

Appendix D

History, Customs and Courtesies, and Traditions of the Mess Night

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Appendix D

History, Customs and Courtesies, and Traditions of the Mess Night

1. History and Traditions

"Devotion to the Marine Corps and its traditions begets equal earnestness and devotion from all." Gallantry and comradeship-in-arms have enabled our small Corps to build a name for itself that is known throughout the world, feared by our enemies, and respected by every military service in existence. This name was not easily won, and we of the Corps should not allow ourselves to forget how it was accomplished, nor should we allow others to forget it. It is not intended that we should advertise our war record, nor that we should even mention it; but to maintain our name, we must conduct ourselves at all times in a manner befitting our traditions.

The maintenance of traditional discipline, gallantry, and love of the Corps is our duty. It is our further duty to see that the same high standard of respect and prestige is not only maintained, but also further strengthened. These standards must be passed on to the future Marines who will take their place among the ranks of the Corps' leadership, if they are to look with pride on our accomplishments. The mess night is an element in fostering such standards.

In times past, the mess served three functions. It was the home for bachelor officers or enlisted Marines, a club for the married ones, and the center of social life of a post or station. The formality of a mess night reflects the same spirit of dignity as the home and each Marine should conduct themselves with that thought in mind.

The traditions of formal military banquets to celebrate victories, dates to the Roman Legions. In the Sixth Century, the Knights of the Round Table had similar gatherings. The term dining-in derives from the Viking tradition of celebrating great battles and feats of heroes by formal ceremony. This tradition spread to the monasteries and early-day universities, and then to the military when the officer's mess was established. Many of the customs employed in our current mess night come to us from the officer's messes of the Royal Marines and the Regimental messes of the British Army. This is not at all surprising when we consider that in the formative period of our country, the majority of our military leaders acquired what little background and training they possessed from service with either British regulars or Colonial militia in the French and Indian Wars. When our forefathers were faced with the task of establishing their own permanent military organization, it was only natural that they should borrow from the British system with which they were familiar. Throughout the years, various changes in format have been effected both by practicality and the unique character of our Corps.

In the U.S. Armed Forces, mess nights date back to the Army's regimental messes of pre-World War I days and to the days of the wine mess in the wardroom afloat, which ended abruptly in 1914 when Secretary Josephus Daniels imposed prohibition on the Navy.

Formal dinners in wardrooms afloat and messes are among the finest tradition of military institutions. The history of the Navy and Marine Corps are replete with examples of such occasions, undoubtedly a carryover from the British practice of formal gatherings in an atmosphere of dignity,

which they felt contributed to the unity and esprit of an organization.

Similarly, this reasoning gave impetus to many such occasions beginning in the highly patriotic era of the early 1800's.

In 1816, a dinner was given in honor of Commodore Stephen Decatur and Captain Charles Stewart as reported by the *National Intelligencer* in these words: "The company sat down to dinner at five o'clock and spent the evening with the purest harmony and good humor. After the cloth was removed, many toasts were drunk, accompanied with highly patriotic songs and music by the Marine Band."

The same newspaper reported a dinner on July 4, 1816, as "a large party of gentlemen assembled to celebrate the glorious festival of the anniversary of American Independence...Accompanied with songs and music from the Marine Band, and announced by repeated discharges of artillery, many toasts were drunk." Some have suggested that this is the origin of "having a shot."

Similar affairs were noted for many years thereafter, always with Marine Officers, Marine Artillery, and the Marine Band in attendance. However, these dinners are not traditional Marine Corps Mess Nights, as we know them today, although they contributed much of the fostering influence.

The only significant mess nights during the 19th century, which were sponsored by the Corps of officers, were at the Old Center House, Marine Barracks, Washington, which must have seen some good-humored evenings in the old days. The *Evening Star* of Washington, DC on February 16, 1908, printed a large photograph of the Old Center House (then torn down) with the following caption: "Tales are told of nights of revelry, when the wine flowed and souls of great men, freed from the cares of state, allowed their wit and spirit to soar unhampered while gracing the Officer's Mess beneath the beams of the old house. The rafters which once rang with the laughter of Presidents now lie in grim disorder." Fortunately, this tradition is carried on and each summer or early fall, Marine Barracks, Washington, Center House Mess is honored by the Commandant at a Mess Night.

Aside from the tales and traditions of miscellaneous special dinners, the traditions of Mess Nights, as we know them, come from the 4th Marine Regiment, then stationed in Shanghai. The Regimental swimming coach, Captain Lemeul Shepard, was invited to the Mess of the 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards. His commanding officer, Colonel Davis, was so impressed that, soon thereafter, the first Marine Corps Mess Night was held in 1928.

Probably the first formal Mess Night to be held after World War II was conducted in 1953 by officers of the 3rd Regimental Combat Team, then in Japan, under the command of Colonel Robert H. Williams. The occasion for this particular evening was the visit made to the area by General Lemeul Shepard, then Commandant of the Marine Corps. Thereafter, members of the 3rd Marines continued to enjoy Mess Nights. When Colonel Williams was transferred to Marine Barracks, 8th and I, the custom was reestablished at that Command.

The Staff Noncommissioned Officer Mess Night tradition was begun at the Staff Noncommissioned Officer Academy in 1971, when the academy was first established. Today, the custom of the Mess Night has become firmly rooted in

the traditions of the Marine Corps. It is taught and practiced at both officer and enlisted professional military education schools as well as by various size units throughout the Marine Corps.

As we all know, customs and traditions are perpetuated from one generation to the next. The "*Esprit de Corps*" of every Marine has been brought about by their ever-present feeling of pride, not only in his unit, but also in themselves; to emulate, but not bask in the glory of, the worthy deeds of his past. It is with this feeling that we carry on the custom of the mess night.

So as the Revolutionary War recruiting poster of the Continental Marines stated, (the latter portion of which is often used as the final "bottoms-up" toast of the evening to the Corps)...Take courage then seize the fortune that awaits you, repair to the Marine Rendezvous where in a flowing bowl of punch, and three times three, you shall drink, "Long Live the United States and success to the Marines."

2. Officers of the Mess

a. There are two functional officers of the mess: the President and Vice President. They are designated to oversee the planning and execution of the event. Together, they establish a chronological checklist of tasks to be accomplished prior to the mess night, as well as the conduct of the mess night itself.

(1) The President of the Mess is normally the commanding officer or the senior Marine within the mess. The President's duties include:

(a) The President sets the date and place for the mess night, coordinates the activities of all representatives, ensuring all deadlines are set and met.

(b) The President appoints the Vice President and various committees.

(c) Select and send invitation to the guest of honor three to four weeks in advance of mess night.

(d) At least two weeks prior to mess night ensures invitations to guests are prepared and delivered.

(e) Designates escorts for the guest of honor and all other guests. (Each guest will be assigned an escort.)

(f) Arranges for the chaplain for the invocation.

(g) Prepares introductory comments and an introduction of the Guest of Honor.

(h) Establish a seating diagram using paragraph 6.i. as guidance.

(i) Select an appropriate gift for the guest of honor. This gift should have no real value other than as a memento, appropriately engraved and signifying the occasion. The gift should never be a personal item, but rather one that can become a treasure only to the guest of honor.

(j) Brief the field music on when to sound all music for the mess night. If the band is not available, assign an individual to play taped music.

(k) Ensure all members of the mess are informed as to how to conduct themselves during the mess night, ensures the members designated to give toasts rehearse their toasts well before the actual event, and schedules a rehearsal of the mess night with all hands present.

(l) During the mess night, the President greets all guests and members of the Mess before dinner.

(m) Introduces the guest of honor and other honored guests of the Mess.

(n) Maintains the decorum of the Mess, controls and levies fines, and in addition to proposing toasts, recognizes members and guests who wish to propose toasts.

(o) Ensure a letter of appreciation is sent to the honored guest after the mess night.

(2) The Vice President (Mr. or Madam Vice) may be appointed, but is normally the junior officer or noncommissioned officer within the organization or unit. The Vice President's duties include:

(a) The planning, coordination, and execution of the entire mess night. The Marine is advised and assisted by the Mess President and committee members and makes progress reports to the Mess President.

