

A collection of Waukesha, WI Elks Lodge No. 400 Newsletter columns by Marion Heinisch-Clark

'HELLO, BILL!'

William Goddard of Minneapolis, Minnesota Lodge #44 was the original "Hello, Bill!" of Elkdom. This cheerful greeting, which found its way around the nation, originated during the Elks National Reunion in that city in 1897. Brother Goddard served on many committees that were in charge of making the arrangements for this reunion.

When visiting Elks came to the committee headquarters to inquire about matters they wanted to know about, more likely than not they were told to "Go over there and ask Billy Goddard." This happened so often that soon the 'out of town Elks', when approaching him, greeted him with the expression "Hello, Bill! I was told to see you, etc.," and so the custom started of greeting each other "Hello, Bill!"

In a day or two the custom spread to the streets, with Elks from all parts of the country, when passing each other, sang out cheerfully, "Hello, Bill!" They then carried the greeting to their home lodges, and so it was spread to around the nation.

Information gathered by Mike Kelly, Grand Lodge Historian

(Marion has one of the original Hello, Bill pins on her red jacket.)

RIDING THE GOAT

Last issue we were introduced to "Hello Bill". This issue we will read about 'riding the goat'.

In the early days of the Order, the installation ritual provided for a password to be changed semi-annually. In May of 1879, the password was "Integrity". In 1899, this ritual was discontinued. New rituals took their place. Some Lodges blindfolded their new members in the beginning of the ritual. Others squirted water or shot blanks at them.

The most widespread practice was for each candidate to ride a live goat around the Lodge room. A 1901 poem, "When Father Rode The Goat" should give you some idea of the former initiation's arduous nature:

The house is full of arnica
And mystery profound;
We do not dare to run about
Or make the slightest sound;
We leave the big piano shut
And do not strike a note;
The doctor's been here seven times
Since father rode the goat.

He joined the lodge a week ago –
Got in at 4 a.m.
And sixteen brethren brought him home
Though he says he brought them.
His wrist was sprained and one big rip,
Had rent his Sunday coat –
There must have been a lively time
When father rode the goat.

He's resting on the couch today!
And practicing his signs –
The hailing signal, working grip,
And other monkeyshines;
He mutters passwords 'neath his breath,
And other things he'll quote –
They surely had an evening's work
When father rode the goat.

He has a gorgeous uniform,
All gold and red and blue;
A bat with plunges and yellow braid,
And golden badges too.
But, somehow, when we mention it,
He wears a look so grim
We wonder if he rode the goat
Or if the goat rode him.

(Courtesy of Grand Lodge Historian, Mike Kelly and shared by Bob Malm PER)

National Home Offered Free

At the time of the 1901 carnival in Milwaukee, A. C. Powers offered to give the Park View hotel property free to the Grand Lodge for use as a national Elks home. He also offered a bonus of 25 cents on each case of Alminaris water sold from the spring on the grounds.

The election of Charles E. Pickett of Omaha, Nebraska #39 as grand exalted ruler may possibly be prejudicial to the selection of Waukesha as a location for the national home, as the Waukesha Lodge has favored the election of Judge Nethaway of Minnesota. The home is established for old and indigent Elks on the same plan as the homes established by other fraternal orders.

A good many Elks of the official delegation attending the Milwaukee carnival have taken a run out to Waukesha to view the Park View hotel and have expressed pleasure with the property.

On Monday, several hundred Elk members from Minneapolis arrived by train near Bethesda park. They were welcomed by state senator Alfred "Long" Jones, who invited them to have a drink of the 'best water on earth'. The crowd then followed the band to the Northwestern depot, where they rejoined the train, and went on to the great carnival in Milwaukee.

Information found in the Waukesha Freeman dated 1901.

A Final Resting Place

I have recently learned of an Elks plot at Wisconsin Memorial Park, an area dedicated to The Elks and Elkdom, and I would like to share it with you.

This area is dedicated to Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love and Fidelity, and few Wisconsin Elks are aware of this Elk Memorial Monument in Wisconsin.

Although this burial section was originated and established for B.P.O.E. Elks from Milwaukee Lodge #46 Elks, other Elk members may purchase burial plots in this section.

