

GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Hicks' Visit to Oklahoma

We left Gatlinburg, Tennessee, on a bright, crisp Sunday morning with Jack and Sharon Frost headed for the Knoxville Airport and Tulsa, Oklahoma, by way of Dallas-Fort Worth. At the Tulsa Airport we were greeted by PGER and State Sponsor Millard Pickering and his wife Susanne, who took us to the Hard Rock Casino Hotel for our three-night stay before the start of the Oklahoma Elks Convention. We arrived in Tulsa a couple of days early to join in the 100-year anniversaries of Claremore Lodge 1240 and Miami Lodge 1320.

Sunday night we went to dinner with Millard and Susanne, who live in the area, at the Canyon Rock Grill on the Arkansas River. We relaxed on Monday morning and were joined by Grand Lodge Public Relations Committee Member James Beyl and his wife Gwen for lunch at the hotel. James and Ron then joined PER Larry East and his daughter, Danielle, both from the Claremore Lodge, for golf at the Hard Rock Golf Course. It was a cool, windy day, so they only played nine holes. Gwen and Nancy stayed out of the wind and relaxed at the casino. We went to dinner Monday night with Millard, Susanne, James and Gwen at local favorite, Oklahoma Joe's BBQ Restaurant.

Tuesday, April 12, was Ron and Nancy's Forty-seventh Anniversary! It was another laid back



Color Guard at Claremore Lodge for the 100 Year Celebration for the Claremore and Miami Lodges



Ron and Nancy with Susanne and Millard



Ron and Nancy with our escorts in Oklahoma, Grand Lodge Committeeman James Beyl and his wife Gwen



Golf foursome: Claremore PER Larry East, his daughter Danielle, Ron and James Beyl

morning as we went to the casino for a little R & R and lunch before leaving for a 3:00 pm Reception with Oklahoma State Officers. We then went to the nearby Claremore Lodge for the evening.

The Claremore Lodge and Exalted Ruler John Dudley did a great job hosting the 100-year Anniversary Celebration for the Claremore and Miami Lodges. PER Russ Campbell and a number of

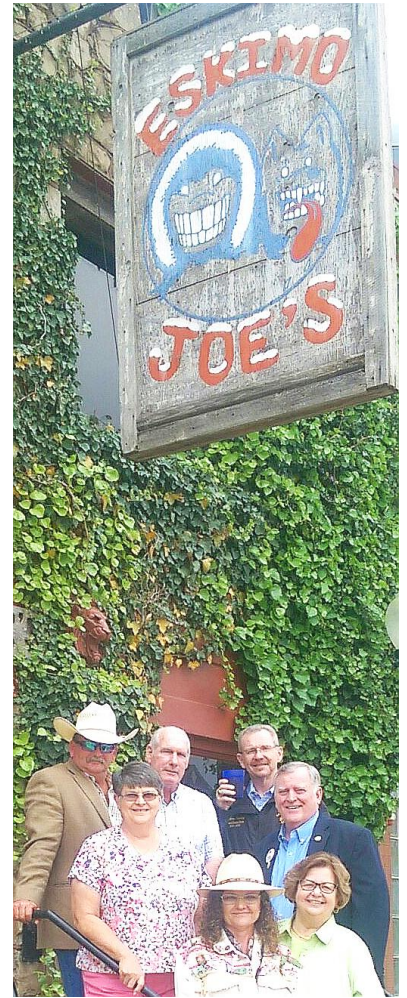


Ron with Claremore PER John Dudley and Miami PER Russ Campbell with 100 Year Lodge Plaques from Grand Lodge

other Miami Lodge Members had traveled the seventy-plus miles to take part in the celebration. Ron congratulated both Lodges and spoke of how many things must go right to achieve such a significant milestone, including much dedication, inspired leaders, selfless

volunteers, and even a little luck. He also explained that occasions such as this provide yet another opportunity for the Lodges to tell the Elks Story, their Story, and to let it be a celebration of the fact that the Lodges remain a fun and comfortable place for their Members and a reliable partner for their communities, encouraging them to be Loud and Proud!

We left the hotel about 11:00 am Wednesday morning on our way to Oklahoma City, riding in the comfort in a nine-passenger luxury van provided and driven by Jimmy Tilley. We were accompanied by Millard as well as Jimmy's wife Kimberley. We stopped for lunch in Stillwater at the famous Eskimo Joe's located across the street from Oklahoma State University, and afterwards took a driving tour of the impressive campus. Back on the road we drove through "Red Dirt Country," "Green Country," and the "Plains," along the edge of the Osage and Iowa Indian Nations. Along Rte 66 (The "Mother Road"), we made a stop at the Round Barn, one of



Jimmy Tilley, James Beyl, Millard Pickering, Gwen Beyl, Ron, Kimberly Tilley (Best dressed all weekend) and Nancy in front of Eskimo Joe's

the most recognizable structures on the historic highway, which was built in 1898 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. Next was a stop at Pop's upscale convenience



Nancy and Kimberly at Pop's checking out all the different sodas

store for gas and to look at the vast collection of sodas that made Pop's famous, from cream soda to sarsaparilla. Jimmy and Ron enjoyed a hand-dipped chocolate milkshake.



Ron and Nancy at the "Round Barn"

We arrived in Oklahoma City at the Crown Plaza Hotel about 4:00 pm, where we were greeted by State President Steve Williamson and his wife Pam and other Oklahoma Elks.

Wednesday night Susanne rejoined our group and we went to dinner at another Red Rock Canyon Grill on Lake Hefner. After dark we visited the outdoor grounds of the Oklahoma City National Memorial, with its reflecting pool and field of 168 lighted chairs standing in silent tribute to the 168 men, women and children who died in the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995.



