



Welcoming Address Grand Regent Marion Friend

Friday May 22, 2009

The year 2008/2009 will go down in my Moose memory book as beyond belief for more than one reason. 2008 was the year that I lost my very best friend whom I had been married to for more than 55 years. It was also the year that I was appointed to serve the Women of the Moose as their Grand Regent. Talk about beyond belief – how about more like impossible dream!!!

There I was in Las Vegas in late June and I was to be installed on the closing day of the 96th Annual Conference of the Women of the Moose. I was not all that positive I had made the correct decision in accepting this appointment the previous December. However, everything was in motion and I was installed on June 25 as your Grand Regent.

I had one month to try on this new title and attempt to become comfortable with it. Then in early August my first assignment was as the Official Visitor to the Iowa/Eastern Nebraska Association's Annual Conference in Des Moines. Thank goodness the waters had receded from the spring flooding and the weather was just as perfect as it can get. While there, it was heart-warming to learn of the many fine accomplishments by the men and women of that association. Thank you, for always going the extra mile to get the job done.

In late August, after catching my breath for about one week, I was privileged to be the Official Visitor at my very own Michigan Association's Annual Conference held in Sault Ste. Marie – in the upper peninsula of Michigan – almost out of the US. Needless to say, it is a great association with loads of enthusiastic men and women working very hard to build membership, raising necessary funds and having fun while they are joining hands to reach their goals. Talk about teamwork, they have it, personify it and meet their self-imposed standards.

Two weeks later it was off on a motor trip to Ontario, Canada. St. Catharine's was the destination for their Annual Provincial Conference and once again it was my honor to be assigned as the Women of the Moose Official Visitor. In mid September, the trees were tinged with red, yellow, orange and still retained enough green to make a breath taking palate for my eyes to behold. It was a most enjoyable automobile trip to the north. I found the men and women of this association to be every bit as enthusiastic as the members had been on my two previous visits. I sat in awe as I learned of their many and varied undertakings and just like a well oiled machine, their successes.

It was most exciting when one week later I flew to Medford, Oregon to be the Women of the Moose Official Visitor at the Oregon Annual Conference. I had never visited Oregon before, although my father and two older brothers had spent several years there while I was attending school in Ohio. I was more than thrilled to see many sights that I had previously only heard about. My, what beautiful country – you must see it to believe it!

The men and women of the Oregon Moose Association were great hosts with enthusiasm equal to their great forests. Thank you, thank you, thank you for all that you do to help make our fraternity even greater.

When I returned home from Oregon, still reeling with excitement, I had just enough time to unpack, do laundry, repack and prepare to leave for the Alaska/Hawaii Moose Association's Annual Conference in Palmer, Alaska. There really are not enough adjectives in the dictionary to adequately describe the awesome beauty of, not only the members of this association, but the scenery as well. I stood in utter and complete amazement of this association's accomplishments, which was matched only by the beauty surrounding them. Talk about "purple mountains majesty", Alaska has it all!

My sincere thanks to the members of the Alaska/Hawaii Moose Association for all that you have done and will continue to do to support our great programs.

In mid November I was off to Las Vegas again to attend the "Bringin' Home the Bacon" seminar as well as the International Boards and Grand Council meeting. Even though I did not win anything in the slot tournament, I did gain a great deal of knowledge from our meetings.

I was particularly thrilled to be invited by the Wisconsin Moose Association to the Mooseheart Campus in early December to attend the tree lighting ceremony. It was cold and snowy as it really, truly should be for the Christmas tree lighting but a wonderful time was experienced by all in attendance.

January not only brought a new year but along with it my first Midyear conference assignment. I was thinking I would be getting out from under the tons of snow and cold weather of Michigan because I was headed for the state of Virginia. Well, that's what I get for thinking. When I left Kalamazoo it was 8 degrees below zero and when I arrived in Richmond it was only 8 degrees above zero, so it really was not all that much warmer. One plus, though, there was no snow piled up on the ground. The welcome, however, was extremely warm which helped to thaw me out a bit. The Virginia Moose Association is sincere in their efforts to accomplish their goal to be a Top Association. A plus for them was meeting and greeting the name and voice of the Safe Surfin' USA Foundation, America's Favorite California Highway Patrolman, Erik Estrada. Now there is something very, very fine!

The month of February brought my next assignment as an Official Visitor for the Women of the Moose to the great state of Illinois. This was another motor trip from the east side of Lake Michigan to the west side. For this particular part of the country, the weather in February is usually very tricky but we were blessed with perfect weather for traveling. The enthusiasm and commitment displayed by the men and women of the Illinois Moose Association was right up there with all of the others I had previously visited. Thank you for all that you do and will continue to do for our great fraternity.

My last assignment for the 2008/2009-chapter year as an Official Visitor was to the Indiana Moose Association's Midyear Conference. For me, this was another motor trip just to the south of my home. Since it was late March there were spring blooms and buds everywhere and what a welcome sight to behold!

Our Hoosiers in the great state of Indiana are working like beavers to support all programs of our fraternity. It was my pleasure to meet these loyal members and extremely exciting to spend the weekend with them. Thank you for your continuing support.

I could continue on and on relating my visits to the various associations but I would need to keep you here much longer than you would like. Suffice to say I had a wonderfully fantastic, whirlwind year serving as your Grand Regent. One that was truly beyond belief as well as impossible ever to be duplicated. My heartfelt thanks to every single member of the Moose organization for allowing me this privilege in 2008/2009.

I will continue to add to my moose memory book for as long as I am able to do so. You have been and will always be my extended family as well as the support group extraordinaire!

From my lips to your hearts my most humble thanks and God be with you.