(b) Undertake all preliminary arrangements, (e.g., guest list, seating diagram, menu, catering, music, decorations, etc.).

(c) Collect funds from all mess night members and conducts all financial transactions.

(d) Prepares a letter of invitation to the guest of honor and obtains a biographical sketch.

(e) Provides the Mess with an exact number of participants and guests.

(f) Coordinates with the treasurer of the mess night and treasurer of the banquet facility to complete all financial transactions.

(g) Ensures all monies collected are recorded and copies of receipts are kept.

(h) Responsible for the conduct of the mess night and ensures the sequence of events is kept on track. Accompanies the chief steward when parading the beef, delivering wine and rum punch to the head table. Pours the wine and rum punch and brings forth the smoking lamp.

(3) The success of the mess night depends on the Vice President.

b. Mess Committee. Depending on the size of the mess night, committees may be formed to assist the President and Vice President in the planning,

preparation and conduct of the mess night. The President selects other members of the Mess as committee chairmen. Examples of committees are:

(1) Seating Committee - Place cards, seating, centerpiece, silver, crystal and china.

(2) Decorations Committee - Menu, serving time, public address system, awards, flags, trophies, photographer, payment of mess and bar charges.

(3) Protocol Committee - Prepares invitations, provides biographies of the guest of honor and distinguished guests, briefs escorts, prepares the program, and thank you letters for after the event.

c. Members of the Mess. A mess night is a formal dinner attended by all hands assigned to a unit's mess. It is customary for members not desiring to attend such affairs to request a leave of absence, in writing or person, addressed to the President of the Mess.

d. Escorts. Members of the mess may be assigned duties as escorts. Prior to the mess night, the escort should contact the invited guest and inform them of mess customs, dress, sequence of events, and any other pertinent information. If necessary, the escort also arranges for transportation and quarters for the guest when needed. During the mess night, the escort's responsibilities include offering the guest a beverage, introducing them to other members of the mess, and showing them their proper place at the table. Escorts will not make their guests feel uncomfortable or "captive" by introducing themselves as an assigned escort. Three or four members of the mess should attend guests at all times, rotating among the membership to allow the guests to meet and speak with a majority of the mess.

e. Duty Officer. In certain units, the duty officers attend the dinner wearing swords. This custom was adopted from the Worcestershire Regiment, whose Captain of the Week traditionally wears their sword in the mess as a token of the time when all officers remained under arms during meals. This practice is said to have begun when the Regiment was stationed in North America in 1746. The Regiment employed a number of reputedly loyal Indians. For this reason, the officers did not take the trouble to protect themselves against the Indians, who suddenly attacked them one evening, ruining dinner and causing numerous casualties. If such is a unit tradition, the uniform will be dress blue/blue white with sword. These officers will refrain from imbibing and will return to their posts immediately following dinner.

3. Uniform

a. The uniform for a mess night should be prescribed as the best uniform that the respective Marine possesses. The uniform should always be prescribed as Evening Dress and each Marine must ensure that he/she is in their best uniform, although it may not necessarily be the uniform their commanding officer is wearing. For example, for company-grade officers this would mean the dress blue/blue white "A" uniform. For those enlisted members not in possession of the dress blue uniform then the service "A" uniform would be appropriate.

b. If the correct term for the uniform of a sister service is not known, use the phrase "Evening Dress." Do not use "Full Dress", as this may

imply daytime uniform with sword, which is not desired.

c. For civilians, "Military Evening Dress, if convenient" may be requested if it is known the civilian is a retired or reserve service member. This often adds color to the mess, particularly abroad. If attending in civilian attire, Black Tie with miniature medals or dark suit with large medals is common and proper. The invitation automatically implies at least a dinner jacket. If a tailcoat is desired, "Full Dress" should be stated and "Orders and Decorations" is noted under the dress requirement. Miniature medals, neck ribbons, and sashes are appropriate on civilian dress at formal military functions. Do not use the expression "Black Tie" or "White Tie" on the invitations.

4. Guests. There are three types of guests:

a. Official Guests. Official guests are guests of the mess as a whole, and the members of the mess share their expenses. Their number should be limited. It might be noted that the selection of guests for mess night should be chosen with discretion. It is better to have no guest, than to honor someone who does not rate such a distinction. As a general guide, it would be considered improper to honor an officer junior to the senior officer of the mess unless the junior officer had in some way distinguished himself or was a foreign national. It is always proper to honor a prominent public figure.

b. Guest of Honor. The guest of honor is an official guest of special distinction. "When the guest of honor is a very high ranking official, it is customary to offer him/her the option of a date and to consult their staff concerning the guest list and general arrangements. After these preliminaries, a regular "invitation with 'To Remind' written on it instead of RSVP should be sent to the guest of honor."

c. Personal Guests. Personal guests are also guests of the mess, but their expenses are absorbed by the individual who invited them. If the guest is a serving officer, he/she should "be junior to the commanding officer. The President of the Mess will specify the number of guests each member may entertain.

5. Invitations

a. When you are invited to a social gathering, notification will come in the form of an invitation. The invitation will contain all the information you will need to prepare yourself for the occasion. The information placed on the invitation is to assist you and the host and will include the following basic information.

(1) Who is Giving the Affair

(a) Avoid all but accepted abbreviations. Rank, titles and names are written in full.

(b) If the invitation is extended to a person primarily because he/she is the incumbent of a certain billet, his/her command title is used. However, if such is not the case, the invitation should specify their rank and last name only.

(c) On invitations to official guests, the proper phrase is

"the honor of your company." To personal guests, "the pleasure of your company."

(2) The Location, Date and Time. The date and hour are spelled out, but only the day and month are capitalized. Military time is not used.

(3) The Type of Attire. In the lower left-hand corner, indicate the desired uniform to be worn. Include other service and civilian equivalents if guests other than Marines are in attendance.

(4) The phrase "RSVP," "Regrets," or "To Remind."

(a) RSVP is French for "Respondes S'il Vous Plait," or "Please Reply." In the lower left hand corner, "R.S.V.P." with periods and only one capital letter is written. (R.S.V.P. with periods and all capital letters is also correct.) The reply should be made within 48 hours of receipt of invitation. Underneath the "RSVP" will be the person to whom the response is to be sent with a phone number, address or an e-mail address for you to use for your reply. It is normally used for very formal occasions. For very formal or large functions, there may be a card included in the invitation for you to use to send back with your reply. This phrase is used on the invitation and is the host/hostess way of ensuring the correct amount of food, cocktails and seating is available. You must reply if you are accepting the invitation, or if you are declining the invitation.

(b) Regrets. The phrase "Regrets" or "Regrets Only" is used only if you do not plan to attend. A simply apology stating that you cannot attend will do. If you do not reply, then the host will assume that you are coming and will plan accordingly.

(c) To Remind. This is sent as reminder to someone that has been orally invited to a function. For example, if the host calls you on the phone and invites you to a function, and you accept, he/she may send you a "To Remind" invitation so that you do not forget. If you decline on the phone, he/she will not send you the invitation.

(d) Withdrawing Acceptances. On rare occasions, a guest who has accepted an invitation must withdraw the acceptance. The only acceptable reasons for withdrawing an acceptance are due to official duties, severe illness, unforeseen but mandatory out of town absence, or the recent death of a close relative. When you must withdraw an acceptance, you must notify the host immediately so he/she can make adjustments to their plans. This should be done orally and then followed up with a written notification.

b. Fifteen to thirty days before the dinner, invitations are extended to all guests that are not members of the mess. Invitations may be partly engraved on unit stationary or entirely handwritten and should follow the standard pattern. *The Service Etiquette* provides detailed guidance on preparing invitations.

6. Procedures

a. Planning. Well in advance of the anticipated date, the command will designate the Officers of the Mess. The President will inform the Vice President that he/she desires to have a mess night on a certain night. The President should also inform the Vice President of his wishes concerning

guests. The Vice President is completely responsible for the proper organization and execution of the mess night. The Vice President must ascertain the number of Marines who are to attend, and ensure that sufficient space is available at the mess for both cocktails and dinner.

