

GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Visit to Vermont

We left Warwick, Rhode Island, after breakfast about 9:00 am on Tuesday morning, September 22nd, and headed for Burlington, Vermont, located on Lake Champlain in the North West corner of the state. We were driven by Rhode Island SDGER and State President Leo Blanchette and his wife Nancy, followed by PGER and State Sponsor of Vermont David Carr



Vermont Elks meeting us in Holyoke Massachusetts ready to take us to Burlington, Vermont

and his wife Penny, to Holyoke, Massachusetts, where we were "handed off" to Grand Lodge Tiler and SDGER for Vermont Earl Cavanaugh and his wife Nancy for our journey through the beautiful Green Mountains of Vermont. The transfer was made in a JC Penny parking lot and drew the attention of a



Ron and Nancy with Grand Lodge Tiler and SDGER Earl Cavanaugh and his wife Nancy.

Security Officer, who was assured that we were not misbehaving, so she wished us a good day and went on her way.

We stopped at Barre (pronounced "Berry"?), Vermont, Lodge 1535 (a little over an hour behind schedule), where we met State President Fred Dusablon and Vice President Robert Campo, along with several other



PSP/DDGER Chip Paine standing by his ER picture at Barre Lodge 1535



Vermont Elks State President Fred Dusablon and his wife Beth, Nancy and Ron.

Lodge and State Officers. The Lodge had prepared a

light lunch of cold cuts and salads, followed by homemade pumpkin cake. ER Stacey Holden and PSP/DDGER Chip Paine gave Ron a tour, highlighted by their beautiful Lodge Room with its unique, locally mined granite Tablets of Love and Memory. Also present was Lodge Public Relations Chairman Kristin Calcagni, who does a great job promoting Lodge programs and events.

Back on the Interstate, and during a brief stop at the Vermont Welcome Center, Ron discovered we would be passing within a mile of the Ben & Jerry's ice cream factory in Waterbury! Another Bucket List Item and another detour! The factory complex was very busy with visitors and tours. So, because of the crowd and the fact we were already behind schedule, we only stopped long enough for a few photos and skipped the calories. Back on the road, we reached our hotel in Burlington, Vermont, about 4:30 pm, after a 7 1/2 hour trip from Rhode Island.



Ron and Nancy at Ben and Jerry's Ice cream in Waterbury, Vermont.

We had just enough time to check-in and change clothes before we



Burlington Elks Lodge ER Wesley Blair, Ron and Vermont Elks Association President Fred Dusablon.

headed to Burlington Lodge 916, home of Vermont Elks Association President Fred Dusablon, for a Reception and Dinner. Dinner was one of Ron's favorites, turkey and dressing with cranberry relish, and, of course, followed by Ben and Jerry's ice cream. There were about 100 Elks and guests in attendance, with ten of Vermont's twelve Lodges represented. ER

Wesley Blair and State President Dusablou hosted the event and Ron received donations for ENF and Silver Towers Camp, the State Major Project.

Silver Towers Camp, a camp for children and adults with disabilities, is enthusiastically supported by all Lodges, and welcomes 500 campers each year for its eight one-week sessions. Vermont Elks are also strong supporters of ENF with all but one Lodge making the GER Goal every year. Last year, ten Vermont Lodges took advantage of the ENF Community Investment Grants, with five of the Lodges receiving two Grants each.

Nearly all Vermont Lodges showed a gain in Membership last year. Over the last five years, Brattleboro Lodge 1499 has led the way with a total Membership gain of 25%, with Barre, St Albans and St Johnsbury Lodges also having significant gains. The thirteen Vermont Lodges contribute over \$1.2 Million and 30,000 voluntary hours each year to their charitable activities.



L to R: Nancy, VEA Chaplain Mary Paule Hill, VEA Tiler Moe Decelles, Ron, VEA Convention Chairman Randy Corey, Burlington Elks Lodge ER Wesley Blair and VEA President Fred Dusablou.



Lots of luggage to get to our room!

Following dinner, Ron asked all present to return to their Lodges and become Salesmen for Success, and we believe many Vermont Elks took Ron's message of Elks Pride and Community Focus to heart. Also, we both signed Membership Cards for voluntary donations to ENF. A great time was had by all.

Tomorrow on to New Hampshire.