

2020 RURITAN NATIONAL CONVENTION, KINGSPORT, TN

SPEECH BY NEWLY INSTALLED 2020 NATIONAL PRESIDENT LINWARD HEDGSPETH

I come before you tonight with a thankful and humble heart. I want to thank each of you for putting your trust in me, and for your support to help guide this organization to success throughout this year.

Thanks to the Squad-Of-Six (The Ruritan National Staff) who leave nothing on the table when it comes to support.

To our National President and First Lady (or Past National President and Lady), and to each of you that supported and advised me during my years of preparation for this assignment, I thank you!

To the love of my life, Anne, for never backing down when I needed support, I thank you!

To my family here tonight: my son Daryl, son Eric and his wife LaToya, my brother Stanley, my niece Terri and husband Rafique, I love you all, and I thank you!

Think with me for a moment;

- a. **Where we are now:**
- b. **How we got here:**
- c. **Where do we go from here;**

Where we are now:

The vision of our Ruritan ancestors when Ruritan was first formed, was carefully orchestrated, implemented and on point for that era.

Community needs were identified, and five Community Service Committee were established to help meet the needs of our communities.

Today, some Ruritan clubs are still operating in small rural communities where the original Ruritan structure still works.

How we got here:

Some clubs are caught in a time warp where its difficult to attract new members and their communities and clubs are not growing.

Many of our clubs have been engulfed into an urban setting, and the vision of how Ruritans need to serve their communities and attract new members is not clear.

Urban community government and related agencies, by-in-large, care for the basic needs of people in their communities.

Where do we go from here:

Our challenge today is to define how Ruritan become knowledgeable of the unmet needs in an urban environment. Our urgency is to define how we continue to flourish as the leading community organization we are today.

This will require a new focus on leadership and a new focus on direction and structure.

A change in Ruritan structure is absolutely necessary to grow in today's environment. To develop and implement that change the leadership must be trained to meet the challenges the changes puts before them.

Well informed leaders are necessary to be successful.

Like the eagle, Ruritan has a long-life span. To realize a longer life, we must have a period of transformation and renewal.

If we can change the way we think, we can change the way we live.

The eagle is a mighty creature; it can soar to heights no other bird can go.

Like the eagle, we must be strong, determined, and have no fear to make changes.

And like the eagle we will soar, taking any challenge as an opportunity to become a better organization.

“Coming together is the beginning”

“Staying together is progress”

“Working together is success”