

GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Visit to Missouri

We left DC Reagan Airport on a warm Thursday morning, March 10, headed for a rainy St. Louis, Missouri. We were met at the airport by PGER and State Sponsor Ted Callicott and his wife Betsy and PSP Harry Hennemann and his wife Judy. After stopping for a quick lunch, Harry and Judy took our luggage and Ron drove Betsy's car on the two-hour trip to Jefferson City, the State Capitol, and the Missouri Elks State Convention. Ron had been slowed by a cold for a couple of days, so when we arrived at the hotel, after unpacking, he took some medicine and a short nap.



Betsy Callicott, Harry Hennemann, Ted Callicott,
Judy Hennemann, Nancy and Ron

Missouri is a large Elk State with seventy-four Lodges and approximately 30,000 Members. It leads the Nation with its Hides/Leather Program for Veterans and Blue Springs Lodge 2509 finished third in the Grand Lodge Ritual Contest last year. The State is aiming for a gain in Membership this year, they always meet the GER ENF Per Capita Goal, sixty-eight Lodges received ENF Grants last year, and forty-eight of the Lodges have an average Membership age of under sixty years. Three Lodges received ENF Impact Grants (\$10,000) this year, Columbia, Osage Community, and Blue Springs. The State Major Project is the Missouri Benevolent Trust Fund which, together with the Missouri Division of Health, operates a mobile dental program serving over 1,500 disabled and mentally challenged children and adults every year.



Blue Springs Lodge 2509 Ritual Team

Thursday night, driven by our escorts for the weekend, Duane Heldenbrand and his wife Angie, we went to the Jefferson City Lodge 513 with State and Grand Lodge officials for the Lodge's always well-attended,



Jeff Volmert, ER of the
Jefferson City Lodge, and
Ron

volunteer-prepared, regular Thursday Night Fried Chicken Dinner. Ron received a tour of the Lodge by ER Jeff Volmert. Jefferson City has a very nice Lodge facility with a pool and a little over 700 Members. They have received two Community Grants each of the last two years to assist them in their community outreach.

The ladies met for breakfast in the hotel and then were off for a morning of "Retail Therapy" at one of the local Malls. With lots of looking and some trying on of clothes a couple of the ladies found a couple of outfits they could not live without. After shopping we were driven to Red Lobster by Linda Gundling for a fun lunch.

Friday morning Ron attended meetings with the Convention Committee and the Past State Presidents. The Convention Directors, PSP Tom Shelton and his wife Marty, did an excellent job coordinating everything for the 650+ attendees, who took over every room at The Capitol Plaza Hotel and spilled over into other nearby hotels. After lunch, Ron attended meetings with the Budget Committee, the Charitable Fund Board, and the Board of Directors. State President Duane Heldenbrand and his wife Angie invited us to the President's Dinner Friday Night, an opportunity for them to thank



Ron and Nancy with State President
Duane Heldenbrand and his wife
Angie



Ron and Nancy with Incoming State
President John Gross and his wife
Sarah

those who had helped make their year so successful. After dinner we had a chance to visit some of the eight District Hospitality Rooms surrounding the hotel atrium.

The Business Session began Saturday morning with many fine reports. The Session was lively as the State Officers played out their theme for the year - "Super Heroes," with each of the VPs donning capes with the names of the Lodges in their District listed on the back, and after their Reports each presented their cape to President Duane. The Session was

interrupted briefly by an unexpected delivery of some "moonshine" refreshments. The Missouri Elks are obviously very proud of who they are and what they do, enjoy each other, and have fun as they go through Elkdom.

Late Saturday morning the ladies departed the hotel for the Jefferson City Lodge to attend the Ladies Brunch. While eating the delicious food from the buffet, we were entertained with delightful organ music. After Brunch all of the State Officers' wives, Grand Lodge Officers' wives, and Past State Presidents' wives were introduced before Nancy. She shared a few experiences and adventures from trips she and Ron have had during this extraordinary journey, told the story of her pin, and thanked the Jefferson City Lodge for their fantastic hospitality this weekend. Then, last, but certainly not least, the ladies were surprised by a few very handsome dancers sharing their talents and some fun entertainment.

