

A Brief History of Ocean City Elks 2645
A Timeline of the Lodge: 1982-2022
As remembered by James W. Harbour, PER, PDDGER

I am doing this project because I am getting old and want people to know the History of 2645. Since the passing of Carroll Wagner, I am probably the only one who has been around from the beginning. I have 39 years in the Lodge, my membership number is 329.

- It all started in 1980 or 1981, a gentleman by the name of Robert Sullivan had an idea about an Elks Lodge in Ocean City. He worked on all the small things, recruited members. Bob's membership number is 1. I was meeting Bob, Dick Pairo and Ron Jones for drinks every day after work. There were 288 Charter Members. Somehow, I fell through the cracks.
- Our Sponsor was PGER Homer Huhn, Jr. Jay Nave from Westminster Lodge 2277 was President of the MD, DE, DC Elks Association. On 10/03/1982, Ocean City Elks Lodge 2645 was Instituted. Selbyville Elks Lodge 2173 PER's did the Institution, led by ER Eddie Murray. The Institution was held at the Ocean City Convention Center. The first officers as listed on the Charter were:
 - Exalted Ruler Robert Gardner
 - Leading Knight Richard Bussey
 - Loyal Knight Richard Pairo
 - Lecturing Knight Gordon Weitzel
 - Secretary Wayne Clark
 - Chaplain Allan Kinsey
 - Inner Guard RJ Shingleton,
 - Organist Andy Anderson
 - Treasurer Daniel Mc Allister
 - Esquire Timothy Shrader
 - Tiler Anthony Giammona
 - Trustees: Bruce Bunting, Charles Dondero, Michael Wicklein, Kevin Hannon and Thomas Goughan.
- Between 1982 and 1984 the Lodge met at the American Legion Post 166. In 1983, Dick Pairo became the first ER to complete a term. The Lodge was also given a Guardian Angel which was an appointed, experienced Elk to guide and teach a young Lodge which was Al Roberts, PDDGER from Selbyville Lodge 2173. Later we would have another Guardian Angel, Edgar Gore, Past State President from Cambridge Lodge 1272. There was discussion about where to buy, Ocean City or

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West Ocean City. They looked at the Westside Lounge (where Coastal Smokehouse is today) but decided on our current home. It was a commercial condo with 8 units, and we acquired units 3 and 4 (where the current bar is located). The entrance was on Sinepuxent Ave. The Lodge was open Friday and Saturday from 2PM until. We only had a beer and wine license, and the beer was sold from a soda machine!

- In 1984, Nils Edwards became Exalted Ruler. That year I was initiated with 22 others along with Jay Bryan, Dave Ford. We were initiated on the deck of Harpoon Hanna's. Nils caught a bunch of grief for that from Grand Lodge on down! The early years were trying. Our Altar was a pool table. There was a group of dissidents called the Dirty Dozen that tried to corrupt the Lodge. Nils was ER between 1984 and 1986. He was elected ER again in 1996 and 1997 so he could go to the Grand Lodge Convention. In the early years, the Lodge could not afford to send the ER, as per Grand Lodge Statutes. Later we would send the ER and Leading Knight to the Convention.
- In 1984 the Ladies Auxiliary was founded. At that time, 1 Ladies were not allowed in the Lodge. Their first President was Mary Hedges. They have continued to be an asset to the Lodge.
- Around 1986-1987 the Denny Carroll Golf Tournament was started to support our Scholarship Program.
- The Lodge struggled in the early years. Our biggest fundraiser was the Octoberfest held on the parking lot of Montego Bay Shopping Center. It was a two-day event. Among what we had at the Octoberfest were tavern burgers, a Big 6 Wheel, a beer wagon, sausage sandwiches, fries, Tear Offs. We also had a Night at the Races, Miniature Golf Nights, and other fundraisers.
- In 1991, a gentleman named Charney Harris became Exalted Ruler. Charney had a vision and knew if we did not grow the building, we could not grow the membership.

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He argued with the powers that be and we purchased units 1 and 2 with the entrance being on 138th St. They created an office for the Secretary and Treasurer and a small kitchen. The office was on the North end, to the left of the entrance. Our new room, at one time, was the kitchen. Lunch was offered to no avail. They made the bar larger from 6 bar stool to 10 bar stools.

