

GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Visit to Indiana

We left DC Reagan Airport at 7:30 am on a sunny Wednesday morning, June 1 for our direct flight to Indianapolis, Indiana, and the Indiana Elks Convention. We were met at the airport by SDGER and PSP Don Schoeff and his wife Ruth, our Escorts for the week, who drove us to the Sheraton Hotel at Keystone Crossing, site of the Convention and about an hour from the airport.



Don and Ruth Schoeff with Ron and Nancy

After unpacking, we had lunch with Don and Ruth at the Cheesecake Factory. Nancy met some of the Convention Attendees in the lobby of the hotel Wednesday afternoon sharing a little social time before Convention begins. The State Chairman of the Cancer Research Fund, Mayo Sanders with his new red tie; Margaret and John Ryan who are in charge



Major Projects Chairman Mayo Sanders, Ron, and Don Schoeff with the Cancer Research Team Members



Ron and Nancy with Convention Chairmen Elaine and Chuck Curtis

of Housing for the Convention; Elaine and Chuck Curtis, Convention Chairmen; and Don and Ruth. Wednesday night we joined State President Ed Dyer and his wife Kate and a few State Officers and PSPs for dinner at the hotel.



Ron and Nancy with Outgoing State President Ed Dyer and his wife Kate

Unfortunately, PGER and State Sponsor Jim Varenhorst was unable to attend the Convention because of a pending surgery.

Thursday morning Ron attended the meeting of the Executive Committee, and in the afternoon, meetings with the PSPs and the Elks Charities Board. Indiana has sixty Lodges and 16,000 Members, with forty-eight of their Lodges having served Indiana for over 100 years.

The State Major Project is Charities for Cancer Research, which supports research at Indiana and Purdue Universities and the Riley Children's Hospital. Indiana Elks Association gave \$260,000 to Indiana University and Purdue University last year and again at this Convention, with over Nine Million Dollars being donated for cancer research since the inception of the program, all without funding from a large investment fund, but through enthusiastic year-round Lodge effort and contributions. The Association also provided \$80,000 in Scholarships last year and is a long-time major sponsor of the Miss Indiana Pageant. A PSP and State Officer Reception and Dinner was held at the hotel on Thursday night, and after dinner, the IEA conducted its annual Flag Day Ceremony.



Flag Day Participants

The First Business Session was Friday morning with a number of fine Reports. The IEA holds several state-wide fundraisers each year, including pin sales, a Lucky Bucks Calendar, Reverse Raffle, and the Parade of Nickels. Indiana, "the Hoosier State," had three Regional Hoop Shoot winners who advanced to Nationals and has a growing Soccer Shoot Program. The Elks of Indiana are active in their Drug Awareness and Veterans Programs and hold State bowling and golf tournaments to raise funds for the State Major Project. There were



Ron and Nancy with Incoming State President Tony Vester and his wife Kim

also discussions on Orientation, Charity Reports, Inter-Lodge Activities, and Grand Lodge Programs. Tony Vester was nominated and elected as new State President for 2016-2017, and Ron spoke



Ron and Dick Dunn, our Driver at Grand Lodge Convention in Indianapolis last year

of his theme "Elks Pride and Community Focus" and his special connection with the Indiana Elks because of his election and installation as Grand Exalted

Ruler in Indianapolis. Ron and Nancy had a chance to visit with our Driver at Grand Lodge last summer in Indianapolis, Dick Dunn and his wife Marilyn.

Ron attended the Exalted Rulers and Secretary Luncheon and spoke to the officers about not being afraid of change and the use of Social Media in promoting their Lodge. Friday afternoon Ron met with



Ron and Nancy with the visiting Michigan Officers

SDGER Schoeff and Michigan PSP and newly designated SDGER, Randy Jackson, with the DDs and DD-Designates to review Lodge activities. In addition to PSP Jackson and his wife Kristie,

Michigan President Pete Gadzinski and his wife Pam, and First VP, Joe Antonishek and his wife Debi, attended the Convention.

The State Reception and Banquet was held Friday night, where a



Miss Indiana Morgan Jackson, Ron, and Miss Teen Indiana Audrey Ferguson

number of Awards were presented, with both Miss Indiana, Morgan Jackson, and Miss Teen Indiana, Audrey Ferguson, on hand to thank the Elks and talk about their experiences. Director North West Don Radarsdorf was named Officer of the Year, and Tim Wright of the Linton Lodge won the 50/50 and

immediately donated the \$565 to ENF. Ron thanked the association for their hospitality, support of GL Programs, and their community efforts, and spoke about the importance of an Orientation "Process" in the development of a life-long, active Member and how the Officers working together to perform an impressive Ritual can return great benefits for them and their Lodge with everything it does. We then retired to the State Hospitality Room for the evening.

