

GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Visit to Arkansas

After a day of heavy rains and deadly tornadoes, we left Virginia on a calm Thursday morning, February 26, for Little Rock, Arkansas, by way of Dallas-Fort Worth. We arrived at the Bill and Hillary Clinton Airport about 3:00 pm, where we were greeted by State President Jim Boyd and his wife Doris, State Secretary and Past Grand Lodge



State President Jim Boyd and his wife Doris with Ron and Nancy.

Officer Roy Worley and his wife Joyce, and DDGER Dennis Darrow and his wife Evonne. We rode with Jim and Doris on the one-hour drive to Hot Springs, Arkansas, and the Clarion Resort Hotel on Lake Hamilton.



Ron and Nancy with Roy and Joyce Worley

At the hotel we were met by PGER and State Sponsor Chuck Williams and his wife Gladys, Grand Lodge Committeeman Ira Earp and his wife Jo, President-Elect Joe Coulter and his wife Tammy, and Second Vice President Johnny Hutchison and his wife Phyllis. Thursday night we all went to dinner at a nearby Italian restaurant.



PGER Chuck Williams and his wife Gladys with Ron and Nancy in front of one of the many carousel horses at the race track.

Arkansas was not holding its Convention during our visit, so it was a little more laid back trip. We visited one of the Arkansas Human Development Centers, the Elks State Major Project; spent a day at the races at Oaklawn Racetrack, home of the Arkansas Derby; and visited the Hot Springs Lodge. Arkansas is a relatively small Elks State with thirteen Lodges and 2,250 Members, but is doing some great work with Community and Grand Lodge Programs throughout the State. This year Arkansas will reach their goal for new/reinstated Members and every Lodge always makes the GER's Elks National Foundation Goal. Last year eleven Lodges shared twenty-five ENF Community Grants, including two \$10,000 Impact Grants received by Mountain Home Lodge 1714 and Fayetteville-Springdale Lodge 1987, and both of these Lodges received the Impact Grant again this year.



Superintendent of Arkadelphia
Human Development Center Steve
Williams and Ron

Friday morning the men visited the Human Development Center in Arkadelphia, which provides training and therapies to 120 adults with mild to profound intellectual disabilities, ranging in age from eighteen to seventy-two. The Center, located on

333 acres, opened in 1968 with a Mission to enable the people they serve to advance the quality and independence of their lives to reach their full potential. We were met at the Center by their enthusiastic Superintendent Steve Farmer and Volunteer Coordinator Deb Wilson, who led separate tours of the campus. The Center includes classrooms, a gym, pool, hands-on skill and

vocational departments, and even includes a State Tourism Mail Center and even a County Recycling Center that employ the residents. The residents work at their individual skill levels, are paid for their efforts, and are taught how to handle the money earned. The Center works to develop skill levels to a point that the residents can transition into Group Homes or return to their families. It was a very interesting and inspiring visit.

Nancy and the ladies met in the dining room of the hotel for a light breakfast. They all got into Jo Earp's big SUV and went into downtown Hot Springs. We parked in the Historical area of downtown near the Baths, the landmark Arlington Hotel, and The Gangster Museum. We had an interesting tour of the museum learning in the 'Twenties, 'Thirties and 'Forties that visitors from all over the world came to Hot Springs and among them were some of the country's notorious criminals and gangsters. The museum gave a historic and entertaining account of how some of these gang members existed with the quaint population of this little valley town in the mountains of central Arkansas. They enjoyed the horse races at Oaklawn Park, golf at Hot Springs Country Club, and visiting the local "Clubs" where they could get spirits during prohibition. They stayed at the Arlington Hotel and could get to the Clubs by way of underground tunnels.

Everyone met at the Blue Monkey Grill for lunch, then split up again, the ladies going shopping and the men for a tour of Hot Springs. The Federal Government took control of the many hot springs in the area, along with several miles around the springs in 1877, and in 1921, the area became our eighteenth National



District Deputies Donnie Golden, Dennis Darrow and his wife Evonne, and Ron and Nancy.