After lunch, Betsy Crawford, a resident of the Jefferson City area and wife of PSP Brian Crawford, took Betsy, Angie, and Nancy on a brief tour of Jefferson City. Some of the highlights were the Governor's Mansion, the State Capitol building, and the Old Missouri State Penitentiary Building. We drove through the "Old Munich District" which maintains its German Heritage with lovely renovated buildings. It was a rainy afternoon so they were not able to get out and walk the areas they rode through.

Ron attended the PSP Luncheon which was also attended by President Duane and by Roger Quinn, the Area Five Member of the Grand Lodge Ritual Committee. There were also separate working luncheons for the Exalted Rulers and for the PERs. After lunch Ron met with Dr. Robert Beck who works with one of the two Mobile Dental Vans that operate throughout Missouri. Dr. Beck, who has been involved with the Program for over seven years, explained how it was personally rewarding and how the Program benefits those who could not otherwise obtain or afford this type of service. The Missouri Elks are in the process of replacing two of the existing vans with two new fully-equipped vans for the Program.



PSP Brian Crawford and Chairman of the Missouri Benevolent Fund Doctor Robert Beck and Ron

Saturday afternoon Ron sat in on an Orientation Program conducted by PGER Callicott for the newly designated District Deputies and DD Esquires. Ron also had a chance to go by the Ritual Clinic conducted by Roger Quinn with the Blue Springs Lodge Ritual Team performing. The Banquet was held Saturday night with the Missouri Most Valuable Scholarship winners and their families being Special Guests. Each of the eight Scholarships winners spoke, thanking the Elks and explaining what they had in mind for the future. All of the students were from small towns or grew up in a farm setting, most were members of FFA, and several expressed an interest in pursuing a degree related to agriculture or the environmental sciences.



Missouri Most Valuable Student Scholarship winners

After dinner Ron had an opportunity to speak about the start of the new Lodge Year on April 1, encouraging the new Officers to be enthusiastic and have positive thoughts, believe they can make a difference, and expect success. He told them, "There is nothing you can do that will return a greater benefit to you, your Officers, and the Lodge than working together to perform a good Ritual," explaining how working together will bring them closer, make them a team, and attract the attention and appreciation of their Membership, which in turn will benefit everything they do at the Lodge and lead them to a successful year. He further said, "It is no accident that Lodges with Officers who work together to perform a good Ritual, and become a true team, tend to be successful Lodges," pointing to the success of the Blue Springs Lodge as an example.



Carl and Sharon Simpson with Ron and Nancy, We served on Grand Lodge Board of Trustees together

Dave Solomon, from De Soto Lodge 689, was named Officer of the Year and Don Cook, from Joplin Lodge 501, was recognized as Elk of the year. Cindy Woolridge from Mexico Lodge 919 was named "Veterans Volunteer of the Year," and the Dexter and Christian County Lodges received Awards for their efforts with Public Relations. The Northeast District won the Hospitality Room Contest and ER Shawn Stark from Blue Springs Lodge 2509 won the Eleven

O'Clock Toast Contest. Rick Lucas from the O'Fallon Lodge was the winner of the GER Wine Raffle which raised \$1,140 for ENF. After the Banquet and changing out of his formal attire, Ron completed his tour of the Hospitality Rooms.

The final Business Session, Memorial Service, and Officer Installation were on Sunday morning, but we had to leave early for our drive back to the St Louis Airport. As it turns out, we could have stayed at the Session because our direct flight back to DC was delayed several times and then, finally, cancelled. We had to spend the night in a nearby airport hotel, and not being able to book another direct flight, left at 5:15 am Monday morning for our flight back to DC by way of La Guardia Airport in NY. Another adventurous trip home!

Submitted by Ron and Nancy Hicks

Send comments to webmaster@virginiaelks.org