(1) Day of the Dinner. Mr. Vice should be at the mess early on the morning of the dinner with a working party available to assist him/her in the final preparations. The unit silver or trophies should be displayed, together with the appropriate flags, decorations, paintings or photographs. The national and organizational colors are placed behind the President's chair per enclosure 1, chapter 7 of this Manual. At organizational mess nights, unit guidons can be banked behind the head table with good effect. Ensure the table is set in the proper manner, and that place cards for individuals are checked for accuracy against the seating arrangement posted.

(2) Evening of the Dinner. The President and Vice President must be at the mess at least 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the dinner, cocktails being a part of the dinner. They must make a final check of all details and ensure that nothing has been left to change. By this time, the punch bowl is positioned, and the rum punch is mixed.

b. Facilities. For many details, the Vice President must confer with the manager of the mess. Sufficient time should be allocated for advance planning and to make coordination with supporting organizations. Reservations should be completed at least two weeks prior to the date, giving the mess manager the opportunity to complete their planning and to prepare the desired menu. One week prior to the dinner, the Vice President should check again with the mess manager and give him/her a final figure on those attending, approve the menu for the evening, ensuring that the proper wines are available in sufficient quantity, and ensure that the waiters to be used are familiar with the serving procedure for a formal dinner.

c. Menu. There are normally four to six courses at formal dinner. Roast prime rib of beef with Yorkshire pudding is the traditional entree at a mess dinner. The courses will normally consist of the following although substitution is allowed.

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Appetizer | Shrimp, clams, oysters, herring juice, melon, etc. |
| Soup | Consommé. |
| Fish | As desired. |
| Entrée | Roast, vegetables, rolls. |
| Salad | As desired. |
| Dessert | As desired. A savory, rather than a sweet dessert is served, as the latter spoils the taste of the port. Coffee is served with dessert. |

d. Décor. Two weeks prior to the event, the Vice President should assemble all the unit silver to be displayed and see to its proper cleaning. The Vice President will need to obtain cooperation of unit commanders to see that the silver is made available to him/her, and that sufficient personnel to assist in the work are assigned. The Vice President should make an inspection of all colors and standards to be used and see to their cleaning and pressing. The unit silver should be assembled, together with the appropriate flags, decorations, paintings or photographs well in advance. It should be no problem to procure pictures or relics of the unit for display, if

only the time and energy are expended. The table should be set in the proper manner, with a place card for each individual. The seating arrangement will need to be posted in the lounge, in order that each Marine will know where he/she is to be seated. The punch bowl for the traditional toast is to be inspected, and its position designated for best service.

e. Music. If at all possible, music should be performed by the unit's own band. Requirements may range from two drums and four fifes for announcing dinner and playing tributes during toasts, to a small orchestra section for playing dinner music and after dinner music, to an entire marching band for complete entertainment. However, in our modern world of electronics, it is expedient to have a sound system on a good quality public address system serve as a substitute if the band is not available. Regardless of what is used, the music must be chosen with care. As a general rule, selections are chosen to alternate between martial music and classical or semi-classical selections. If contemporary music is played, care must be taken to play a variety as not all tastes are the same. The Vice President should meet with the bandmaster and approve the proposed music selections for the evening, ensuring that the band is thoroughly familiar with the "National Anthem," or unit marches of the guests who are to be toasted. The Vice President should be particularly cautious in the case of foreign nationals, as occasionally they have several unit marches, only one of which is proper for playing in conjunction with toast. The Vice President may check with the guests' mess secretary or aide-de-camp for advice as appropriate. The following are the standard mess night music.

(1) "Dinner Chimes" or "First Call" ("First Sergeant Call") 15 minutes prior to the start of dinner.

(2) "Officers Call" or "Mess Call" ("Mess Call" may be substituted for an enlisted mess night) five minutes prior to the start of dinner.

(3) "Sea Soldier" or "March On" for the march on of the mess members.

(4) "Semper Fidelis" for the march on of the head table.

(5) "Roast Beef of Old England" for the march on of the beef.

(6) If foreign officers or guests are present, their national anthem is played when their head of state is toasted.

(7) "National Anthem" for the toast to the Commander and Chief.

(8) "Anchors Away" for the toast to the Navy. If toasts are made to the other services then their service song is played at this time.

(9) If foreign service members are guests, and their service is toasted then appropriate music will be played.

(10) "Taps" during the Fallen Comrade toast.

(11) "Marine's Hymn" during the toast to the Corps. Traditionally, all members of the mess sing all three verses of the Marine's Hymn.

f. Cocktails. The room set aside for cocktails should command a great

deal of the Vice President's attention, as this is where his/her brother and sister Marines and guests will receive their first impression of the evening's festivities. The room should, if possible, be small enough to lend itself to an atmosphere of intimacy yet not so small that the guests feel they are crowded. It is better to have a room too large than one too small. Subdued lighting should illuminate the room.

(1) Cocktail Hour. Members of the mess are expected to attend cocktail hour, whether they chose to imbibe or not. Each member of the mess should arrive at the appointed place for cocktails 5 minutes before opening time. The cocktail hour is primarily designed to establish social rapport and to afford an opportunity to meet the guests. The cocktail hour should last no longer than 45 minutes. There will be sufficient time after dinner to completely satisfy all thirst and members should, therefore, avoid excessive drinking prior to dinner. It is customary that each Marine upon entering presents himself/herself to the President of the Mess. A simple "Good evening sir/ma'am" will suffice. To take a drink or to smoke prior to doing this is bad manners. In addition, the younger Marines should take this occasion to pay their respects informally to the senior members; this is proper and much appreciated by the older Marines. At sometime during the cocktail hour, every member should make it a point to introduce themselves to each of the guests.

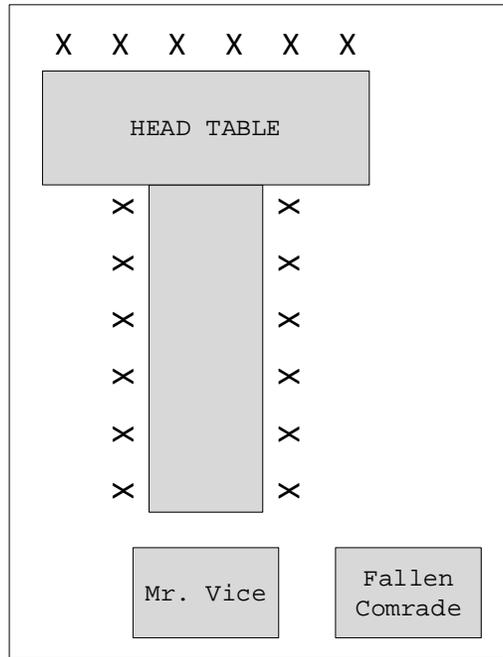
(2) It is the specific duty of the President to greet each guest as that person arrives at the mess. The guest of honor is usually the last to arrive and is greeted immediately by the Vice President. The guest of honor is introduced to the President, and subsequently to the mess. There should be three or four members attending each guest at all times prior to and after the dinner. Members should rotate between peer groups and guests to assure that each guest has an opportunity to converse with three or four different members at all times. As a member of the mess, you are a host and should act accordingly. During the cocktail hour, there should be no formal "Hors D'oeuvres", however, it is quite proper to have several plates of peanuts, potato chips, crackers, and pretzels placed about the room. At this time, suitable music should be played. Everyone attending must be in the cocktail lounge at least 10 minutes prior to the hour fixed for dinner. Be sure to locate your seating assignment prior to the Call to Dinner. Do not spoil your evening by becoming intoxicated at this time.

g. Call to Dinner depending on local ground rules, members and guests may proceed informally to their places; or where more formality is the custom, each marches into the wardroom at designated times. The usual entrance for large assemblies is for the membership to be in place within the wardroom and the Officers of the Mess march in procession, escorting the honored guests. The signal for dinner will be the playing of "Officers Call," (or "Mess Call" for enlisted mess nights) followed by "Sea Soldiers" or "March On." As soon as the music starts, all hands not seated at the head table should dispose of their drinks, and proceed informally (but orderly) into the wardroom to their seating locations and stand behind their chairs. The musicians will start playing in the wardroom, march through the cocktail lounge back into the wardroom, around the table and return to the cocktail lounge where they will halt. By the time the music has returned to the cocktail lounge, all hands, except those to be seated at the head table, will have retired to the wardroom and found their respective places at the table. They will stand quietly behind their chairs. There should be no delay moving into the wardroom and the path of the musicians should never be restricted. At this time, there will be no one in the cocktail lounge except those to be