The Oklahoma Capital has an oil producing well on its front lawn

Thursday morning we went to the State Capital where Ron and Steve were introduced in the House Chamber by Delegate Dustin Roberts, a member of the Durant Lodge, and in the Senate Chamber. Afterwards we enjoyed a tour of the State Supreme Court



President Steve Williamson and Ron received Citations from the Oklahoma State Legislature by State Delegate Dustin Roberts, a member of the Durant Lodge

Building, led by thirty-two year Court Justice Yvonne Kauger. The



Ron and State Supreme Court Justice Yvonne Kauger. Original Indian artwork in background

building, which was renovated under Justice Kauger's direction, is filled with original paintings by Oklahoma artists, mostly Indian artists, including the "Kiowa Six." Oklahoma was first to recognize and accept Indian art as an art movement and Justice Kauger knew some of the artists, their families, and the history of each piece. There are thirty-nine recognized Indian tribes in Oklahoma

and each has their own court system.

Thursday afternoon we went to lunch at the Western Heritage Cowboy Museum. Dinner Thursday night was at the Vast Restaurant on the top floor of Devon Towers, the tenth tallest building west of the Mississippi, having wonderful 360-degree views of the City and surrounding areas.

Oklahoma has a tradition of sending a strong team to the National Competition and Friday morning Ron attended the Ritual Contest, which had four teams competing. We returned to the Oklahoma City National Memorial to visit the impressive Museum that lays out the events of that April 19 and the days leading up to the subsequent arrests and



Virginia friends Don and Karen Delap,
Nancy and Ron

trials. Lunch was at Ted's Cafe Escondidos and the PSP dinner was held Friday night at the Hotel. One of the joys of the Convention for us was to be reunited with dear friends Don and Karen Delap, who had recently moved from Virginia to Oklahoma and are now members of the Broken Arrow Lodge.

Saturday morning Nancy and Susanne were invited to a coffee hosted by Pam Williamson, wife of the out-going State President, in the Presidents Hospitality Room. Also attending were Past State Presidents Wives, State Officers Wives, and in-coming State Presidents' wife Deanna Debus

Saturday Ron attended meetings with the State Major Projects Board, the DDs and DD-Designates, Membership Committee, and the ER/GL Delegates and Spouses. Among the projects supported by the Major Projects Trust are Special Olympics, Cadet Lawman Academy, Boy Scouts, Sky's the Limit Ranch, and Scholarships. The Youth Awards Luncheon started at 11:00 with many youngsters in attendance and recognized for their achievements in the Americanism Essay and Drug Awareness Contests, Hoop Shoot, and Soccer Shoot. The Most Valuable Scholar Scholarship Winner, Cullen Edens, sponsored by the Ada Lodge, was on hand to thank the Elks and spoke about the five things that he feels lead to success: Stay involved, Separate yourself by finding something to make your own, Set goals, Have Confidence in yourself, and Remain humble. Important words, especially for the other young people in attendance.

After the Youth Awards Luncheon, the ladies were whisked away on a Kincaid Coach (bus) to the Oklahoma City Lodge 417 where we were treated to a Variety Show presented by the Okmulgee 1822 Players of the Okmulgee Lodge 1822. We saw acts like Tiny Dancers, Elsa from "Frozen," Short People, and "You Ain't Woman Enough," with the Grand Finale "Rockin' the Beer Gut". What a group of guys with fantastic bodies(?). A fun time was had by all of the ladies. Thanks to all of the Players, their writers, and director for a very entertaining show!

The General Business Session was held Saturday afternoon with a number of good Reports. Ron had an opportunity to congratulate the Lodges on the service to their communities and encouraged them to take full advantage of the ENF Community Grants to assist in those efforts. President-Elect Charlie Debus hosted a Reception prior to the Saturday night Banquet. At the Banquet, Ron spoke about his theme for the year and encouraged everyone to become Salesmen for the Success of



In-Coming State President Charles Debus and his wife Deanna, Ron and Nancy, Out-Going State President Steven Williamson and his wife Pam



Our "Chauffeur for the week" Jimmy Tilley and his wife Kimberly were the GER Wine Raffle Winners and Nancy and Ron. \$600. was raised for ENF

their Lodges. He also shared a quote from Judge Alfred P. Murrah which he had seen at the Murrah Museum, "The greatest rewards in life come from living outside one's self," explaining how that typifies the rewards of being an Elk. The winner of the fundraiser for the Ritual Team was determined by a shootoff, with Ron firing a BB gun at numbers on a spinning target (No one was injured!). The GER Wine was auctioned off with the winning bid of \$600 by Jimmy Tilley, our driver and Exalted Ruler of the Lindsay Lodge.

Sunday morning we attended the New Officer Installation and Memorial Service before leaving for the Oklahoma City Will Rogers World Airport and our return trip through Dallas back to Virginia. Unfortunately, due to severe weather in Oklahoma and Texas our flight was delayed for over an hour, then we had a further delay for mechanical problems, and finally had to have a new plane brought in before we could leave Oklahoma City. The three-hour delay caused us to miss our connection in Dallas, where we went on stand-by status as more severe weather rolled into Dallas. We sat around the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport until Midnight waiting for the next flight to Richmond and the bad weather was probably responsible for us getting a seat on the plane. While waiting Ron began having pains in his left side, which was relieved somewhat by several doses of Advil. We made it to Richmond about 5:00 am, and with Ron moaning and groaning, arrived in Fredericksburg about 6:30 am, where we immediately went to the Emergency Room for what turned out to be Ron's first ever kidney stone.

Submitted by Ron and Nancy Hicks

Send comments to webmaster@virginiaelks.org

