

#ElksFamilyMan

Helping Elks Build Stronger Communities

LONG BEFORE Elks family became a hashtag, it was reality in the Hess household of Wheeling, West Virginia. The local Lodge was ingrained in the family tradition.

“My father was Exalted Ruler of Wheeling Lodge No. 28 the year I was born,” recalls PGER

Lester C. “Ted” Hess, Jr. “He coached the Ritual team for many years. I knew the Eleven O’Clock Toast by the time I was 7.”

Ted also knew that one day, when he was ready, he’d follow in his father’s footsteps and join the Elks.

Lester C. Hess, Sr., was a shrewd man, and when Ted was in his final year of law school at West Virginia University, he offered his son sage advice.

“Lawsuits are adversarial procedures,” the elder Hess said. “You’re bound to make some foes. Join the Lodge now before one of them has a chance to blackball you!”

Ted listened to his father. It didn’t hurt that a bunch of his friends were members. He was newly married to Becky Eades, and the Lodge had fun dances and an excellent restaurant and lounge. Ted and Becky spent a lot of time there and made more friends. It’s not hard to imagine the young couple looking forward to a day when they could share the Hess family tradition with kids of their own.

That day never came. Ted and Becky weren’t blessed with kids, but life can work out in funny ways. Instead of coaching ball teams and attending school plays, Ted had a lot more time to spend on the Elks. He dove in to both governance and community activities. (“I’ve judged scholarship applications for more than 40 years,” he says.)

Soon, his father’s footsteps were behind him as he blazed his own trail through Elkdom. He served the district and then the state association on numerous committees and in positions of leadership. He was a member of the Grand Lodge Committee on Judiciary and the Board of Grand Trustees, and in July 1991, he was elected national president of the Order.

Ted has remained active as a past national president, serving in a variety of roles. He spent 14 years on the Elks National Foundation’s Board of Trustees, including two years as chairman. As a Trustee, Ted helped shape the organization that has provided him with so many opportunities to give back—as a local scholarship judge, at V.A. medical centers, as a Hoop Shoot official. (“I never pass up an opportunity to try to steer the really good shooters toward the basketball program at Vanderbilt University,” he says.)

“I initiated the conversation that eventually led to the Legacy scholarship that we have now,” Ted recalls, referring to the four-year scholarship for children and grandchildren of Elks. “The Community Investments Program started on my watch.”

In fact, Ted volunteers regularly with Wheeling Lodge’s Just for Kids Impact Grant project. For



“Join the Lodge now before one of them has a chance to blackball you!”



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As an ENF Trustee, Ted presented the award to the Foundation's first Alum of the Year, Christina Vuocolo, at the 2009 Elks National Convention in Portland.

“I ate a lot of ‘gourmet’ meals at White Castle.”

the past nine years, he and his peers on the Lodge's Youth Activities Committee have been preparing and serving a monthly family dinner at a local soup kitchen. Ted also sticks around to play games with kids and help with their homework.

Despite all his accomplishments in Elkdom, he still counts the introduction he gave as a state sponsor for a top female Most Valuable Student as his proudest moment. “I must have spent 20 hours on that 10-minute speech,” he says.

As an active Elk, he's embraced many opportunities to share Elkdom with young people, whether a top scholar, a client at the soup kitchen, or a camper at a special needs camp operated by the West Virginia Elks Association. (“Have you ever

seen a youngster line dancing in a wheelchair?” Ted asks.)

These moments aren't limited to program recipients. He's mentored young Elks trying to find their way in the organization and followed—and occasionally advocated for—the careers of new employees at Elks headquarters.

“The Elks have been very good to Becky and me,” Ted explains. “The Order has been a major part of our lives. I can never fully repay the Order for what it has done for me, but I can do what I can.”

A longtime Foundation donor, Ted has also planned a gift to the Foundation. The Foundation's administrative expenses are “among the lowest in the industry,” he says, but mostly, he gives because he wants to help kids, veterans and students.

“I ate a lot of ‘gourmet’ meals at White Castle,” reflects Ted on his days as an undergrad at Vanderbilt. “I hope I can help some of today's college students avoid that experience.”

That's the kind of thing family does.

Ted and Becky recently sold their country home of 40 years and downsized to a one-story townhome. The new place had no room for Ted's extensive home library, so he arranged to donate it to the Louis Johnson V.A. Medical Center in Clarksburg, West Virginia.

“I drove from Wheeling to Clarksburg to personally deliver the books to the hospital's librarian,” Ted says. He smiles. “The famous American who said ‘The Elks raise a lot of money and give it all away’ was not too far off the mark.”

Join the John F. Malley Society!

DONORS LIKE TED who plan gifts to the Foundation are eligible for membership in the John F. Malley Society. Benefits include an exclusive pin and medallion plus an invitation to a special Foundation event each year at the Elks National Convention.

For more information about planned giving, contact your financial adviser and visit enfplannedgiving.org. To learn more about the Malley Society, please visit enf.elks.org/MalleySociety. To discuss planning a gift, please contact Kate Keating Edsey at KateE@elks.org or 773-755-4866.

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