

The Wandering Elk Log - Issue II

The accompanying picture shows a banner displaying Elk's Lodge pins from many lodges across the country. As a result of my travels for work and pleasure, I have had the privilege of visiting many lodges. Since the first log back in 2010 my wife Beth and I have had the opportunity to visit many lodges since that time. Some during my last work trips before retiring and lots more travelling around the country. We have acquired many more pins and now have thirteen banners with pins from nearly every lodge visited.

Some lodges have the fortune of being located in special places. One of these is the Newport Harbor Lodge 1767 located in Newport Beach California, an area right on the Pacific Ocean. The lodge is on the Newport Bay and has docks for Elk member boaters to tie up and come in for a beverage. Staying overnight was very reasonable, about \$15 as I remember. I was lucky enough to visit the lodge first in late 2010 and then take Beth and friends Jim and Barb there in September 2015. We had a wonderful dinner there and enjoyed watching the boat traffic.

Trading pins at lodges is a very old Elk tradition. Many lodges have displays of visitor pins. One memorable display was at the Gatlinburg Tennessee lodge 1925. Their visitor pins are on a five by ten foot map of the USA. Each pin is placed as close as possible to your home lodge town. Another way of showing pins came from the Louisville Kentucky Lodge 8. They display visitor pins by lodge number. They have three walls of a meeting room set aside for the pins.

As I am sure most Elks know, the Elk history goes back to the 1860's in New York City. I had the honor of visiting Elks Lodge No. 1 – the New York lodge in July 2011. The Esquire, Paul, explained to me the Elks moved out of Manhattan in the 1950's and merged with the lodge in Lynbrook located on Long Island. This lodge has a history room with many old items from Lodge 1 including large formally bound hand written books with meeting minutes. What a treasure.

In the memory of tradition, Lodge 1 has a unique pin. The pin has a little metallic chain with a cork attached. This is in honor of the original name of the Elks organization, the “Jolly Corks.” See the accompanying picture.

The Elk “ritual” tradition goes back to the beginning of the order. I recall the Elks Lodge 782 Lake Hopatcong New Jersey located in Mount Arlington. I visited there first in July 2011. I met Larry and others who were just over the top having just won the national ritual competition. Their experiences were just great. I had a chance to get back there in 2014 another time and the folks there were still basking in the memories.

At times, the fortunes of an Elk's Lodge follow the fortunes of the town in which they are located. This was explained to me on my visit to the Weirton West Virginia Lodge 1801. The city was the home of the Weirton Steel Mill and most of the Elks members worked there. As the fortunes of steel making declined in the 1980's, the Elk membership followed. The lodge is still vibrant and active with a smaller membership. The members are very dedicated and a repeat visit a few months later demonstrated their resilience.

In June 2012, the Wandering Elks and friends from Chicago headed out to travel Route 66 from Chicago to Santa Monica. Elks lodges were definitely on our radar screen. One such place was the Elks Lodge 743 in El Reno Oklahoma. On arrival in the afternoon, we hoped to find some grub at the lodge. They did not have food that day, but, suggested we visit a local place for burgers – highly recommended. Turns out that El Reno is the home of the “onion burger.” We got food and returned to the lodge to eat and have a beverage. We brought extra burgers to share with the server who made the suggestion. We also got great advice there; most hotels were full because of the oil boom going on. If we hadn’t done that, we might have gone a long time before we got lodging. Our fellow Elks really saved us that day.

Many Elks lodges have very talented folks who do a lot of the building, renovations, and other special tasks around the lodge. One memorable such lodge was the Rock Island Illinois Lodge 980 Beth and I visited in August 2012. We happened to be the only people there other than the server, George. The bar was a beautiful wooden structure and we made remarks about it. As it turned out, George was the bar builder. What a talent.

All of you who visit other lodges know of the great fraternity we belong to. One of the traits of that fraternity is generosity. The Elks help out countless people in so many ways. That generosity often extends to visiting Elks. A beautiful example of that was during my visit to Aliquippa Pennsylvania Elks Lodge in September 2012. I was there in the evening and was hoping for something to eat. They had really good food and had a duet playing music and singing. In addition to the local Elks, the District Deputy was there and found out I was a visitor. Not only could I not pay for dinner, I couldn’t pay for beverages, or the cover charge for the music. I was lucky to get out of there before they stuffed my pockets with money. What wonderful generosity.

As I indicated in my first **Wandering Elk Log**, what is very clear to me, is that regardless of location, or how opulent or austere their facility, or a particular Elk member’s station in life, all Elks I have met live and share the Elkdom principles of Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love, and Fidelity.

Beth and I enjoy the challenge of finding new lodges and encourage all members to support the Elks when you travel. The people are fascinating and the fun never ends. Stay tuned for another **Wandering Elk Log**.