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State President's Message

As I sit at my computer developing this article there are many thoughts that are flashing through my mind. There are so many things to say! I will do my best to convey what I am thinking, and hopefully it will hit many of you as it did me.

Well, Pat and I are more than half way through our term as your President and First Lady. It has been an overwhelming experience for both of us. As we have traveled to be with you in your Lodges all over the state, I first want to thank everyone for the genuine hospitality that you have shown to us, and our traveling companions. Your friendliness and heartfelt concern to make sure we are comfortable and having a good time has been even more than we could imagine. We have really enjoyed the process of renewing old acquaintances, getting to know so many new friends, getting to know more about your area, and getting a feel for each Lodge we visit. Everywhere we go, we get a real sense that Elkdom is alive and well, there is optimism and hope that we are making a difference and we look forward to a renewed period of prosperity and growth. The big question is, how do we turn this optimism into results?

As we finish up the holiday season and enter the home stretch of our Lodge Year, there is so much to do, so many decisions to make, it is truly a critical time for each Lodge. We need to make sure our fund raising for Major Projects and Elks National Foundation have met our per capita goals, review our plans for other programs such as scholarship, drug awareness, the dictionary program, Hoop Shoot, veteran's service, basically all the hopes and desires we had when the year started, to determine how do we reach or exceed our goals in the time we have remaining. On the operational side, there are budget reviews and preparation for next year, making sure all our legal obligations have been met, and controlling costs so that the Lodges can show a profit for the year. There is the push to make sure you address your delinquent members with personal contact and make every effort to save their membership and

hopefully reenergize them about your Lodge and Elkdom in general. Initiations need to be conducted so that we give each Lodge the best chance to show a gain in membership, and good luck to all the Lodges preparing for District and State Ritual Contests, we all appreciate your hard work and dedication.

The most important aspect of the last few months of the Lodge year is the impact it has upon the future. This is the time when we recruit members to serve as officers or committee members. This in part is where the pay off comes for having an active and well designed program of Community and Lodge based activities. My slogan for the year has encouraged each Lodge to increase their efforts in Community involvement and couple that with energetic and well constructed Lodge Activities. This would expose the prospective members in our area to the true interests of Elkdom and hopefully provide them with a comfortable, attractive and fun place to gather and make new friends.

This approach is also aimed at the long time member who has been inactive or even a former member dropped from the roles. These members and former members need a reason to be proud of their Lodge, and our Community Service programs provide that. Now that we have their attention the current officers and the Lodge Activities Committee needs to listen to their wants and desires as far as life around the Lodge goes. Find out why they became disinterested in the past and we all need to work to make sure our Lodges are open and inviting to all our members.

This approach will have hopefully provided some new blood to introduce into leadership positions around the Lodge. "Meeting the Challenge" is first and foremost an effort to identify members in our Lodges who are encouraged by the opportunity to serve the Community in some way and will as a result volunteer to take a leadership role in the Lodge. This is our number one issue, in my opinion, and by successfully addressing this lack of new, enthusiastic leaders, we can then attack all the other problems we may have. If we cannot encourage new members or existing members who have been sitting on the side to step up and help, we will find it difficult to address any of the other challenges before us.

So why are people optimistic you ask? I think it is because we have many dedicated men and women who have devoted many years to our Order. They have seen the prosperity, they now how good it feels to be a member of an organization that is committed to help other people and have a great time doing it. They continue to put in the time to keep our Lodges running. They see a renewed sense of community involvement and volunteerism, which if we can sustain it, will provide the spark we need to turn the corner. The process will take time. We must not become discouraged. We know that this model will work. Look at the

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most successful Lodges in your District, find out what they do that is being successful. I am sure they will be all too happy to give you any advice or provide support your Lodge may need.

I want to thank you all again for all your hard work and dedication. I want to recognize our State Officers, State Vice Presidents, State Committee Chairs, State Trustees, and District Deputy Grand Exalted Rulers for all their help and assistance so far this year. They all have important jobs to do, and our Order would not be what it is today without their hard work.

I would like to issue a heartfelt message of Good Luck and Godspeed to Dave and Penny Carr as they prepare for their term as the Grand Exalted Ruler and First Lady of our beloved Order. Dave and Penny have dedicated themselves for many years to the principles of Elkdom and provided dynamic leadership to our State Association and Grand Lodge. Please join Pat and me in supporting them in some small way by participating in your Lodge or District fund raising programs that will provide the Committee with the resources to show all of our members across the country how proud we are of our candidate for the highest office in Elkdom.

Lastly, we all need to thank our State Sponsors and the members of our Advisory Board. Past Grand Exalted Rulers Dr. Bristol and Peter Affatato, along with all our Past State Presidents have an awesome responsibility to watch over the Lodges of our State and do their best to make sure each and every one is doing their best to support the Programs of Elkdom and conform to its procedures. They are also charged with directing the policy of our State Association and we are truly fortunate to have men of this caliber leading us. Pat and I would like to sincerely thank each of you for all you have done to make our year so special.

Good Luck as we conclude our year, help your Lodge have a truly exceptional year. Make "Meeting the Challenge" the rallying cry in your Lodge. Get out and show the Community what we are, be VISIBLE and represent your Lodge and Elkdom.