Chris



Kim Burch and Nancy at the hotel. ("Trouble 1" and "Trouble 2")



Drake University students Steve Maynard and Chris Bernard were the entertainment at the Ladies Luncheon.

Bernard accompanying him on guitar. They are students at Drake University in Des Moines. After lunch Nancy spoke to the ladies and told them she had enjoyed being with them and thanked them for their great hospitality. Julie ended the luncheon by saying, "Let me be the first to wish you a Merry Christmas."



Ron's Iowa Pride Committee.

Saturday night we attended the State Association Reception and Banquet. Ron spoke on his theme "Elks Pride - Community Focus" and growing Elkdom through all we do. He encouraged all Elks to stop moving through the Community quietly, to be Loud and Proud and let their light shine. "Keep doing what you are doing, but let everyone know, and be a bright shining light for all to see." The Association held the drawing for the \$10,000 winner in their annual Charity Trust Fundraiser and the Eleven O'Clock Toast Contest winners were announced. The winner of Ron's Special Label GER Wine Raffle for ENF was Jerry Baltisberger, Jerry got the personally autographed wine and ENF received \$802 in the name of Jerry and his Grinnell Lodge 1266.

Ron spoke on his theme "Elks Pride - Community Focus" and growing Elkdom through all we do. He encouraged all Elks to stop moving



Jerry Baltisberger, winner of the GER Wine Raffle for ENF, and Ron

After a brief visit to the hotel atrium for a little more hospitality and goodbyes, we retired to our room early to prepare and rest for our 4:30 am wake-up and 6:45 am, 3-flight journey from Des Moines to Bangor, Maine.