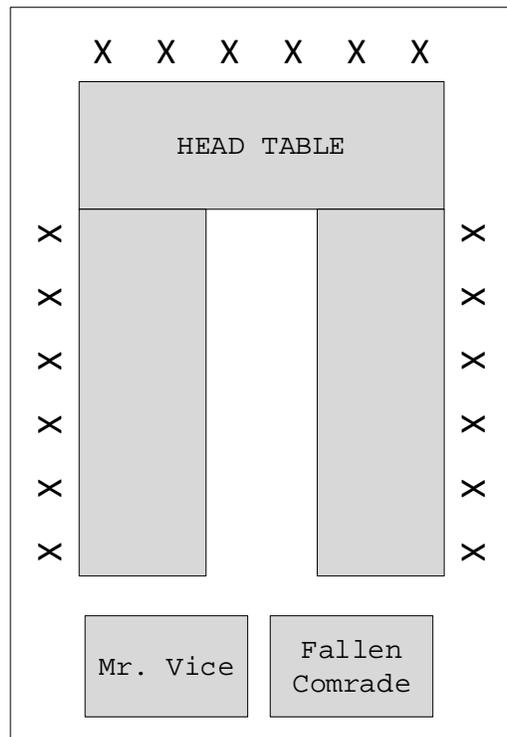
seated at the head table and the musicians. The President will form those to be seated at the head table in the order in which they are to march into the wardroom. The President with the honored guest on his/her right, followed by the next senior officer and the next senior honored guest, etc., followed by the remaining officers in order of seniority, prepare to enter the wardroom (as an option the head table may March on in the order in which they are to be seated). When all the guests are ready to enter the wardroom, the President will inform the bandmaster that he/she may proceed with the ceremony. The musicians will strike up "*Semper Fidelis*," enter the wardroom, march around the table and halt. Once the music has entered the wardroom and reached the far end of that room, the President will lead the head table guests to their seats. As soon as the last member to enter has stopped and turned to face his place setting, the music will cease playing, execute the prescribed facing movements and march out of the wardroom to a single drumbeat. The President will initiate the formal opening of the mess (by offering grace). Once the head table has entered the wardroom, no one will be allowed to enter the mess without permission from the President. The proper sequence to enter after this point is to address "Mr./Madam President" and wait to be acknowledged. Express your regrets and ask to join your place in the mess. Conversely, once seated, no one may leave the wardroom without permission of the President. Regardless of the degree of formality in the entrance, drinks will not be carried into the wardroom. It is not proper to have alcohol on the table during grace.

h. Grace. As soon as the musicians have left the wardroom, the President will rap with a spoon or gavel as the signal for order and attention. All hands will be standing. The President says in an audible but not loud voice. "Ladies and gentlemen, the grace." The chaplain, or in his/her absence, the President or the Vice President will then say grace. Immediately following the grace, all hands will be instructed to take their seats. Often, there is a short concluding grace after dinner, before the port is served. Do not create a sermon out of grace. A story is told about the officer who was informed he/she would have to act as President of the mess, due to the absence of the commanding officer, and also render a short grace. Whereupon the officer intoned, "The commanding officer is not here. Thank God." A more appropriate grace might be: "Father, we thank you for the blessing you have given us today and throughout our lives. We are especially thankful for the privilege of gathering here in this mess tonight, honoring the traditions and esprit so deeply rooted within our beloved Corps. We invoke your blessing on this assembly, the meal we are about to enjoy, and the fellowship that will follow. Amen."

i. Seating Arrangement. The tables may be arranged in any order that suits the particular circumstances, the only rule being that no one should be seated across the head table. Members of the mess, with certain reservations, are normally seated according to seniority, from the head table down. Seating will, as far as practical, prevent members of the same organization sitting together (to aid in the prevention of "talking shop"). Typical diagrams may be a "T", a "U", an "E", or a "Multiple Line." (See figures D-1.) If more than one spur extends from the head table, they should be disjoined to permit passage of the stewards between the spurs and head table. The senior honored guest sits on the right side of the President, the next senior guest on the left. The remaining guests are interspersed throughout the mess to ensure their being well entertained by members. The Vice President is seated at the foot of the table or separate table opposite the head table at large mess nights. Do not mis-seat the honored guest.

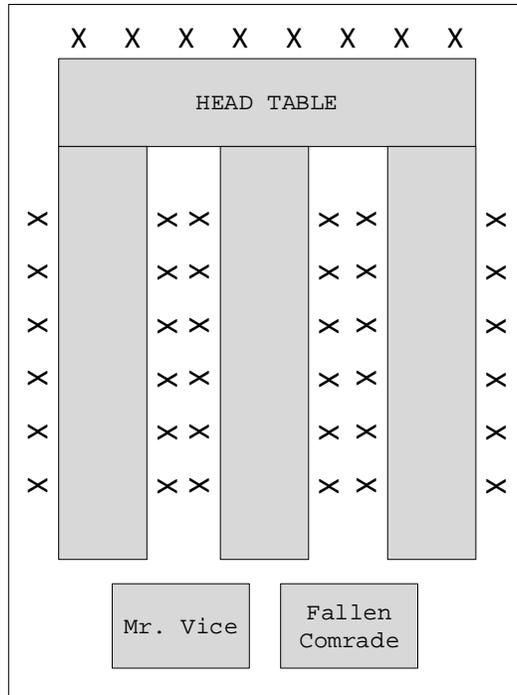


a. "T" Seating Layout.

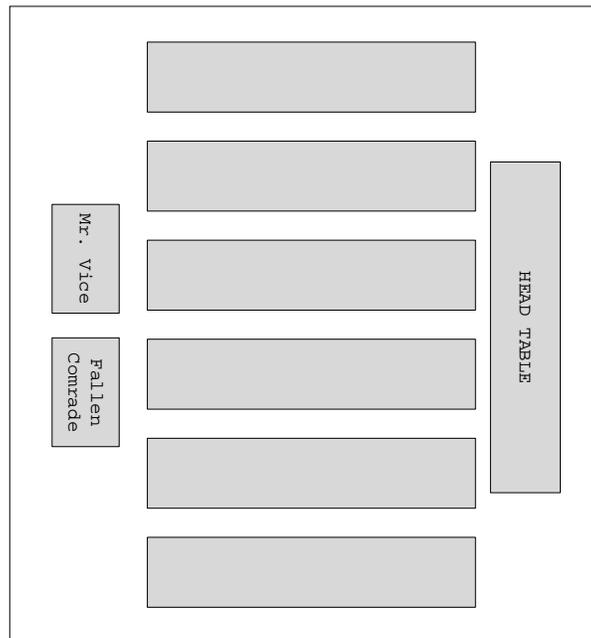


b. "U" Seating Layout.

Figure D-1.--Sample Seating Diagram.



c. "E" Seating Layout.



d. "Multiple Line" Seating Layout.

