ELKS FORM CLUB ON GUADALCANAL

Even in the South Pacific the spirit of the Order keeps our men together.

On an island in the South Pacific which few Elks had heard of before the War, members of lodges back in the States have gathered together and set up a club which would do credit to many a town in America. It boasts some sort of record for having the greatest turnover in membership and officers of any group in the Order.

It all started in the late summer of 1944—the brainchild of Army S/Sgt. Ernest C. Frey of Houston, Tex., Lodge, No. 151, who was the first to be elected president. While on the prowl for Brother Elks, Sgt. Frey met Army Colonel C. H. Nichols of Bakersfield, Calif., Lodge, No. 226, who immediately offered the use of his offices in the Army Port Superintendent’s Building where the first meetings were held. A handful of Elks searched this island outpost of the Armed Forces for others, and enlisted the cooperation of the local Army Special Services radio station. Soon 35 Elks gathered at the Port Superintendent’s office to discuss plans.

Meetings were held regularly from then on and now the club has an average active, paid-up membership of 60. More than 200 Elks have visited the Guadalcanal club at one time or another, when the Army, Navy and Marine Corps provided them with a temporary residence there. Almost every meeting brings new faces to the clubhouse and all too many sessions end with officers turning over their duties to others, in preparation for departure to the battlefronts, but they carry on with an enthusiasm undimmed by the shadow of war.

After two months of meeting in whatever Army or Navy building was available, the Elks began dreaming of a clubhouse. How they obtained it is one of those things generally called “American ingenuity” but which more nearly resembles a scavenger hunt. A Quonset hut was salvaged from a dump heap. That was a start, but another problem was to find a site for the building. No Army or Navy organization wanted the responsibility of a private club on its premises, even for recreational purposes. Through diplomacy, the Elks induced one Army commander to provide land for the clubhouse by making it an official building through its use as a classroom in the daytime.

A Quonset hut, as such, is a drab looking clubhouse, especially when it has no floor, no doors, no windows, no furniture. The boys solved this problem, too. With scrap lumber and bawderboard from the dump heap they turned the interior into a bright and cheerful place. A mechanically inclined Elk rebuilt a generator from scraps discarded by the Armed Forces. From then on, things turned up from all over. Ash trays were built from old bomb casings. A bar was constructed with plywood from a junked building. An electric fan was produced from a motor (Continued on page 29)
Elks Form Club
(Continued from page 18)

salvaged from an old airplane turret and a tan from a wrecked jeep. We
might add here that Houston, Tex., Lodge got wind of what was going on
and that their fellow member, Sgt. Frey, was elected the first president, and an-
other Houston Elk, Navy Seabee T. O. Montgomery SK 2/c, the first secretary.
No. 151 decided to do something to help and very graciously sent a gift of $100
which was used to procure a radio and an electric fan.

Chairs and tables were constructed and the Army Special Services branch
and members chipped in with magazines, games and cards. The building
was finished in December, in time for
a Christmas party.

Among the leaders in organizing the club and obtaining the building was
Army 1st Sgt. Walter C. Ridenour of
Knoxville, Tenn., formerly a member of
Helena, Mont., Lodge, No. 193, who is
vice-president of the club.

"The Brothers really did a fine job of
getting this place together," he said as
he surveyed the finished product.

"There were soldiers, sailors and Ma-
rines in the original group, and they
pitched in like a football team in a
tough game. Everyone contributed
what he could find in dumps over the
island and the results look pretty good.

"We just wanted a place to meet and
a place where transient Elks in the
Armed Forces could stop and find
something like the atmosphere of the
club back home."

The latest president was Navy Avia-
tion Radio Technician 3/c Leslie M.
Kephart, a member of San Diego, Calif.,
Lodge, No. 168, who also look care of
the clubhouse, cleaning it up before
meetings and seeing that everything
needed was on hand.

"It's been a lot of work, and we're
proud of it," Kephart said. "This build-
ing is far beyond all the expectations
we had when we first started plan-
ing it."

The secretary, Army Sgt. Wayne A.
Glew, of Turtle Creek, Pa., a member of
Braudock, Pa., Lodge, No. 883, said
he had trouble keeping track of mem-
bers because of the rapid turnover.

"We issue a card to members who
are in good standing in their lodges
back in the States," he said. "We have
a $5 membership fee, and the men who
use the clubhouse contribute $5 a
Remember MICHIGAN

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VACATION Directory
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