The Second Business Session was Saturday morning and included more Committee Reports and Special Reports from ERs offering Lodge highlights and reviewing their successful year. Americanism Chairman Dick Dunbar presented the middle-school Americanism Essay Contest winners: Lexie Baker, Ryan Deaton, and Morgan Adams. ENF Chairman Rob Whitaker recognized the top Lodges in per capita giving to



Ron with Americanism Essay Contest winners, Ryan, Lexus, and Morgan, and Chairman Dick Dunbar



Veterans Service Chairman Bob Jansen, Veterans Volunteer of the Year Andy Gemmer, and Ron

ENF, New Albany (\$24.66) and Decatur (21.56), and also recognized Silver Level ENF Donor Pat McCormick for her tremendous efforts for ENF. National Veterans Chairman Bob Jansen recognized Andy Gemmer from the Decatur Lodge as Veterans Volunteer of the Year, announced that the Parade

of Nickels raised over \$60,000 last year, and that the Decatur Lodge won the Gerald Griffen Award with a total Lodge "Nickels" contribution of \$7,216 and a per capita of \$36.02. Both Miss Indianas helped Ron present Awards for contributions to the State Major Project, with the Boonesville Lodge having the highest per capita donations (\$95.57) and Union City having the highest total Lodge contribution (\$22,050). President Dyer presented the Hoosier Heritage President's "Lodge of the Year" Award to ER Brian Rawding and Auburn Lodge 1978.



Ron, Auburn Lodge ER Brian Rawding accepting "Lodge of the Year" Award, and State President Ed Dyer

Representatives from Indiana University's Simon Cancer Center attended the Saturday Session to thank the Elks for their generosity and let them know how the IEA "Seeds of Hope" are helping fight cancer. Dr Rebecca Silermann, an engineer who designs new cancer therapies; Mary Tankany, a research nurse and cancer patient; and Dr Jenna Ricketts, a Neuro-Biological Engineer; spoke passionately about their work and how cancer is not just one

disease, but a collection of nearly 100 diseases, each with their own characteristics and challenges. The Lodges then joined in "A Line of Giving" with additional contributions for Cancer Research.



Vice Chairman Board of Grand Trustees Larry Shaver and his wife Carolyn with Ron and Nancy

Indiana reported \$1.9M as the value of their services to the community last year, although it was noted that, like most states, this figure is probably only a fraction of what the Lodges actually do in support of their youth, the Veterans, and their Communities. While the IEA did not quite have a gain in Membership this year, Membership Chairman Kathy Easterday announced that Indiana

showed the "Most Improvement" in Membership in the Nation! Greenfield Lodge 1720 was recognized as Number 1 in Inter-Lodge Activities, joining together and working with other Lodges. District All-State Lodge Winners were the Dunkirk, Elwood, and Franklin Lodges. After the Business Session, the IEA Memorial Service was held with Michigan Vice President Joe Antonishek delivering the Eulogy, which included comments about our dear friend, Ric Mulholland, the previously endorsed candidate for Grand Exalted Ruler, who died last October.

After the Memorial Service, Nancy attended the Ladies Luncheon held in the hotel. Kim Vester, wife of in-coming State President Tony Vester, was Mistress of Ceremonies. We had a delicious lunch and were entertained during lunch by an Elvis Impersonator. He was great and almost caused a couple of the ladies to faint when he put his scarves around their necks. Kim introduced the wives of the in-coming and outgoing officers. Kate Dyer thanked everyone for the wonderful hospitality shown to her and Ed during their travels as State President and First Lady.

Saturday afternoon Ron attended the finals of the Ritual Competition between Hobart Lodge 1152 and Wabash Lodge 471, followed by the Toast and Flag Tribute Contests. Saturday night new State President Tony Vester and his Officers were installed, the drawings were held for the major fundraising raffle and GER Wine Raffle, and Ritual winners were announced. Wabash Lodge 471 took top honors in Ritual and will be representing Indiana at the GL Convention in Houston. Don Keller and Joe Slacian, both from the Wabash Lodge, completed the sweep for Wabash by winning the Toast and Flag Tribute Contests, respectively. The GER Wine Raffle, which raised \$610 for ENF, was won by Kathy Easterday, also from the Wabash Lodge. Following the festivities, we retired to Convention Chairman Chuck and Elaine Curtis's room for pizza and dessert before heading to the State Hospitality Room. (Chuck and Mike Chester were the 2015 Convention Coordinators for the GL Convention in Indianapolis.)



State Ritual Champions Wabash Lodge 1152



Hobart Lodge 1152 Ritual Team



Ron with ENF Chairman Rob Whitaker, who raised \$610 for ENF in the GER Wine Raffle

Our flight from Indiana was not scheduled until Sunday afternoon, so after a leisurely breakfast, we spent the rest of the morning packing and working on the blog, thank you notes and other odds and ends. It was a beautiful day in Indiana as we left the hotel with Ed and Kate Dyer about 11:45 for the airport. After boarding the plane, then de-boarding and a short delay because of the weather on the East Coast,

we were off for our return on American Eagle to DC Reagan. The stormy weather made the approach and landing one of the worst we have encountered during our travels, but we made it in safely and were met by the smiling face of our faithful driver, Steve Ravinsky, and we arrived home around 6:30. Next week, we look forward to staying in Virginia for the Virginia Elks Convention in Fairfax County, VA.

Submitted by Ron and Nancy Hicks

Send comments to webmaster@virginiaelks.org

