

ST. HELENS ELKS LODGE NO. 1999

St. Helens, Oregon

A GLANCE AT OUR HISTORY

November 15, 2023

INTRODUCTION

St. Helens Elks Lodge No. 1999 is a relatively small Lodge (800 plus members) located in a relatively small community (about 25,000 people within 10 miles) in the middle of God's Country (author's comment). Our Lodge is 30 miles from Portland, 70 miles from the beautiful Pacific Ocean and 35 miles from the infamous Mount St. Helens in Washington State. Our Lodge is located on a bluff overlooking the mighty Columbia River. We enjoy watching large ships navigating to and from Portland bringing products from all over the World.

We are a friendly bunch of nice folks. We would like to meet as many of our brothers and sisters from across this great Nation as possible. If you are in the area, we invite you to stop by our Lodge for **'a howdy and a handshake'**. We will have our **'welcome'** on for you.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

One day in the early Fall of 1955, Ernest Nelson "Ernie" Beickel, Jr. and Lyle Wirfs, the partners of the K & W Food Store on Columbia Boulevard, started talking about the formation of an Elks Lodge in our community. They contacted Allyn Collins Bailey, Donald Victor Bemis, Everett Monroe Freytag, Charles Henry "Charley" French, Jr., Elbert Van "Ab" Hearing, Charles Herbert Johns, Arthur Livengood, Charley Lluewellyn Mock, Robert Ray "Bob" Vagt, George Frederick Vahl, Marvin Lynn Vaughn, Leslie Tom Watters, and Vernon Hugh Westover to determine interest in having a local Lodge. The idea caught on rather quickly. These men were responsible for the initial foundation of St. Helens Lodge.

February 26, 1956

A committee consisting of George Frederick Vahl, Chairman; Ernest Nelson "Ernie" Beickel, Jr., Secretary; Committeemen, Charles Herbert Johns, Marvin Lynn Vaughn, and Leslie Tom Watters met to discuss several topics involved with instituting the Lodge. One of the topics of discussion was to find a location where regular meetings could be held. Some of the locations considered were the Italian Import Building, McCormick Building, Moose Lodge Hall, Shrine Hall, St. Helens Farm Building, and the Sportsman Inn. Another topic involved the necessary funds of \$7,448.00 required to institute the Lodge.

March 12, 1956

Cliffton B. Mudd, Special Deputy to the Grand Exalted Ruler, received from L. A. Donaldson, Grand Secretary, Notification of Dispensation to institute a new Lodge in St. Helens, Oregon. The request for institution was accompanied with a petition signed by 261 American gentlemen. The request asked that St. Helens Lodge be assigned Number 2000. Number 2000 was denied since Lodge numbers are assigned sequentially

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THE START AND BEYOND

April 7, 1956

St. Helens Elks Lodge No. 1999 was instituted in ceremonies at St. Helens Armory. Judge Lonergan, Past Exalted Ruler of Portland Elks Lodge No. 142, instituted the Lodge. Portland Elks Lodge No. 142 Officers initiated the class. Lyle Frederick Pieper was the lead candidate.

There were 287 applications for the Charter Member class, of which 8 never joined our Lodge.

The following Officers were installed:

Exalted Ruler.....	Everett Monroe Freytag (1903-1963)
Leading Knight	William Alexander "Bill" Kumpula (1903-1995)
Loyal Knight	Harold Alden Scharback (1916-2007)
Lecturing Knight.....	Donald Victor Bemis (1910-1994)
Secretary.....	Robert Ray "Bob" Vagt (1915-1995)
Treasurer	Lyle Frederick Pieper (1917-1988)
Tiler.....	Charles Henry "Charley" French, Jr. (1918-2003)
Inner Guard	Lyle Wirfs (1912-1983)
Chaplain	Harold Frederick Jensen (1925-1983)
Esquire	Elbert Van "Ab" Hearing (1916-2004)
Organist.....	Ernest Everett Hewitt (1897-1973)
Trustee-1 Year.....	George Frederick Vahl (1885-1966)
Trustee-2 Year.....	Ernest Nelson "Ernie" Beickel, Jr. (1920-2000)
Trustee-3 Year.....	Marvin Lynn Vaughn (1906-1989)
Trustee-4 Year.....	Leslie Tom Watters (1894-1969)
Trustee-5 Year.....	Charles Herbert Johns (1900-1958)

After the Installation of Officers, a gift was presented to our Exalted Ruler by Beaverton Elks Lodge No. 1989. A baby buggy, signifying St. Helens Lodge as the Baby Lodge in the State of Oregon, was eventually passed on to Madras Elks Lodge No. 2017.

