



Friday, November 18, 2022

## Virginia Elks Mourn the Passing of PGER Lester C. Hess, Jr.



### **PGER and State Sponsor Ron Hicks Eulogizes Ted Hess**

All, The Virginia Elks lost a true friend and mentor with the passing of PGER Lester C. "Ted" Hess yesterday morning. Ted suffered a stroke and spent the last two weeks in the hospital with his wife of fifty-six years, Becky, by his side the entire time.

As you know, Ted had been in declining health for the last couple of years, retiring from his law practice and State Elk Sponsorships, taking Emeritus Status on the Grand Lodge Advisory Board, and ceasing all travel. Still, he never lost his interest in and love for Elkdom. and always found time to mail personal notes of congratulations and encouragement to Members and Lodges.

Ted was a special person, but when you were in his presence, he had a way of making you feel like you were the special one. He was our State Sponsor for twenty years, encouraging and mentoring many State Leaders and Lodges. Whenever I spoke with Ted, he would always ask about the Virginia Elks and his many friends. You meant a lot to him.

In my mind, he was the best of all our Past Grands and his wisdom, easy manner and friendship will surely be missed.

"We will meet, but we will miss him." Ron Hicks

### **Lester C. "Ted" Hess, Jr. Biography**

Lester C. Hess, Jr. was born on March 3, 1940, in Wheeling, West Virginia. This populous County Seat combines the easy-going rural atmosphere of its home state with the urban tempos of its industrial cousins Ohio and Pennsylvania, located less than a dozen miles to the west and east. Brother Ted wore his hometown's pleasant, soft-spoken manner on top of a "True Grit" spirit of integrity and competence forged through years of hard work and accomplishment. Following graduation from high school in Wheeling as President of his class, Yearbook Editor, Captain of both the school and All-Conference basketball teams, he attended Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, on a Dow-Jones scholarship from 1958 to 1962, graduating with a major in English. Degree in hand, Hess headed

north for a year as an English teacher and basketball coach at a Bay City, Michigan high school. He later served as a staff writer for UPI in its Nashville, Knoxville, Memphis, Charleston and Birmingham offices, with his headline stories on the era's racial tensions and civil rights being read throughout North and South America and across the European continent. Hess graduated from West Virginia University's College of Law in 1966, where he served as Associate Editor of the West Virginia Law Review. Lester C. Hess, Jr. was recognized in his profession as a conscientious and skilled trial attorney. He was admitted to practice in the United States Supreme Court and was elected a Fellow in the American College of Trial Lawyers. He also served sixteen years as Municipal Judge of the City of Wheeling. During the same period he compiled an exemplary record of service to his own community, serving as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Ohio County Public Library and as a founder and Chairman of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Wheeling, Inc.

Inspiring and accompanying him since 1966 has been his lovely wife, Becky, the former Rebecca Sue Eades, noteworthy in her own right as a high school teacher in Virginia, Ohio, and West Virginia. Paralleling his prominence as a jurist and involved citizen was Brother Ted's quarter-century as an outstanding and dedicated Elk, following his initiation into Wheeling Lodge No. 28 on October 23, 1965 under the sponsorship of his father, PER and Ritual Coach, Lester C. Hess, Sr. In 1968 he was appointed Inner Guard, progressing through all the chairs until election and service as Lodge No. 28's Exalted Ruler in 1974-75. He was a member of the Lodge's Youth Activities Committee, recognized for over a decade as the best program in West Virginia. PER Association President and Editor of the Lodge Newsletter for many years, he was a member of the Wheeling Elks Basketball and Softball teams. In recognition of his many contributions to the Lodge, State and Order, Wheeling Lodge No. 28 selected him as its 1980-81 Elk of the Year.

In Ritual, Ted was All-State Chaplain and All-State Exalted Ruler, and held a strong commitment to this beloved area of Elkdom's traditions. In 1976 he was appointed District Deputy, followed by service on the Grand Lodge Committee on Judiciary from 1978-1983, while for three of those same years he was Vice President of the West Virginia Elks Association, ending with Association President for 1982-83. He was Chairman of numerous State Committees and in 1988 incorporated the West Virginia Elks Major Project. After four years as State Trustee, he served as Chairman in 1988. Elected in 1983 to fill the last year in an unexpired term as Grand Trustee, he was elected the following year to a four-year term on the Board. He served as its Secretary, Building Application-East Member, Home Member, Approving Member, and ultimately Chairman of the Board. Since 1988 Brother Ted gave three years of distinguished service as a Justice on the Grand Forum, the highest Tribunal of the Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks, relinquishing this important position for the good of his Brothers by accepting Elkdom's highest office, Grand Exalted Ruler. Since his exemplary tenure as Grand Exalted Ruler, Ted has served as the Sponsor of the Elks of Virginia, Kentucky, and West Virginia. He has also served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Elks National Foundation and as Chairman of the Grand Lodge Advisory Committee. Ted retired as Chairman of the Board of the Ohio County Public Library in Wheeling, West Virginia and as West Virginia Chair of the American College of Trial Lawyers. The Virginia Elks Association is thankful and appreciative of the efforts Ted provided in his years of guidance as its Grand Lodge Sponsor and Friend and mourns his passing.

(Obituary will be published later when available.)