

## GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Visit to Minnesota

The trip to Minnesota took a little longer than expected! After being dropped off at DC Reagan Airport on a stormy Thursday morning, June 23rd, for our scheduled 8:30 am flight direct to Minneapolis, our flight was delayed, then cancelled. These days, when a flight is cancelled, there is rarely a chance of getting on the next flight, and you can often wait a couple of days. Fortunately, we were able to get a flight at 10:30 am Friday morning through Chicago. Friday was a beautiful day; we arrived at the Minneapolis-St Paul Airport about 2:00 pm, and were met by PGER and State Sponsor Dwayne Rumney and his wife Sandy, Grand Trustee Paul Ryan, and Stillwater Lodge Members, Frank Vikingsted and John Joslin, who would be our drivers during our visit. The Minnesota Elks State



Ron and Nancy with State Sponsor of Minnesota PGER Dwayne Rumney and wife Sandy



Board of Grand Trustees Member Paul Ryan and his wife Stacey with Nancy and Ron



Sunset on the St. Croix River

Convention was being held about an hour away in Stillwater, the 1848 Birthplace of Minnesota and located on the banks of the scenic St. Croix River, just over the lift bridge from Wisconsin. Our home during the Convention would be the Water Street Inn with its great view of the river and the old lift bridge.

Because of our travel delay, we had missed the Thursday and Friday activities, including a meeting with Advisory, the first Business Session, the Friday afternoon Golf Tournament, and the Ladies Lunch but were able to go to dinner on Friday night with State Officials at the Stillwater Lodge, host to the Convention. After dinner Exalted Ruler Pat Cleary gave Ron a tour of the Lodge building, a portion of which is shared with the American Legion and a catering company. On the way back to the Inn, we took a quick tour of Stillwater, with its beautiful homes, steep streets. and historic downtown.

Saturday morning Ron attended the Second Business Session at the Lodge. Minnesota has twenty-five Lodges and 8,000 Members, with the Owatonna Lodge being the largest Lodge with 723 Members. The State Major Project is the Minnesota Elks Youth Camp, established in 1954 and located on four lakes and 300 acres, serving 600-700 children per year. Every Lodge usually makes the GER Goal for donations to ENF and the State Per Capita last year was \$9.78, doubling the Goal. Twenty-two of the twenty-five Lodges received ENF Community Grants to support their Community outreach, with the Minneapolis and Hopkins Lodges leading the way with four Grants each, plus a \$10,000 Impact Grant.



Committee on Judiciary Member Todd Deal with Nancy and Ron

I had a quiet morning and enjoyed breakfast and great conversation with Sandy Rumney and Judy Ledebuhr at the hotel. Our driver came promptly at 10:00 am to pick us up and take us to the Lodge for the Memorial Service and other convention activities.

Led by Chairman Tom Kramin, Minnesota has an active Veterans Program and is already involved in the new Grand Lodge Welcome Home Kits Program for Homeless Veterans. The Veteran Volunteers of the Year were Dave Seykora (Owatonna Lodge) and Virginia Van Sluis (Faribault Lodge). Diane Blight, Public Relations Chairmen, urged Members to let everyone know who the Elks are and what we do, and to "stand in the light," which fits in with Ron's message that "each Member, and those they inspire, can be a bright light, and let's let our bright lights shine." Ritual Chairman Herman Wisneski commented that shortening the Ritual "may not have been our brightest move," which Ron agrees with entirely and often states that "Ritual is part of our history and tradition, and what sets us apart from the club down the street." Scholarship Chair Brenda Shoults reported 275 Scholarship Applications last year and a top twenty National Scholar. The GER Wine Raffle, headed by ENF Chairman Tom Nesvig, raised \$1,315 for ENF and was won by Cheri Johnson a Member of Faribault Lodge 1166.



Veterans Chairman Tom Kramin and the female "Veterans Volunteer of the Year," Virginia Van Sluis with Ron



Outgoing State President Dick Ledebuhr and his wife Judy with Nancy and Ron



Incoming State President Butch Blight and his wife Diane with Nancy and Ron

The Memorial Service was held at 11:00, followed by the Installation of State President Butch Blight and

the other new State Officers. Lunch of soup and salad was provided by the Stillwater Lodge and the President's Reception was held at 2:00. After the Reception we headed back to the Inn. Contrary to the expected cool weather in Minnesota, it was a stifling ninety-eight degrees and very humid Saturday afternoon. The Saturday night Banquet was on board the "Majestic Star" cruise ship with a cruise down the St. Croix River. Along the way we passed under the new town bridge which has been under construction for two years and is planned for completion late next year, bringing welcome relief from the current draw bridge which halts traffic every hour to allow boats to pass.



A "Selfie" after the river cruise. The Rumneys, the Ryans, and the Hicks.

A number of Awards were presented during the Banquet. Mankato Lodge 225 was Number One in the State with a Membership gain of thirteen percent. Youth Activities Divisional Awards went to Brainerd 615, Alexandria 1658, and Hopkins 2221. Dakota County 2832 (48 Members) led the State with an ENF Per Capita of \$71.25, with Owatonna 1395 (737 Members) coming in second with \$30.14. Divisional Awards for the "Penny-a-Day" Per Capita Donations for the State Major Project went to the Brainerd Lodge (\$8.69), Wilmar Lodge (\$6.42), and the Hopkins Lodge (\$4.39). Lynn Rohlf of the Duluth Lodge was named Elk of the Year.



Ron and Dwayne with the "child's cone" already half gone before we thought to take a photo



State President Dick Ledebuhr, "Elk of the Year" Lynn Rohlf, and Ron

During our stay, we had heard about Nelson's Ice Cream Parlor and an amazingly large "child's size cone" for \$3.00, so on the way back to the Inn, Ron just had to stop

by Nelsons. True to the rumor, the child's cone was huge (It must have been a quart!) and Dwayne and Ron each got one. Sandy helped Dwayne with his cone, but I only tasted Ron's, and, for the first time ever, he had trouble finishing his cone. He actually had to throw some of the ice cream away!?!?!? Back at the hotel we packed for our 8:00 am departure on a beautiful sunny morning, arriving back at DC Reagan about 2:30 pm to the smiling face of our faithful driver throughout the year, Steve Ravinsky. We are only going to be home long enough to unpack and repack our suitcases before heading to Houston, Texas for Grand Lodge early Tuesday morning.

Submitted by Ron and Nancy Hicks

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