April 12, 1956

The first regular meeting of St. Helens Elks Lodge No. 1999 was held at Shrine Hall (across from Columbia Theatre). The Treasurer reported a balance of \$9,462.25 in the Lodge bank account.

April 19, 1956

Ten cents was collected from each member present and the weekly member drawing was started.

April 26, 1956

Our first regular initiation ceremony was held for 7 new members.

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May 3, 1956

It was reported that our Lodge would sponsor a team in the Midget Baseball League, a Cub Scout Den and a Boy Scout Troop. Among the bills approved for payment was \$2.00 for garbage service.

May 24, 1956

A motion passed to make our first contribution (\$25.00) to Elks National Foundation.

June 7, 1956

A motion passed to make our first contribution (\$10.00) to Eye Clinic, the major project of the Oregon State Elks Association. After considerable discussion, Thursday night was retained as the Lodge meeting night.

June 14, 1956

A motion passed to rent the old PGE office (a local utility) for \$75.00 per month for the first year and \$100.00 per month thereafter with utilities furnished.

June 28, 1956

The first regular meeting in the new Lodge facility at the old PGE office was held on this date. It was reported that Pendleton Elks Lodge No. 288 offered to give our Lodge their back bar and sell to our Lodge, at reduced prices, the furniture they no longer needed.

July 5, 1956

A motion passed to purchase a bar and large amount of furniture and fixtures from Pendleton Elks Lodge No. 288 for \$1,750.00.

September 13, 1956

Our first Lodge Bulletin, titled "Elks Call" was published. It has remained "Elks Call".

October 22, 1956

Elvis Eugene Scott (#209), born on September 16, 1915, passed away. He was the first member of our Lodge to die.

October 25, 1956

A presentation of our Lodge Charter was made by District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler Fred Simpson.

November 1, 1956

George William Knighton, Sr. (#147) was hired as our first Club Manager.

November 10, 1956

St. Helens Emblem Club No. 305 held institution and installation ceremonies at Pythian Hall.

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November 11, 1956

Our Lodge Ritual Team participated in our first ritual contest. It was held at Bend Elks Lodge No. 1371.

December 6, 1956

The House Committee requested all members remove their hats while drinking at the bar and that there be no profanity at the bar.

December 8, 1956

Our first Charity Ball was held at the St. Helens Armory.

January 3, 1957

A large mounted Elk's head was presented to our Lodge by Astoria Elks Lodge No. 180. It was announced that next year's Officers would be required to wear tuxedos during initiation of new members.

January 31, 1957

It was reported that the Paper Union had offered to rent us their Union hall at no charge. A motion passed to rent the Paper Union hall and make a \$10.00 donation to the Union Charity Fund each time the facility was used for our meetings.

February 14, 1957

The first regular meeting in the new Lodge facility at the Paper Union hall (near Columbia Theatre) was held on this date. It was reported the Scholarship Committee would be conducting interviews for the purpose of awarding the first scholarships from our Lodge.

February 22, 1957

Our first Father and Son Banquet was held at McBride School.

April 18, 1957

Our first Lodge visitation was made to Hillsboro Elks Lodge No. 1862.

November 14, 1957

The first Absolute Dimit for our Lodge was approved for Carl Washington Brandenfels (#64).

April 12, 1958

Our first Inaugural Ball was held at St. Helens Armory.

April 17, 1958

"Happy Hour" was implemented at our Lodge for the first time.

November 8, 1958

Our first Father and Daughter Banquet was held at the Lodge.

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December 24, 1958

Christmas Baskets were given to four needy families. This was the first time for this annual event.

March 21, 1963

Frank James Sopp (#460) was honored as the first Elk of the Year in our Lodge.

December 20, 1963

Our Lodge held the first Kids Christmas Party with 185 children receiving presents. This is an annual event.

February 6, 1964

George Frederick Vahl (#8) was awarded the first Honorary Life Membership in our Lodge.

October 21, 1964

A District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler Clinic was held at our Lodge for the first time.

December 16, 1965

A motion passed to purchase 4 acres on Old Portland Road for the purpose of constructing a new Lodge building of approximately 10,000 square feet.

July 7, 1967

Ground was broken on our new Lodge building site on Old Portland Road.