Figure D-1.--Sample Seating Diagrams--Continued.

j. Table Setting. A formal table setting using a unit's silver, crystal, and china can make a handsome picture. A lay plate is in the center, partially covered by a neatly folded napkin on top of which lies the place card. To its left, working from the outside toward the plate, will be

the forks in the order of use--fish, meat, and salad, the latter properly being eaten after the main entree. To its right, working from the outside toward the plate, will be the fruit and soup spoons, then the knives in order of use--fish, meat, and salad. However, the oyster fork is always outboard on the right side. Above the knives will be the crystal. Again working from the outside toward the center, in order of use--a sherry glass for white wine, one for red wine, a Claret glass for port (found only at stag dinners), and a goblet for water. Thus, by merely proceeding in order, the wrong equipment cannot be used. After each course, a well-trained steward will remove all extra silver and glass, again aiding the choice of the proper utensil at the proper time. The dessert implements are normally found on the dessert plate. If not, they will be innermost utensils of their kind. Butter plates are not used on formal setting. The center of the table is decorated with flowers or unit silver. Candelabra will furnish all light. Nuts, celery, etc. are placed in appropriate dishes and removed at the proper time.

k. Dinner. The backbone of a good dinner is amicable and friendly conversation. Each Marine is not only expected, but also encouraged to enjoy himself to the utmost during the dinner hour. As Marines, jokes that are off-color or which may be detrimental to the guests are forbidden. It is beneath the dignity of a Marine to make any comment that possibly might offend anyone present over dinner. During the dinner, members must refrain from loud and boisterous conversation. Exuberance of spirit is more properly accepted after completion of the meal, when all guests and members join at the bar. It must be kept in mind that there are guests present who are judging the whole Marine Corps by the manner in which the members conduct themselves. There are normally four to six courses at a formal dinner. The service will be conducted by two stewards in a counter clockwise fashion commencing with the honored guest and the officer to the right of the President. In that way, the official hosts, the President and the Vice President are served last. The head steward will clear the table when each person at the table has finished his course. Therefore, dinner should be consumed at normal speed. Stewards should not be disciplined during dinner. Refer complaints to the Vice President. Traditionally, when roast beef is the entree, the President will command "Chief Steward, bring forth the beef," and the chief steward will ceremoniously roll on the beef, escorted by the Vice President while music sounds "the Roast Beef of Old England." He halts behind the President, cuts him a small but choice piece and lays it before the President on a plate. The President will taste the beef and declare "I find this beef to be tasty and fit for human consumption." Serving then commences.

l. Wines. Good wine is as much a part of a formal dinner as the entree. There has evolved over the years a general rule that white wine is to be served with white courses, fish and fowl, and red wine with blood meats. Champagne may be used any time. Sherry, sometimes served with soup, is more often omitted. White and sparkling wines are served chilled. Red wine is offered at room temperature, however it is well to remember that this infers a temperature of 58°-60°F. Port, an after dinner brandy, is served for all toasts except to the Corps, for which a rum punch is used. This punch was initially reported in a recruiting poster that appeared in Philadelphia in January 1776, which ordered the recruit upon enlistment to: "REPAIR TO THE MARINE RENDEZVOUS, WHERE IN A FLOWING BOWL OF PUNCH, AND THREE TIMES THREE, YOU SHALL DRINK, LONG LIVE THE UNITED STATES AND SUCCESS TO THE MARINES."

To make the traditional 1775 Rum Punch; mix:

| |
|---|
| Four parts dark rum. |
| Two parts lime juice. |
| One part maple syrup. |
| Add a small amount of grenadine to taste. |
| Ice generously. |

The wine, in decanters if available, is served by stewards or placed on the table and passed by the members. At the end of a course that calls for wine, the steward will properly remove your glass. Do not stop him, even though your glass may be full. It is also improper to turn a glass upside down on the table. Should a member not desire wine, he/she may place his card over the glass, inform the steward that he does not wish wine, or simply allow him/her to pour the glass and do not drink it. The steward will remove the glass at the proper time, full or not. However, glasses must be charged with port for toasts and at least raised to the lips. Not to do so would be an insult to the person toasted. Appropriate wines with each course stimulates the palate and accentuates the meal, however, remember that a chilled rose goes with all food combinations, has a light, pleasant taste, and is inexpensive (in other words, you do not have to be a wine snob to run a good mess night).

m. Smoking. Following dessert and coffee, the entire table will be cleared except for the port glasses. Port will be called for and all glasses should be charged as soon as possible. Do not drink it yet. Ashtrays and cigars will be placed on the tables. Do not smoke yet. Following the loyalty toast, the President announces "Ladies and gentlemen, the smoking lamp is lighted." Now, and not before, smoking commences. Cigars will be passed. The Vice President will light the smoking lamp, if there is one available and pass it to the President, who lights the honored guests' tobacco. The Smoking Lamp is always announced as being "lighted", not as being lit. When the smoking lamp is lighted and cigars and port are passed around, the President may, at his discretion, send for the bandmaster and offer him/her a drink.

n. Use of the Gavel. The gavel, in possession of the President of the Mess, will be used to signal the members.

(1) Three resounding raps require the attention to the President of the members, whether standing or seated.

(2) Two raps cause the members to rise, standing in place.

(3) One rap is the signal for the members to take their seats.

o. Applause. Applause or gaining attention from the mess will be accomplished by rapping a spoon against the table. Do not strike the glassware. Follow the example of the President. As guests are introduced, applause is correct and invited as each guest is introduced and at the conclusion of each one's remarks.

p. After Dinner Activities. At some point, the President will signal that dinner is concluded and invite all present for further conviviality by saying, "Ladies and gentlemen, please join me at the bar." Remember, the members of the mess should wait until the head table and guests have left the wardroom. Then, without undue haste, they also leave the dining area to

continue the festivities at the bar. All hands are encouraged to stay, enjoy themselves and partake of refreshments. The remainder of the evening may be spent more or less, as impulse and ingenuity suggest. Singing is always in order and camaraderie is the key to the remainder of the evening. By this time, many Marines are often pleasantly surprised to discover how really well they can produce harmony. There are also any number of parlor games and feats of strength that could be planned in good taste. The custom has grown in some messes for the members to join into rough and dangerous games after dinner. This is not only dangerous to the individual, but quite often causes the destruction of mess property. Remember that you are in your dress uniform and even though you may not worry about its care, others do worry about theirs. However, you choose to occupy yourself or whatever hilarity you indulge in, never forget that you are a Marine and represent the Nation's finest. Proper etiquette and decorum dictate that, as the mess is your home, you must remain until all official guests have left. It is also customary not to leave the mess for your quarters until your commanding officer has retired for the evening. The President must remain in the mess until all officers senior to himself/herself have retired for the evening, at which time he may designate the Vice to remain as host until all hands have departed. This is necessary to ensure that all members and guests receive full courtesies of the mess, yet leave promptly at closing time and to see that the unit's decorations are secured after the evening is over. However, a more common practice of departing the bar after a proper and decent interval serves the purpose of the evening much better. If the usual custom is observed, it will place the senior guests and officers in an awkward position. They will feel compelled to leave early, even though inclination is to stay on, in order not to inconvenience those who may have important duties the following day and wish to leave at an early hour. Anyone should feel free to leave at any time after the proper interval, and done properly, the guests and officers of the Mess will take it as a kindness.

q. Behavior. Your behavior is just as important as the way you dress. Looking good will not bring you respect if you cannot conduct yourself accordingly. Here is a list of the things you should do and why, and the things you should not do.

(1) What You Should Do

(a) Be on Time. One of the most valuable habits you can acquire is that of being on time. It is said that promptness and responsibility go hand in hand.

(b) Receiving Lines. If there is a receiving line, it is a courtesy--and therefore mandatory--that you go through the receiving line.

(c) Table Talk. Loud talk and laughter at the table are disturbing to others. Be careful of controversial or unpleasant subjects, such as politics, religion, or death.

(d) Always stand when being introduced.

(e) Treat self-introduction with care; the impression you give will be the one that is remembered.

(f) Do

1. Introduce yourself and speak to each guest.
2. Make head call prior to dinner.
3. Eat at your own pace. Let the stewards take your plate and glass when attempted.
4. Remain in the bar after dinner.

(2) What You Should Not Do

(a) Public Display of Affection. Entering into any formal gathering accompanied by your date is all the attention you need. Open or extreme displays of affection are not considered appropriate at any formal function, and should be kept at a modest or minimum level. Refrain from any type of groping or lewd gestures at all costs. Remember that you are a Marine officer, staff noncommissioned officer, or noncommissioned officer and a true professional and are expected to carry yourself as such.

(b) Do not drum on a table with your fingers, or tap your feet on the floor. If you do--stop it. Finger or foot tapping draws attention to what you are doing and takes away from what is being said.

(c) Poor grammar, rude or vulgar talk, and the persistent use of improper and uncouth phraseology are representative of careless personal habits.