This section of burial plots in Wisconsin Memorial Park is at the south-end of the park, straight south of the main building. Its large granite monument identifies it. The monument was dedicated on August 24, 1946.

It all began when PER Howard T. Ott, President of Wisconsin Memorial Park, had an inspiration when he was Exalted Ruler of Milwaukee #46 to have an “Elks Memorial” resting place for Elks unable to purchase a conventional burial plot. In the name of Charity, he secured the donation by the park of 18 grave plots to Lodge #46 on June 14, 1945. Six of those plots were used for the building of the Memorial Monument, leaving 12 interment plots and 3 spaces for cremation urns. The Stotzer Granite Company built the monument, which Ott arranged for.

On April 12, 1954, Lodge #46 was offered additional plots, and purchased 22 more plots. Four more plots were donated by members; three on November 2, 1967 by PER Arthur Chadek and one on June 7, 1996 by Mrs. Martha Stubbe for her husband Hans who is buried there.

Of the 38 plots and 3 urn spaces; three plots are used for a flowerbed. Six plots and 2 urn spaces are the resting place of Elks. Other Elks have purchased their own plots adjacent to Lodge #46 resting area and are buried there. If you have a need, please contact Milwaukee Lodge #46 as they are in charge of selling the burial plots.

On Elks Memorial Sunday, (1st Sunday in December) Milwaukee Elks gather at Wisconsin Memorial Park for a short memorial service about 9:00 AM.

Expressions of appreciation to Charles E. Gronitz and John Bruno for the above information.

Origin of the 11 O’Clock Toast

In regard to origin of the Elks’ 11 O’Clock Toast, we have to go back long before the BPOE came into existence. One of the main contributions of Charles Richardson – stage name Charles Algernon Sidney Vivian and founder of the American branch of the Jolly Corks – was to deliver into the hands of newborn Elks the rituals and traditions of a fraternal organization started in England around 1010 A.D., the Royal and Antedeluvian Order of Buffaloes, to which he belonged prior to coming to New York.

The RAOB, or Buffaloes as we shall henceforth refer to them, also practiced an 11 o’clock toast in remembrance of the Battle of Hastings in October of 1066. Following his victory, William of Normandy imported a set of rules, both martial and civil in nature, to keep control of a seething Norman-Saxon population always on the edge of revolution.

Among those rules was a curfew law requiring all watch fires, bonfires (basically all lights controlled by private citizens that could serve as signals) to be extinguished at 11 o’clock each night. From strategically placed watchtowers that also served as early fire-alarm posts, the call would go out to douse or shutter all lights and bank all fires.

The hour of 11 quickly acquired a somber meaning and in the centuries that followed, became the synonym throughout Europe for someone on his death bed, or i.e. “His family gathered at his bed side at the 11 hour” or the troops in the trenches wrote notes to their families as the 11th hour approached.

Thus, when the 15 Jolly Corks (of whom seven were not native-born Americans) voted on February 16, 1868, to start a more formal and official organization, they were already aware of an almost universally prevalent sentiment about the mystic and haunting aura connected with the nightly hour of 11, and it took no great eloquence by Vivian to establish a ritual toast similar to that of the Buffaloes at the next-to-last hour each day.

The great variety of 11 O’Clock Toasts, including the Jolly Corks Toast, makes it clear that there was no fixed and official version until 1906-10. Given the theatrical origins, it was almost mandatory that the pre-1900 Elks would be expected to compose a beautiful toast extemporaneously at will. Thus the custom is as old as the Elks.

Note: Information found on Elks National Website.

Elks' New Quarters

The Elks had their organizational meetings in the Fountain House which was owned by M. Laflin. From there they obtained quarters on the third floor of the Putney building on Main Street which was their meeting place from 1897 to 1906. The Elks removed from the Putney block to their new rooms in the Columbia block on South Street, occupying the room formerly used by the Waukesha Club, which will be used as a lodge hall, while the rooms formerly occupied as offices by the Mayer and city clerk will be used as parlors and club rooms. The new quarters are being handsomely decorated.

The following article reprinted from a 1906 Waukesha Freeman article.

ELKS IN WORLD WAR II

“One hundred thousand Elks wore the uniform of our armed forces in World War II. Eighteen hundred died for our country.”

From “The Story of Elkdom, THE ELKS NATIONAL MEMORIAL,” p. 53.