

## Ron and Nancy Enjoy North Dakota and ND Convention

We found North Dakota much different than expected. It is a vibrant State with much going on in oil production, technology, health care, agriculture and higher education. For the last two years, North Dakota has experienced the highest rate of growth in the Nation, and in a recent Gallup Poll was listed as the Happiest State in the Country and among the top 10 Healthiest States.

The Annual North Dakota Convention was held in Jamestown, ND, a bustling small town about mid-way between Bismarck and Fargo. State Sponsor, PGER Jack

Traynor, was our host. He is also the State Sponsor for Montana, but had missed the Montana Convention due to rail and other travel difficulties. North Dakota has eight Elks Lodges, Bismarck being the largest with over 4,000 members, the second largest Lodge in the Country (formerly #1).

We returned to Jamestown on Thursday afternoon after a wonderful visit to Camp Grassick. Friday was a relatively “free” day. Nancy attended a Coffee with some of the Jamestown ladies, while Ron spent the morning with PSP Tex Weatherly touring the Buffalo Museum and his property in search of “White Cloud,” the only known White Albino Buffalo in existence.

White Cloud cooperated, which is not always the case, and Ron had a unique close-up encounter with Tex’s favorite buffalo. White Cloud has had several white offspring, but she still remains the only certified Albino. In Indian lore, the white buffalo is thought to hold special powers and symbolize



Ron and Nancy being greeted at the Fargo, North Dakota airport by the State President, Jim Gibb.



Ron and Nancy with David and Jan Bailly standing in front of the Fargo Theater in Fargo, North Dakota.



Ron and Jack Traynor at the Past State Presidents dinner at the Jamestown Elks Lodge.



Ron and Tex Weatherly with White Cloud the albino buffalo in the background.

abundance and purity of body, mind and spirit.

Friday afternoon, Ron had the opportunity to play 9 holes of golf in the State Association Two-man Team Tournament. It was a great day for golf, Ron enjoyed the camaraderie and chance to get back on the course again, and a good time was had by all.

Friday night was the PSP's Dinner, a Luau with suckling pig and all the trimmings, where Ron spoke about the exciting times for North Dakota, and how he hoped the North Dakota Elks could capture the spirit and enthusiasm of the many new companies and people moving into the State, and grow Elkdom by tapping into these new community opportunities.

Saturday began the Business Sessions at the Jamestown Lodge, with reports from the various State Committee Chairmen. North Dakota, like many other states, has lost members over the last few years, but there is a revived effort, led by David Bailly, State Membership Chairman, to get to plus-1 this year, also for each Lodge to meet Ron's GER Per-Capita Goal of \$4.65. The North Dakota Elks participate in all of the Grand Lodge Programs and, in addition, each Lodge has its own special programs and projects to support their communities, but it was clear that the pride of North Dakota is the success story that is Camp Grassick.

Nancy attended a lovely luncheon with the ladies of North Dakota at the Jamestown Country Club. She enjoyed spending time with the ladies and getting to know more about them and what they do to help the North Dakota Elks. They had a silent auction with the funds going to Camp Grassick.

There were two receptions Saturday Evening, prior to the Association Banquet, held at the Knights of Columbus facility because the Jamestown Lodge was not large enough to accommodate all of the Elk delegates and guests. July 25<sup>th</sup> was National Hot Fudge Sundae Day and Ron's birthday, and somehow the news was leaked, and Ron was treated to a hot fudge sundae for dessert. The entertainment for the evening was provided by the Bismarck/Mandan Chorus, which has performed at several Elks National Conventions. In addition to many other great old songs, the Chorus led the attendees in a rousing rendition of "Happy Birthday" for Ron and serenaded Nancy with "Let Me Call You Sweetheart."

Ron spoke of ways to increase Elks Pride in the Lodges and a Community Focus, and finding a way to grow Elkdom through all they do. He spoke on the importance of Ritual in helping to bring the Officers together and how a good Orientation can put the new member on the road to success and be the first step in Member Retention. Among the after dinner awards



Ron and Nancy with campers at Camp Grassick and Director Dan Limbaugh.



Ron and Nancy with newly installed North Dakota State President, Larry Larson and his wife Phyllis.

and presentations, Larry Bares was named State Elk of the Year, then Ron completed his duties for the evening with the installation of the new State Officers, including new State President, Larry Larson.

There were two significant presentations for Camp Grassick. The Camp



Ron giving the Elk of the Year plaque to Larry Bares

was presented with a \$20,000 check by Larry Knoblich from a fundraising event that he has conducted with the help of the Jamestown Elks and Elkettes for many years, growing each year, called “The Running of the Green.” Then, it was announced that long-time supporter of an Elks scholarship given in memory of his wife, and member of the Jamestown Elks, Donald Lohr who lives in Canyon, Texas had agreed to match any amount raised by the event. A total of \$40,000 for Camp Grassick.

Ron and Nancy did not go away empty handed. In addition to some parting gifts, between money raised from the signing membership cards, donations to Ron and Nancy from the Jamestown Elks Lodge and the Past State Presidents Association, and a \$10,000 donation made at the Banquet by the North Dakota Elks Association, a total of \$10,454.00 was raised in the name of the North Dakota Elks for the Elks National Foundation. Thank you North Dakota Elks!!!

We left Jamestown Sunday morning, at 7:00am, returning to Fargo in time for our 10:55 flight back to Washington’s Reagan Airport. Unfortunately, we have now experienced our first major delay early in our travels. The flight from Fargo was delayed over 2 hours, causing us to miss our connection in Chicago. Being a heavy travel day, there were no other planes with seats available to return us to DC, Reagan or Dulles, so we booked our return for the Richmond Airport, with arrival expected around midnight. Fortunately, our Lodge Transportation Committee drove us to DC when we left on July 15<sup>th</sup>, so we didn’t have to worry about a car at the wrong airport, and Richmond was a little more convenient, although a little late, for our Committee pickup. It certainly makes us thankful for our Elk friends who are willing to shuttle us along on our travels!!

One of the few good things about airline cancellations and delays is that it gives us time to reflect on our experiences since our last blog and draft a few follow-up articles for the blog. With the 8-hour layover in Chicago today, we were able to catch up on all of our travels to date. Later this week, on to the Bluegrass State of Kentucky.