(d) Do Not

1. Drink too much at the cocktail hour.
2. Smoke at the table until the "Lamp is Lighted."
3. Discuss sex, religion, or politics at dinner.
4. Use raucous behavior at the table.
5. Do not talk with food in your mouth. Avoid making noises while eating or swallowing and chew with your mouth closed.
6. Do not blow on hot liquids to cool them.
7. Do not lick your fingers. That is the purpose of having a napkin.
8. Never reach for food; ask for it to be passed.
9. When finished with the napkin, place it to the left of the plate, not inside of it.
10. During cocktail, never have both hands full at the same time.
11. Always wait for the guest of honor or host/hostess to begin eating first.

q. Rules of the Mess. The following are some time-honored rules of the mess. These can be modified or expanded depending on local custom.

(1) Thou shall be punctual, heavy fines will be levied on all late arrivals.

(2) Thou shall not wear an ill-fitting, ill-prepared, or discolored uniform.

(3) Thou shall not wear clip on ties.

(4) The sounding of "Chimes" is the last opportunity to make thy head call until thy meal is completed.

(5) Thou shall not murder the Queen's English.

(6) Thou shall not use foul language, speak smut tingly, or use loud, obtrusive remarks in any language.

(7) Thou shall not pick thy nose, ears, or buttocks.

(8) Thou shall not flatulate, lest thou be severely punished.

(9) Thou shall not chew gum.

(10) Thou shall not bring cocktails or other tobacco products in the dining area.

(11) Thou shall sit in thy assigned seat.

(12) Thou shall not rap on glassware for attention.

(13) Thou shall not rearrange the table settings.

(14) Thou shall greet the guest of honor and make every effort to greet all members of the Mess at some point during the evening.

(15) Politics, shop, money, and religions shall not be discussed at the Mess. The Commander in Chief's policies will not be discussed.

(16) Thou shall not haggle over thy date of rank.

(17) Thou shall not refuse any course, nor shall you ask for seconds, thy meal shall be consumed as served, and in a manner becoming a lady or gentlemen.

(18) Thou shall not throw food or disgrace the Mess with unruly conduct.

(19) Thy elbows will remain from the table.

(20) Thou shall not turn glasses upside down or refuse any beverage. Members shall not be required to consume alcohol, however all glasses will be filled.

(21) Wine will be passed from right to left.

(22) Thou shall not "bottom up" glasses for every toast, only for the final "Toast to the Corps."

(23) Exclusive of actual emergencies, no member shall leave the dining area until thy head table has exited.

(24) Thy President and the Vice President shall be the only consultants of time during the feast.

(25) Members may request to address thy Mess by standing up at their seat and asking, "Mr./Madam Vice President, (rank and name) request permission to address the mess." The head table is not required to request permission and may address the mess directly.

(26) Thou shall not rise with smoking material in mouth or hand.

(27) Thou shall not use tobacco products until the smoking lamp is lighted. Only cigars provided to the Mess will be smoked.

(28) Thou shall not put ashes on the plates, table, or floor. All smoking materials shall be extinguished properly.

(29) The Vice President will monitor the behavior of the Mess throughout the evening. Upon request of the President, he/she will list any violations of these rules and the President will assign appropriate punishment. Members of the Mess may request to address the Mess in their own defense. All fines will be paid to the Vice President.

(30) Any member of the Mess addressed directly by the President may respond directly without requesting permission from the Vice President.

(31) The decisions of the President are final and may not be appealed. The decisions of the Vice President are final and may not be appealed, unless overturned by the President.

(32) Thou shall move to the Mess when it is time and remain standing until seated by the President.

(33) Thou shall keep toasts and comments within the limits of good taste and mutual respect. Degrading or insulting remarks will be frowned upon by the membership. However, good-natured needling is ENCOURAGED. Thou shall not laugh at ridiculously funny comments unless the President shows approval by laughing.

(34) When the Mess adjourns, thou shall rise and wait for the President and guests to leave.

(35) The Mess will not talk to the head table or servers of the mess.

(36) Thou shall not start a course before the President.

(37) Thou shall use proper toasting procedure.

(38) Thou shall ensure that thy glass is always charged while toasting.

(39) Thou shall practice in all toasts unless thyself or the group is honored with a toast.

(40) Thou shall have exact funds for fines.

(41) Thou shall not have a copy of these violations in the Mess.

r. Cost. The cost of a mess night should be prorated by rank. Reference (i) and reference (j) contain examples of the Schatzel formula used to calculate prorated costs.

s. Fining. The tradition of fining is a holdover from the days of closed messes when members lived and subsisted in the mess and formal rules for conduct in the mess existed. When the President raps the gavel three times and announces that the floor will be open for fines, you will now have the opportunity to levy charges, on anyone in the Mess except for the members of the head table. You may bring to the attention of the Mess any violations or infractions your fellow Marine may have violated or committed. Be prepared to address the Vice President and the President correctly. Also prepare to be challenged by those accused which, might result in your being fined. Today, this tradition is an optional part of the mess night. The President will generate fines for any infractions deemed appropriate. Coins of the realm are designated as United States Dollars (the Vice President will not make change!) However, fines are not required to be monetary in nature. The following guidelines apply when fining:

(1) The President is the only person authorized to levy fines.

(2) Guests are exempt from fining.

(3) Unfounded accusations brought to the attention of the Mess will be grounds for the accuser being fined.

(4) If monetary fines are levied, they should be a token amount and the procedures agreed upon by all members in advance.

(5) An alternate to monetary fines may be imposed. This includes singing, tests of knowledge and exercises.

(6) All monetary fines collected will be dispersed by the Vice President to cover the cost of after dinner drinks or donated as an additional gratuity to the serving staff.

(7) While not all inclusive, the following specific infractions that will incur fines are:

(a) Navigational errors (know your place and be in it at the proper time).

(b) Hagglng over dates of rank or precedence numbers.

(c) Excessive grog intake or spilling your drink (alcohol abuse will be dealt with severely).

(d) Food and drink are not eligible to log flight time, therefore, do not launch it.

(e) Annoying the President with trivial or unwarranted allegations from the Mess.

(f) Grievous violations of the Mess protocol (uncouth behavior without permission.)

t. Addressing the Mess. The following procedures will be used to address the Mess.

(1) The Marine will stand at the position of attention and address the Vice President; "Mr./Madam Vice, (Rank & Name) requests permission to address the Mess."

(2) The Vice President will address the President, "Mr./Madam President, (Rank & Name) requests permission to address the Mess." Note: The Vice President has the unconditional option to deny or forward the request.

(3) When the President grants permission, the Marine will address the President and state the charge.

(4) If the nature of the address is to accuse a member of an infraction, the President has the option of allowing accused to respond to accusation. Consider charges only or dismiss accusation and fine accuser.

(5) When addressing the Mess, do not break the position of attention without permission. This requires the individual to request permission to move about freely.

7. Toasts

a. It is appropriate here to mention the term "toast" which is English in origin. The idea is not older than the 17th century and had reference first to the custom of drinking to the ladies. In Stuart times, it was the custom to put a piece of toast in the wine cup or glass before drinking in the belief that this improved the flavor of the wine. There is an account of a celebrated beauty who, during the reign of Charles II, was bathing in public when one of her admirers took a glass of water in which she stood and drank to her health to the assembled company. The account goes on to say that "there was in the place a gay fellow, half befuddled with drink, who offered to jump in and swore, though he needed no more liquor, he would have the toast." There are four classes of toasts:

(1) Toasts of Protocol. To foreign governments or chiefs of states; toast to the President of the United States.

(2) Official Toasts. To other services, military organizations, government departments, agencies, or institutions.

(3) Traditional Toasts. To Corps and country, toast to battles.