- In 1992 Carroll Wagner became ER and I became Secretary. I remained the Lodge's Secretary for 22 years. We had 250 members. We computerized in 1993 thanks to the Ladies Auxiliary. They purchased a computer from Radio Shack. I became friends with Past State President Earl Schellman, Secretary of Annapolis Lodge. I beta tested Yuma Elks Secretary(which became CLMS). Over the next 10 years we had a net gain in membership and one year we were #1 in the Nation. I think that was 1993. The Grand Exalted Ruler was Vince Collura. We got him to stop by on his way from Pocomoke Lodge to Cape Henlopen Lodge. Our Sponsor, PGER Homer Huhn, who was escorting GER Collura, spoke to Carroll Wagner and remarked "and to think I almost revoked your Charter". Like I said, the Lodge struggled.
- Also in 1992, Carroll Wagner and I started going to the State Association Meetings, meeting Elks from across the State and 2645 was becoming prominent.
- In 1994 two men knocked on the door and said they wanted to become members. Pat Mrockowski was House Chairman and in the Lodge at that time he and let them in and gave them applications. They were Bill Thompson and Biff Bittenbender. They both became outstanding members. You can still see Bill around the Lodge.
- In 1996, we bought unit 5 and expanded the ladies' restroom and the bar. The old bar was against the East wall, it is now on the Southside of the current bar. Through the years we got units 6 and 7. We were growing and needed the room. To get those units, we had to move Walker Plumbing to unit 8. We had Bull and Oyster Roasts, Night at the Races, and other affairs to raise money.

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- In 06/1998, the Lodge hosted the MD, DE, DC Elks Association State Convention. It was held at either the Princess Royale or at the Carousel.
- In 2001, Carroll Wagner was appointed District Deputy, the first from our Lodge. There would be 3 others: myself in 2005-06, TP Simons in 2014-15 and Susan Caldwell in 2021-22. Carroll would go on to be State President in 2004-05. I was one of his Vice Presidents.
- In 2002, Shawn Smith became Exalted Ruler. The flagpole was dedicated on 09/11/2002. in honor of those who were killed in the World Trade Center attacks. That year we were 3rd in the Nation for All-American Lodge Contest in our Division.
- I became Exalted Ruler in 2003. That year we were 2nd in The All-American Lodge Contest in our Division. We were still working to get Walker out. There were plans to build a second floor, but we needed Walker's unit.
- Our first female Exalted Ruler was elected in 2006-07, Pamela Bobst. I think we got Walker out in 2006. Construction of the second floor started then.
- Two years and \$1.3 million from our partner Taylor Bank, the second floor was finished in 2008. Past Grand Exalted Ruler Paul Hesel was Grand then. He is a member of Newark Lodge 2281 and a member of our State Association. He said he had the weekend of 11/01/2008 available and we would have our dedication that weekend. It was attended by dignitaries from across the State of Maryland. The expansion gave us many options.
- One being we could have bingo. That became a shot in the arm financially, and still is today. The other things we could do was hall rentals for wedding receptions, concerts, condo meetings and personal parties, all money makers. We now had a half block of property, two floors! There was no place else to go.
- In 2009, John Buzzuro and Bill Thompson started Bingo upstairs. It started slow, and after a couple of years the pro players found us.

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- In 2011 we finally got slot machines after years of trying. And the Lodge continued to grow. We were and are the largest Lodge in the State of Maryland (member wise) and the youngest.
- I became ER again in 2014-15.
- In 2022 the old kitchen was reclaimed for useful seating and the men's room expanded.

Fun Facts

- The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks was founded on February 16, 1868.
- We still have 12 Charter members on the Rolls.
- 1994 or 1995, a group of retired Baltimore Gas and Electric employees got together for the Gas House Gang. They had lunch at the lodge for 11 years. Today, they meet at Doyle's in Selbyville.
- Guns and Hoses, a group of retired police and firefighters, was started by Pete O'Connor, PER, and a Retired Fire Chief from Baltimore. He was ER 1995-96 and during that period, I think that is when he started the group.
- 1999 or 2000 Jim Flaig started the Elks Golf Association.
- Around 2015, Bill Thompson started the Wednesday Fun Golf. Bill also started the Coats for Kids Golf Tournament.

I hope this helps 2645 members learn where we started. I have seen a lot of changes in the Lodge, and I have met some great people and lost a lot of friends. God Bless Ocean City Elks 2645.

James W. Harbour, PER, PDDGER

Glossary of Terms

DDGER	District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler (GER's agent)
ER	Exalted Ruler (Lodge President)
GER	Grand Exalted Ruler (National President)
P	Past having served one term of that office. As in PER, PDDGER, PSP
SP	State President