

## My Membership Card in the Elks

By Robert S. Barrett

*Chairman of the Good of the Order Committee of the Grand Lodge*

I HOLD in my hand a little scrap of paper, two by three inches in size. It is of no intrinsic worth, not a bond, check, or receipt for values, yet it is my most priceless possession. It is my membership card in the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America.

It tells me that I am an American citizen-the proudest title in all the world that can be conferred upon a man. It tells me that I am the peer of emperors and kings, the ruler of my own destiny, the maker of my own fortune. It tells me that I am a citizen of a land where democracy rules, where brotherhood prevails, where tolerance holds sway, where justice is enthroned.

It tells me that I have joined with 800,000 other Americans in the pledging of allegiance to our country and its laws; in placing the American flag first in our hearts as loyal Americans and first upon our altars as loyal Elks.

IT TELLS me that I have entered into a spiritual and material kinship with my fellow Elks to practise charity in word and deed; to forgive and forget the faults of my brothers, to hush the tongue of scandal and innuendo; to care for the crippled, the hungry and the sick; and to be just to all mankind.

It tells me that in 1,500 cities under good fellowship prevails - a home among brothers and friends; a borne dedicated not only to the high principles for which the Order of Elks stands, but to the need of play, which is inherent in the heart of every man.

It tells me that my loved ones, my home, my fireside, and my household, are under the protection of every member of this great Order, who has sworn to protect and defend mine, as I have sworn to protect his.

IT TELLS me that should I ever be overcome by adversity, the hand of every Elk in all the world will be stretched forth to assist me in my necessities.

It tells me that if old age should find me alone and homeless, that, as an honored guest of our Order, surrounded by my old comrades, and with every comfort and luxury, I may sit upon the veranda at Bedford in Virginia, and watch the evening sun sink behind the Peaks of Otter for the last time before my fading eyes.

And, finally, it tells me, Brothers, that when my final exit from the stage of life has been made, there will be gathered in my Lodge Boom friends and brothers, who, when the Eleventh hour has been struck, will recall to mind my virtues, though they be few, and will write my faults, though they be many, upon the sands.

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