

GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Trip to West Virginia



Ron and Nancy with West Virginia State Trooper Devan Barger and State Sponsor Ted Hess.



State Sponsor Ted Hess and his wife Becky and Ron and Nancy

We drove to the West Virginia Elks Association State Convention with Ron's Aide Ray Dameron and his wife Elizabeth. It was a very pleasant and scenic drive through the beautiful mountains and valleys, and a few small towns, of Virginia, Maryland and West Virginia. Soon after reaching the West Virginia state line, we were surprised to be greeted by PGER Ted and Becky Hess, and State Trooper, Devan Barger, an arrangement set up by Ted and Ray. We then received a State Police escort to our convention hotel in Morgantown, where we were met by West Virginia Elks President Jackie Barlow and his wife Brenda; Jeff Miller, GL Committee on Judiciary, and his wife Debbie; and the President of the Pennsylvania Elks Stanley Welch and his wife Mary Ellen. Thursday afternoon, Ron met with the Past State Presidents and that evening we enjoyed dinner with the PSPs.



Ron with PSP Ashley Martin and State President Jackie Barlow

Friday morning we toured the campus of West Virginia University, including a private tour of their new \$28 Million basketball "practice" facility, conducted by Assistant Head Coach Billy Hahn. The building, which includes identical, separate facilities for men and women, was built with private donations. It is a state of the art facility, open 24/7



Ladies on the tour of the Practice Facilities at the University of West Virginia.

to the players, which is sure to attract many good basketball players to WVU.

Business Sessions began Friday afternoon, beginning with a Report on the West Virginia Elks Major Project, two camps for mentally and/or physically challenged children and adults. The volunteer staff members assist the campers in developing an awareness of their potential as they work to minimize their disabilities and encourage independence and resourcefulness within their own limitations. The PER Association held a Dinner on Friday Night, hosted by Ken Kormendy, President of the Association. The Dinner had an Indianapolis race theme and the discussion centered around starting our engines for a membership gain. Buchannon Lodge 1736 won the membership trophy for the highest net gain in 2014-2015, and it was announced that West Virginia is well on their way to a Plus-1 Membership Gain for this year.

The Business Sessions continued on Saturday morning, followed by a very impressive Youth Awards and Scholarship Program in the afternoon. At the well-attended Program, state winners of the Americanism Essay Contest and the Teenage Contributors of the Year were recognized, and \$82,000 in college scholarships was awarded to high school seniors. Many of the young people spoke during the Program and a television camera crew was on hand to record the Program, including on camera interviews with several of the award and scholarship winners and with Ron. Our Order and the Elks of West



Ron, Nancy, and Billy Hahn , Assistant Head Basketball Coach at West Virginia University

Virginia received great recognition as the story of the Youth Program and other Elk programs was aired for several minutes on the local 6:00 and 11:00 news that evening.

After the Youth Program, the WV Association held an Eleven O'clock Toast Contest won by Jeff Cionni of the Wellsburg Lodge and a Salute to the Flag Contest won by Curtis Beard of the Martinsburg Lodge. The Annual Association Banquet was held that evening.



Among the many other good reports for the weekend, it was reported that 17 of the 19 Lodges in WV had received ENF Community Investment Grants totaling \$90,000 in support of their community outreach; 15 Lodges are taking advantage of technology and social media with their Public Relations by being on Facebook; a new Lodge had been instituted in Harrison County, the first new Lodge in WV in 50 years; and Margaret Krueger, ER of the Fairmont Lodge, was recognized as being one of four nationwide recipients of the Marvin M. Lewis Scouting Award.



It was a great visit to Virginia's sister state, and it was great to be with so many old friends and to make many new Elk friends. The hospitality could not have been better! The Elks of West Virginia are looking to the future and received Ron's message of "Elks Pride and Community Focus" with much interest and appreciation.

Text by Ron Hicks, Photos by Nancy Hicks

Send comments to
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