

GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Visit to Mardi Gras

At the invitation of New Orleans Lodge 30, we left Orlando on Sunday morning, February 7, on our first flight with Southwest Airlines, for New Orleans, Louisiana, and Mardi Gras. We arrived at Louis Armstrong New



Ron and Nancy with PGER and Louisiana State Sponsor Millard Pickering and wife Susanne

Orleans International Airport about 11:15 am and were met by PGER and State Sponsor Millard Pickering, SDGER Richard Conran and his wife Sue, PSP Terry Bruno, and DD Armand Buuck. Susanne Pickering arrived minutes later and we met her in the baggage

claim area. When we arrived at the Wyndham Hotel our room was not ready, so we had lunch with Richard and Sue, then Ron spent some time in the Business Center.

Once in our room, we had about two hours to relax before leaving for the Sheraton Hotel in downtown New Orleans for the Orpheus Krewe Party and the Bacchus Krewe Parade. There are



numerous Parades throughout the week and Millard is a member of the Orpheus Krewe which conducts its Parade on Monday night. The food and drink flowed freely throughout the evening, as the band played and people danced. The Super Bowl was shown on several TVs, so we saw some of the first half of the game, before we went outside about 8:30 pm for the Bacchus Parade. We were on a great viewing stand right on the street in front of the Sheraton. The King of Orpheus, Nathan Fillian, star of the TV series Castle, and Harry Connick, who helped start the Orpheus Krewe, were on the balcony behind us to greet and toast King Bacchus when his float arrived. All of the floats stopped to throw beads and the bands performed at our location.



Ron and Nancy with Special Deputy Richard Conran and his wife Sue



Ron and Nancy with District Deputy Armand Buuck and his wife Debbie

Monday morning we headed for the extremely popular Morning Call Cafe at City Park for Beignets and



New Orleans Lodge's Elks Tombs in Green wood Cemetery

Cafe au Lait, a New Orleans tradition. We then went to the Greenwood Cemetery to visit the New Orleans Lodge's Elks Tomb, where ninety-seven Members are interred with a solid bronze Elk standing guard over the Tomb. Our next stop was at the beautiful Garden District home of Lodge Member Larry Kamiem and his wife Diane. The home was furnished with lovely antiques and they take great pains to decorate



Cafe au Lait and beignets at Morning Call Cafe at City Park

their home for every holiday. The decorations for Mardi Gras were unbelievable! There we enjoyed an Irish Coffee with Larry and Diane, another New Orleans tradition.



Larry and Diane Kamiem with Ron and Nancy in their beautiful home decorated for Mardi Gras in the Garden District

We then went to the National WWII Museum for a brief visit. You could easily spend an entire day viewing the exceptional exhibits and listening to stories of the war and its many battles. It is estimated that between fifty to



Exalted Ruler of New Orleans Lodge 30 Brian Baye and Ron

seventy million people died during the war; 418,000 were Americans, and the Museum is dedicated to all those who sacrificed to preserve our freedom and liberty. Lunch was at Mother's Restaurant, another very popular New Orleans eatery. Because of the local knowledge of Exalted Ruler Brian Baye, a Police Detective, we were able to bypass the long line of people waiting outside the restaurant, and entered through a back door to our

waiting table. Mother's was founded in 1938 and is known for its comfort food, baked ham and po' boys. Five of the founder's children served in the Marines, and as a result, the restaurant became a favorite with the military and was designated an official "TUN TAVERN" after WWII.

Monday night a GER Reception and Dinner was held at the New Orleans Lodge, with about 100 Elks in attendance. Exalted Ruler Brian Baye and other Lodge Officers gave a tour of the facility and explained its many historic displays. Dinner was served by members of Boy Scout Troop 223, which is sponsored by the Lodge. After dinner Ron thanked the Lodge for our invitation to New Orleans and



ER Brian Baye and Ron presenting American Flags and Certificates to Eagle Scouts for one of their projects

congratulated them on their Community Service Programs, then spoke briefly about the importance of Orientation and getting the new Members quickly involved in the Lodge. He presented American Flags and Certificates to two new Eagle Scouts and also presented GER Award Pins and a Letter Certificate



Bryan Ruiz receiving GER Award Certificate and pin for bringing in the most members to the New Orleans Lodge from Ron and Exalted Ruler Brian Baye

to four Members who had sponsored at least three new Members.

The tradition of Mardi Gras dates back to 1872 and was started in an effort to lure tourists and business to New Orleans after the Civil War. The New Orleans Lodge is unique in that it has two separate Krewes that organize and sponsor Mardi Gras Parades in different Parishes of the City. The Elks Krewe of Jeffersonians, established in 1974 and Captained by Bud Lyons and Jay Yambra, leads the Jefferson Parish Parade, the largest



Parade in that Parish. The Elks Krewe of Orleanians, established in 1938, and Captained by Walter Smith, leads the City of New Orleans Parade, the largest Truck Parade in the world. Both Parades were conducted on Fat Tuesday



Parade Captains Jay, Bud, and Walter with Ron

this year, with each generating significant income for the Lodge.

We were up at 5:00 am on a cool and windy, but sunny and clear, Tuesday morning, for our Mardi Gras adventure, which started at the Lodge with coffee and Danish. Ron and about fifteen other Elks boarded their truck/float and left at 7:00 am for a chilly ten-mile ride to their designated starting position.



Nancy and Sue Conran ready to catch beads and enjoy the parade

Nancy, along with PGER and State Sponsor Millard Pickering and his wife Susanne and other New Orleans Lodge Elks and guests, were escorted to a viewing area where the parades turned off Napoleon Avenue onto St. Charles Avenue. There was plenty of hot coffee and goodies to keep us warm waiting for the parades to begin. While waiting we saw many people in interesting dress pass by, certainly nothing like Nancy would normally see in Fredericksburg,



Virginia! There were all kinds of elaborate costumes on display with local residents, young and old, playing instruments or pulling wagons with music blaring and dancing down the street to keep us entertained until the Rex and Orleanians Parades began.

Exalted Ruler Brian Baye was the leader of Elks



Ron on the Krewe of Orleanians Float throwing beads!!!

Truck Number One, the first Truck in the Orleanians Parade, which got underway about 11:30 am. The Orleanians were directly



behind the Parade that carried Rex (Latin for "King"), the King of Carnival, the oldest and perhaps most famous of the Mardi Gras Parades. The Parade, which very-much looked like one

continuous Parade, was long, down St Charles Ave, then left onto Canal Street, passing Royal and Bourbon Streets, and with hundreds of thousands of revelers along the way. The Parade ended around 4:00 pm with the Elks Krewe having another chilly ride back to the Lodge, where Lodge Members had prepared a welcoming meal of Jambalaya, Gumbo, and King Cake for the Krewe and other Lodge Members.

After dinner at the Lodge, we returned to the hotel for a hot shower, Tylenol and nap, before packing for our trip to Albuquerque early the next

morning. The New Orleans Lodge was a wonderful host and Mardi Gras was a great, fun experience, and another item checked off of our "Bucket List."
"Laissez Les Bon Temps Rouler!!"

Submitted by Ron and Nancy Hicks

Send comments to webmaster@virginiaelks.org