(4) Personal Toasts. To individuals (distinguished guests, members being dined out, etc.)

b. Port is served from decanters and is passed clockwise from the President and Vice President. All toasts are with port except the traditional toast. When all glasses are charged, toasts will begin. The

President controls the procedure. The President will call for a toast to the head of state of the senior foreign guest. After a proper interval (usually about two minutes), he/she will call for a toast to the head of state of the second senior foreign guest, until the heads of government of all foreign guests or members have been toasted. Many messes add a bright touch to a toast. The President may propose a toast to "The King of the Belgians" and the Vice President replies in French "Le Roi de Belge," this could be an exciting toast in Korean or Chinese. The President then turns to the senior foreign guest and calls him/her by name. The senior foreign guest will stand and propose the toast "Ladies and gentlemen, to the President of the United States" which is not seconded (this is called "*The Loyal Toast*"). The mess rises and the orchestra plays the "*National Anthem*." When the music ends, the mess raises their glasses, respond in unison "The President of the United States," drink, and return to their seats.

c. If foreign guests or members are not present, the President will call for a toast to the President of the United States as the first toast and then light the smoking lamp. The President then proceeds to toast the units represented by the United States service members at the dinner. This follows a short talk by the senior honored guest and introductions or shorter talks by the remaining official guests. The President must tactfully inform each official guest to limit his remarks to not more than 10 minutes. The mess will not rise to applaud speeches, unless exceptionally inspiring, and only on the example of the President or Commanding Officer. After speechmaking, the President may open the floor for toasts from the mess.

d. The procedures for toasting utilize the following sequence. The person making the toast addresses the toast to the Vice President. The Vice President seconds the toast and finally all members of the mess echo the toast. As an example:

President: "Mr./Madam Vice, a toast to the President of Tunisia."

Mr./Madam Vice: "Ladies and gentlemen (pause while all stand), a toast to the President of Tunisia."

All: "The President of Tunisia."

e. The next series of toasts are to the units of the foreign guests or members, called by the President. These are followed by toasts to the units of American Services represented at the dinner, according to seniority of those present, regardless of whether they are members or guests of the mess.

President: "Mr./Madam Vice, A toast to the United States Navy."

Mr./Madam Vice: "Ladies and Gentlemen, a companion at sea. It is with a great deal of respect and honor that I propose a toast to our sister service, the United States Navy."

All: "The United States Navy."

President: "Mr./Madam Vice, A toast to our comrades-in-arms, the U.S. Navy Corpsmen."

Mr./Madam Vice: "Ladies and gentlemen, to those who provide care and comfort on the battlefield. It is with a great deal of respect and honor that I propose a toast to our comrades-in-arms U.S. Navy Corpsmen."

All: "Navy Corpsmen."

f. Toasts from the mess are given in similar fashion, except for asking permission to toast. A person stands and says "Mr./Madam Vice, a toast." Mr./Madam Vice will acknowledge the toast with "Propose your toast sir." The member or guest says "Mr./Madam Vice, a toast to the Continental Marines, who." Mr./Madam Vice will stand, raise his/her glass and says "Ladies and gentlemen." All hands will stand with wine glasses in their hands and Mr./Madam Vice will continue "To the Continental Marines." All members raise their glasses, repeat in unison the words of Mr./Madam Vice, drink a portion of their wine, and resume their seats.

g. Some organizations seed the mess to offer historic toasts when the floor is opened, examples of these are:

(1) A toast to the Continental Marines who fought for our freedom and liberty. (Mr./Madam Vice responds: The Continental Marines.)

(2) A toast to the Marines of the 19th century who fought from the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli. (Mr./Madam Vice responds: The Marines of the 19th century.)

(3) A toast to the Marines who fought in World War I from the Argonne Forest to Belleau Wood. (Mr./Madam Vice responds: The Marines of World War I.)

(4) A toast to the Marines who fought in the island campaigns of World War II where "Uncommon valor was a common virtue." (Mr./Madam Vice responds: The Marines of World War II.)

(5) A toast to the Marines who fought in Korea from Inchon to the Chosin Reservoir. (Mr./Madam Vice responds: The Marines of the Korean War.)

(6) A toast to the Marines who fought for freedom in Vietnam (Mr./Madam Vice responds: The Marines of the Vietnam War.)

(7) A toast to the Marines in Beirut, who gave their lives defending the sanctity of another nation. (Mr./Madam Vice: The Marines of Beirut.)

(8) A toast to the Marines who fought for Kuwait liberty in Southwest Asia. (Mr./Madam Vice: The Marines of Desert Shield and Desert Storm.)

(9) A toast to the Marines who fought in Operation Enduring Freedom. (Mr./Madam Vice: The Marines of Operation Enduring Freedom.)

(10) A toast to the Marines who fought in Operation Iraqi Freedom.
(Mr./Madam Vice: The Marines of Operation Iraqi Freedom.)

(11) A toast to the Marines currently forward deployed to the sharp
edge of the sword. (Mr./Madam Vice responds: The deployed Marines.)

(12) Newer toasts may be added as needed.

h. In place of individual toasts, an alternate toast can be inserted at
this time to honor all of the battles that Marines have fought in. The
President of the Mess makes the following introductory remarks after which
selected members of the mess stand in sequence and each announces a battle.
They remain standing. A ship's bell is rung once after each battle is
announced. After all battles have been announced, the members sit.

President: "Ladies and gentlemen, it is traditional to pay homage
to the valor shown and sacrifices made by Marines who have
distinguished themselves throughout history."
(A ship's bell is rung one time following each campaign.)

BLADENSBURG
TRIPOLI
CHAPULTEPEC
GUANTANAMO BAY
MEUSE-ARGONNE
GUADALCANAL
TARAWA
IWO JIMA
OKINAWA
INCHON
CHOSIN RESERVOIR
KHE SANH
HUE CITY
LEBANON
GRENADA
PANAMA
KUWAIT
SOMALIA
AFGHANISTAN
IRAQ

i. A moving toast, often offered by the Guest of Honor just prior to the Traditional Toast, is the fallen comrade toast. It involves staging an empty table, draped in black, in a corner of the wardroom. It should be set with a full dinner setting and prominently display a pair of blank Identification Tags and a Purple Heart Medal (Figure D-2). The toast that is offered describes:

Guest of Honor or person giving toast: "Marines, I too have a toast. I would direct your attention to the table at the rear where a place has been set for those Marines who have gone before us. The military way of life is filled with much symbolism. The table provides a way to tell us that members of our profession, whom we call "brothers", are unable to be with us this evening. It is set for one, yet there are many represented by the single chair.

The table is draped in black, symbolizing the color of mourning; the ultimate sacrifice, a table set in honor of our fallen comrades. The single lighted candle reminds us of the flame of eternal life that the memory of our fallen comrades will be with us always. The Purple Heart medal displayed to reflect the infliction of wounds and the ebb of life in battle. The identification tags blank, yet they could bear the name of Marines of every creed and color, and from every state in the Union. The dinner setting inverted, they dine with us in spirit only. Those who have died so that we may live, our former comrades who have earned the glory and have given to us the respect and pride that we, as Marines, hold so dear."

(inflection pause)

"Marines and honored guests, let us honor our fellow Marines, who have gone before. Mr./Madam Vice, a toast to all Marines who have died for our beloved Corps."

Mr./Madam Vice: "Marines a toast."

(The entire mess will rise to the position of attention)

"To our fallen comrades."

All: "To our fallen comrades."

(Taps is played.)