Park. We drove through the town and up the winding road of Hot Springs Mountain to the Hot Springs Tower, some 1,000 feet above the town. Along the roadside many locals draw water from the cold spring fountains for domestic use. The cold water is

odorless, flavorless, and colorless, and has different components and properties than the water that flows from the hot springs.

Back in town we toured the Fordyce Bathhouse. Once considered the best bathhouse in Hot Springs, it now houses the National Park Visitors Center and Museum, and has been restored and furnished to look as it did in earlier times. During the Golden Age of Bathing over a million visitors a year immersed themselves in the 143 average degree waters of the hot springs, which needed to be tempered before bathing. By the 1950s changes in medicine led to a rapid decline in the water therapies provided in the bathhouses, but today bathing continues to be a popular pastime and Hot Springs remains a popular tourist destination.



ER of the North Little Rock Lodge Shawn Sullivan and his wife Ragan, Nancy, and Ron.



Ron and Herb Carey, ER of the Hot Springs Lodge

Friday night we enjoyed a catfish dinner at the Hot Springs Lodge, where we were greeted by Exalted Ruler Herb Carey. The Lodge has 413 Members, expects to have a

membership gain this year, always makes the GER ENF per capita, and has received ENF Community Investment Grants for the last two years. We were back at the hotel fairly early.

Saturday morning, PER Mike Muldoon met us at the hotel and led our caravan to the Oaklawn Racetrack for the "Elks day at the Races." Mike has worked at the track for many years, knows everyone and has access to many restricted areas.

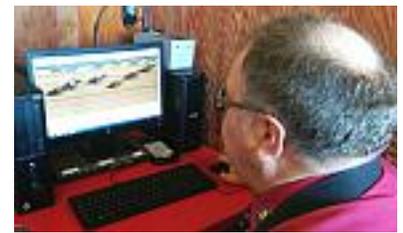
We had lunch at the Post Parade Restaurant before our tour of the track. The track, opened in 1904, has been owned by the family of Charles Cella for many years. He loves carousel horses and artwork and the impressive collection is displayed throughout the facility. We had a great tour of the "inner sanctum" of the racetrack, from

the horse owner and trainer areas to the staff offices and press box with its sports writers, broadcasters, finish line judges, and race stewards. There were three stewards to judge any fouls or inquiries, including former Jockey Larry Snyder, the winner of 6,388 races and over \$47 million during his



Ron and Jockey/Steward Larry Snyder, winner of 6,388 races.

career. The fourth race was the "Arkansas Elks Race" and Ron got to present the owner of the winning horse with the



An Official watching the Finish Line of a race at Oaklawn.



A "Birds Eye View" from the Press Box at Oaklawn.



Nancy with Ron presenting a Crystal Plate to the owner of the horse after the Elks Race.

winner's crystal plate (He also won \$22,000). We left the track after the sixth race, stopping at a nearby Dairy Queen on the way back to the hotel.

Saturday night we returned to the Hot Springs Lodge for dinner and a dance, also attended by a number of Elks from Texas and Oklahoma. Students from the Hot Springs High School "East Lab Club," which conducts various community projects, including work with homeless Vets, and is supported by the Lodge, helped serve the meal. After dinner Ron and Nancy both



PER Mike Muldoon presenting Ron with the "Arkansas Traveler" Certificate from the Governor of Arkansas

thanked the Arkansas Elks for their hospitality and Ron spoke about his theme for the year "Elks Pride - Community Focus" and received a framed Traveler Certificate from Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchison. We both signed Membership cards, the Arkansas Elks Association drew the winner for a State Raffle, and there was an auction of Ron's Wine. President-Elect Joe Coulter served as auctioneer and Steve Williams from Durant Lodge 1963 was the high bidder on the Wine, which raised \$500 for ENF. We stayed around for a little dancing, thank-yous and goodbyes before we called it a night.

Sunday, we rode back to the Clinton Airport with Roy and Joyce Whorley for our flight from Arkansas through Dallas-Fort Worth to Las Vegas, Nevada, and on to Utah, the "Beehive State," and the Utah State Elks Convention in Saint George, Utah.