July 18, 1968

Construction began on our new Lodge building on Old Portland Road.

July 15, 1970

Andrew Christian "Andy" Knudsen, Sr. was installed as District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler of Oregon North District at Grand Lodge Convention in San Francisco, California. He was the first member of our Lodge to serve as District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler.

November 5, 1970

A lengthy and somewhat heated discussion evolved concerning continuing construction of our new Lodge building on Old Portland Road or searching for an alternate building site. A motion passed to stop construction.

March 11, 1971

A motion passed to sell the property on Old Portland Road. This property was eventually purchased by and is the current location of St. Helens Moose Lodge No. 591.

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March 18, 1971

A motion passed to purchase property known as the "6th Street Site" for \$16,110.00 and build a new Lodge building on this site. This is the current location of our Lodge at 350 Belton Road.

September 16, 1971

Construction began on our new Lodge building at 350 Belton Road.

October 17, 1971

Donald Wayne Cherry (#1030) was the first Officer in our Lodge to be selected All-District in a District Ritual Contest.

June 1, 1972

Construction was complete on our new Lodge building at 350 Belton Road and members commenced moving furniture and equipment into the building.

June 5, 1972

At a special meeting, Ross Wilbur Clark (#1251) was initiated. He was the first member initiated in our new Lodge building.

September 16, 1972

A dedication ceremony for our new Lodge building was held. Among the dignitaries present for the ceremony were Grand Exalted Ruler Francis Milton Smith, Past Grand Exalted Ruler Raymond Clair Dobson and Past Grand Exalted Ruler Frank Hise. A box placed inside a cornerstone at the entrance to the building contains a copy of our Charter, a Lodge Bulletin, an Elks Magazine, a roll of pennies, a special dedication coin, a copy of the local newspaper and a copy of our Lodge By-Laws.

May 19, 1973

Andrew Christian "Andy Knudsen, Sr. (#39) was installed as Chaplain of Oregon State Elks Association at Summer Convention in Eugene. He was the first member of our Lodge to hold office in Oregon State Elks Association.

June 1, 1974

Harold Herbert "Harry" Hansford, Jr. (#1112) was the first Officer in our Lodge to be selected All-State in the State Ritual Contest.

May 17, 1975

Bert Allen Burr (#863) was the first member of our Lodge to be a candidate for Vice President of Oregon State Elks Association.

December 4, 1975

A motion passed to retire Member Number 1999 and place that number on a Chair of Honor dedicated to Our Absent Members.

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June 28, 1980

An enthusiastic group erected a prefabricated cabin our Lodge donated to Meadowood Springs Speech Camp for Children near Weston, Oregon in 4-1/2 hours. The cabin was named "Tahoma", a Native American word, meaning "Haven of Rest".

May 8, 1982

Donald Alan Jensen (#698) was installed as 7th Vice President of Oregon State Elks Association at Summer Convention in Lincoln City. He was the first member of our Lodge to serve as Vice President of Oregon State Elks Association. He served as President in 1989-90.

November 23, 1996

Our Lodge conducted a 40th Anniversary Celebration. Among the dignitaries present was Past Grand Exalted Ruler Frank Hise.

SOME FINAL COMMENTS

Several members of our Lodge have held positions in Grand Lodge and Oregon State Elks Association.

Bert Allen Burr (#863), Richard Joseph "Rich" Crandall (#3024), Tony Richard Crawford (#1746), Andrew Christian "Andy" Knudsen, Sr. (#39), George Warren LeMont (#371), Daniel Anthony Linhares (#905), and Gerald Robert "Buzz" Shoemaker (#2856) have served as District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler.

Daniel Anthony Linhares (#905) served as a judge for the National Ritual Contest at Grand Lodge Convention in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Tony Richard Crawford (#1746) and Donald Alan Jensen (#698) have served as State President Oregon State Elks Association. David Richard Backlund (#3607) is currently Vice President North District.

Richard Joseph "Rich" Crandall (#3024) and Donald Alan Jensen (#698) are members of Oregon State Elks Association Hall of Fame.

Donald Alan Jensen (#698) currently serves as District Leader North District.

Our Lodge is an important member and partner in our Community. We are very proud of all our charitable work. Our Lodge enjoys a robust financial situation and continued growth in membership. Money in the bank and more new members is the goal of all Lodges. We have achieved that goal. Our challenge now is to maintain what we all have worked hard to achieve. Yes, we are up to that task!

The author intends to update our Lodge history when necessary.