

GER Ron and First Lady Nancy Tour Yellowstone Area

After the Montana State Convention, since we had never been in this part of the Country, rather than flying home to Virginia for three days and back to North Dakota, we decided to stay out West. We flew back to Billings, Montana, from the site of the Convention, Wolf Point, and rented a car and headed towards Yellowstone National Park.

Before traversing the breathtaking Beartooth Pass over one of the highest passes in Montana, with its two-lane, switch-back road, we stopped in Red Lodge, Montana, to visit the Beartooth Elks Lodge, which we had heard about at the Convention.

Upon arrival at the Main Street location, we were greeted by a huge welcome sign in front of the Lodge. It was Sunday morning, and the Lodge was closed, but we were met by a dozen enthusiastic Lodge Members who provided a great lunch and tour of their facility. Beartooth is a "Yellow Ribbon Lodge" and has a number of great programs in support of our Veterans.

On the flight to Billings, we had learned that it was "Ironhorse Weekend (Little Sturgis)" in Red Lodge, so after our Lodge visit, we walked around town taking in the sights and sounds. Then, we went to the Ironhorse Rodeo, where the riders compete in rodeo events on motorcycles instead of horses. It was quite a show with thousands of cheering fans and almost as many motorcycles (as far as you could see). After observing a few events, we were off to Silver Gate, Montana at the North Entrance to Yellowstone, and the Grizzly Inn.

That night, we met up with a couple of dozen bikers from Utah (mostly couples) also staying at the Inn. After dinner, we sat around a campfire with the bikers talking about the Elks, sharing jokes and stories. We left early Monday morning,



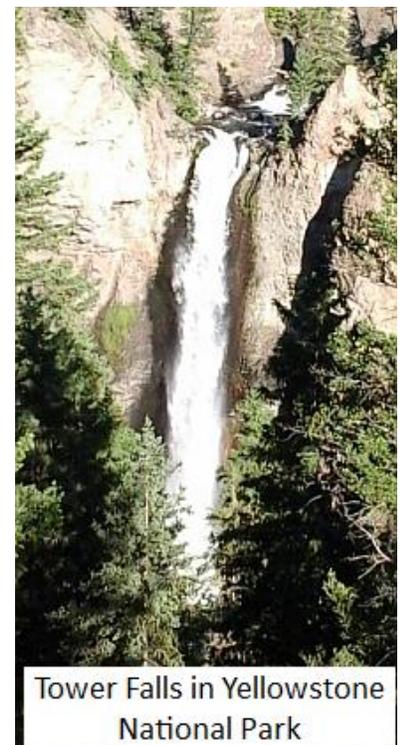
Beartooth Pass



"Top of the World," Beartooth Pass, Montana



Beartooth Elks Lodge, Red Lodge, Montana



Tower Falls in Yellowstone National Park

headed for Old Faithful. The vistas along the way were beautiful, with more to see around every corner. We saw snow, ice formations, waterfalls, several herds of buffalo and a number of deer and elk, and other animals, but unfortunately, no bears.

We arrived at Old Faithful late morning and joined thousands of spectators waiting for the next water eruption. Old Faithful puts on her show about every 90 minutes without fail. Another item gone from our "Bucket List!"

We then travelled around Lake Yellowstone towards the East Entrance to the Park. There was more amazing scenery, with much of this side of the Park being scarred by multiple forest fires through the years. Just outside the entrance, we stopped for a late lunch at the Pahaska Tee Pee Resort built in 1904 by Buffalo Bill Cody. Here, we enjoyed (Ron did) our first taste of Rocky Mountain Oysters. Mmmmm!!

After visiting the Cody Elks Lodge, we witnessed a staged bank robbery, an old west gunfight, dinner at the historic Irma Hotel (also built by Buffalo Bill), and a country music show. We spent Monday night in Cody, Wyoming. Tuesday morning we visited the Buffalo Bill Cody Museum, an expansive facility with five separate museums featuring, western art, natural history, Indian culture, every gun imaginable, and a building dedicated to Buffalo Bill himself.

Tuesday afternoon, we headed back to Billings, Montana, for dinner at the Billings Elks Lodge with a number of new Elk friends we had met at the Montana Convention. The Lodge is a large facility with three indoor tennis courts. Wednesday morning, we flew out of the Big Sky Country for Fargo, North Dakota, and our second official State Visit.



Elk grazing along side of road and Lake Yellowstone



Buffalo in Yellowstone



Buffalo Bill Cody, Annie Oakley, Doc Holiday, Calamity Jane and other western characters.



Ron signing guest book at the Billings, Montana Elks Lodge