



The Huntington Park Elks #1415 Story

Huntington Park Elks Lodge No. 1415 was chartered July 14, 1921. On January 4, 1924, a new home located on Pacific Boulevard, just north of Gage Avenue was dedicated. Ten years later, the lodge suffered substantial damage in the earthquake of 1933. Plans were discussed even then for a move to a new location. Far sighted leaders of the lodge had already started purchase of land on Gage Avenue and had established a special building fund.

During this period of time, the lodge had embarked on a period of phenomenal growth. With the membership increasing each year, it became obvious that more spacious quarters were needed.

In late 1952, it was announced that sufficient funds had been accumulated to start construction of the new building on January 17, 1953. Past Exalted Ruler C. P. Hebenstreit was named chairman of the building committee. Although the first Lodge meeting in the new building was conducted by Exalted Ruler Lawrence Stevens and his officers on January 8, 1954, the first event held was a week previous with the annual New Year's Eve Dance.

Grand Exalted Ruler Earl E. James, in his letter of congratulations, commended the membership for entering the home "entirely free of debt" and described it as "The most beautiful, most perfect elks home he had ever visited."

A special three day dedication period was held March 26, 27 and 28, 1954. Hundreds of members of Elkdom, including many dignitaries, joined civic officials and business leaders from surrounding communities in welcoming the new facility to the Southeast.

In succeeding years, the Elks lodge became the center of social activities and community gatherings for service clubs, as well as many others Southeastern area civic groups holding regular meetings in one or more of the several rooms almost every noon and night.

In the meantime, dedicated members of the lodge participated strongly in every activity. Huntington Park Lodge 1415 became known as the "sensation of the Nation" after continuously leading the way in charity projects, lodge activities, such as youth work, veterans' service, community involvement events, and the many other programs of both the state and the Grand Lodge.

With the advent of major sports teams, large amusement parks, and other events or items providing major competition for both time and money, our Lodge, like every organization began a decline in actual number of members. Much of this was undoubtedly due to economic conditions.



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Yet, the remaining members have remained dedicated and active and have redoubled their efforts to keep Huntington Park Lodge one of the leading lodges in the nation.

Our Golden Anniversary program held in July, 1971, pointed out our many achievements, the many goals we had reach, as well as the many hardships and difficulties confronted.

Previous hardships were forgotten, however, on the morning of April 20, 1983 when we found that a major fire had damaged and destroyed about half of our beautiful building. We were all in a state of shock. The Jinx hall, Bar, Lugo Room, and kitchen were either burnt out or unstable because of damage. Fortunately, the balance of the building, including the Lodge room, dining room, library and downstairs area sustained only smoke damage.

Within a matter of days, however, the membership began responding to this major disaster with calls and letters reaffirming their love of the lodge and its purpose for existence. A committee known as "The Blue Ribbon Panel for Reconstruction" was organized and met weekly. Its membership was comprised of brothers from all fields, officers of the lodge, contractors, insurance men, plumbers, electricians, publicity, and every activity that might bear on our rebuilding program. Advise and guidance were offered regularly to the Board of Trustees. Many decisions were made easier and arrived at; more quickly as a direct result of the Reconstruction Committee's experienced advice.

Lodge Officers accepted an offer made by Downey Lodge 32020 for Huntington Park Lodge to meet there temporarily. At the first such meeting, a "fire bucket brigade" was organized to raise working funds for any contingencies. More than \$1,000 was collected that first night and many additional thousands in succeeding months. Many other lodges also sent greatly appreciated donations to help defray extra expenses.

After returning to our own building, using the downstairs bar and facilities and meeting in our regular lodge room, work got under way again. Plans were drawn and contracts let during this period of readjustment and reconstruction. We were able to resume social activities in early December with our annual charity ball as the first such affair. By early January, all events were resumed, and Huntington Park Lodge, like the mythical "Phoenix" had risen from the ashes to take its place as a leader. We thank the local press which saluted completion of our rebuilding program with the remarks, "We join the community in hailing the return of this building."

All of the above was written in a Booklet for the Building's Rededication. It took us up the February 26, of 1984. It is now May of 2005 and we are still striving for more members and more participation. The members here at Huntington Park have dropped from 2000 in our heyday to 230 this year. This year was the first year in over twenty



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years that Huntington Park Elks #1415 has shown an increase in membership. We had a plus 13 and already we have another 6 members that have asked to become a member. We are getting our civic leaders once again involved in our lodge and we are looking forward to once again becoming "The Sensation of the Nation". We are proud of our Lodge and are looking forward to this new Lodge Year. Brother William "Billy Bob" Newcome is once again our Exalted Ruler. Brother Bill was a Exalted Ruler back in 1980-81 and was District Deputy Grand Exalted of the South East District in 2000-2001. He has dedicated this year to the rebuilding of Huntington Park Elks. He has a fine Corps of Officers and is well on the way to achieving his goals. The Membership and Officer Corps are planning a variety of programs and hopefully, the membership will participate and attend the many functions needed for the Lodge to fulfill its obligation to Elkdom and to this fine community.