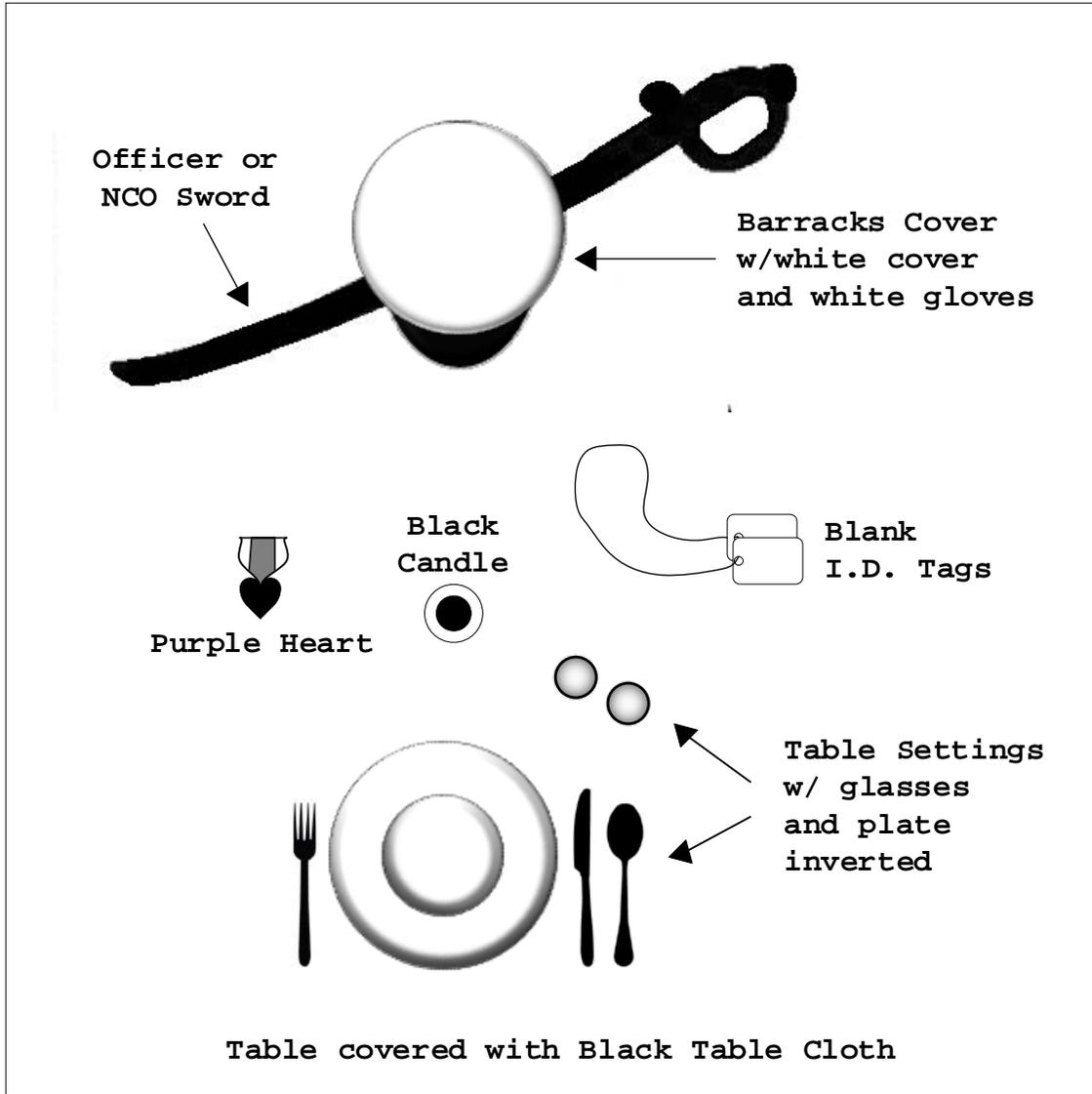


Figure D-2.--Fallen Comrades Table.

j. To conclude the formalities of dinner, the President calls for the toast, "To Corps and country." Mr./Madam Vice fills each cup from the punch bowl at the end of the table starting with the honored guest and ending with the President. At large dinners, Mr./Madam Vice fills only the cups of those seated at the head table, the stewards charging the other glasses. The President fills Mr./Madam Vice's cup who then faces about and seconds the toast.

President: "In 1776, one of the first recruiting posters ordered recruits upon enlistment, take courage then, seize the fortune that awaits you, repair to the Marine rendezvous, where in a flowing bowl of punch, and three times three you shall drink.

(pause)

Long live the United States and success to the Marines.
Mr./Madam Vice, a toast to the country and Corps."

Mr./Madam Vice: "Ladies and Gentlemen, a toast. Long live the United States and success to the Marines!"

All: "Long live the United States and success to the Marines!"

(Marines' Hymn is played or sung.)

k. From this point, procedures vary with each mess according to the desires of the commanding officer and its own traditions. Usually, the President will offer: "Ladies and gentlemen, will you join me at the bar?" after which all members will stand fast until those seated at the head table have departed the dining room.

1. The following are some general rules for toasting:

(1) Do not toast the Commandant.

(2) Do not be caught with an uncharged glass.

(3) Do not "bottoms-up" your glass on each toast, only on the final traditional toast.

(4) Do not stand or drink a toast if you represent the service toasted, except the Traditional Toast.

(5) Keep in mind that toasts are offered to institutions, never to persons by proper name.

(6) During toasts to battles, individuals who participated in the specific battle will remain seated.

8. Checklist. The following is a sample checklist of key events and milestones that occur during the preparation for a mess night.

| Mess Night Preparation Checklist | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Item | Completion Date/ Comments |
| Command selects officers of the mess and assigns committee members. | |
| Select honored guest, make initial correspondence to his office to ensure that the date of the mess night fits into his schedule. | |
| Prepare for the honored guest and obtain his biographical sketch. | |
| Send letters to support agencies to reserve facilities, arrange for field music, and arrange transportation (as needed) and other necessary support. | |
| Select a list of guests that the mess desires to have attend their function. | |
| Ensure invitations to guests are properly prepared and delivered. | |
| Prepare a script for introductions and special toasts and prepare the working program for the event. Begin seating arrangements, decoration plans, and any other special arrangements that may be required. | |
| Complete seating arrangement, conduct command briefing, finalize working program, and complete decoration plan. | |
| Verify all requested support requirements, complete last minute liaison with all support agencies. | |
| Select and brief escorts for guests as required, possible rehearsals for key figures. | |
| Conduct a final walk-through inspection, see to the details. Brief the field music. | |
| Ensure that a letter of appreciation is sent to the honored guest, coordinate with the treasurer of the facilities to complete all financial transactions. | |

Figure D-3.--Mess Night Preparation Checklist.

a. The President will:

(1) Coordinate the activities of all representatives, ensuring deadlines are set and met.

(2) Select and properly invite the honored guest. At least two weeks prior to the event, ensure invitations to the guests are prepared and delivered.

(3) Designate escorts for the guests.

(4) Prepare a script to introduce guests.

(5) Select and acquire an appropriate gift for the guest of honor, appropriately engraved to signify the occasion.

(6) Complete letters of appreciation for support agencies.

b. Mr./Madam Vice will:

(1) Plan, coordinate and execute the entire mess night. The Marine is advised by the President and other members, but has the responsibility to the mess and President.

(2) Collects funds from members and conducts all financial transactions.

(3) Coordinates with the mess manager about numbers attending, facilities and such.

(4) Coordinates and supervises the treasurer and accounts for all monies received and expended.

9. Gear List. The following is a list of equipment normally required to conduct a mess night.

a. Smoking Lamp.

b. Gavel.

c. Unit Colors (and guidons if applicable).

d. Officer or Noncommissioned Officer Sword (substitute a rifle and bayonet for field mess night).

e. Barracks cover with white cap (substitute a helmet for field mess night).

f. Purple Heart Medal.

g. Blank identification tags.

h. Black tablecloth with inverted dinner set (substitute a field mess gear during a field mess night).

i. One candle (preferably black).

j. Ships bell if the alternate to the traditional toasts is used per paragraph 7.h.

k. Seating chart.

10. Variations. There are several variations to the mess night and include:

a. Field Mess Night. Also known as a "Warrior Night" or "Viking Night." Circumstances will frequently not permit a mess night with all the formalities as to uniform, catering, table, or services as detailed here. This should not deter an organization, however, and adaptations should be made to meet the "situation and terrain." Do not, in particular, let yourself become stupefied by the apparent formality of mess night; the object is the pleasure and camaraderie of all hands. The key words are conduct yourself with dignity and style. Some key elements that differ for a field mess night are:

(1) Uniform. Normally the camouflage utility uniform with designated field equipment.

(2) Meal. The meal may be modified from field rations to Meals Ready to Eat (MREs).

(3) Wines. Appropriate substitute beverages may have to be employed.

(4) Decorations, table settings and the like will be modified to fit the situation.

(5) Fallen Comrades Table. Modified for a field setting as shown in figure D-4.

b. Figure D-4 shows a modified setting using only a field table. A second option is to take the helmet and bayonet from the table and placing them on a M16 rifle placed inverted in front of the table similar to the boot and rifle display used for memorial services in enclosure 2, chapter 13.

c. These and any other modifications do not preclude the members of the mess from following the prescribed ceremonies for toasts, treatment of guests or other traditions.

d. During a field mess night certain rules of the mess may be relaxed by the President of the Mess in keeping with the informality of the evening.

e. Another variation of the Mess Night is a "Dining-Out." This is normally conducted in the same manner as a mess night with the exception that spouses and dates are invited. Specific rules such as fining need to be omitted or modified. A dining-out allows spouses to share in the camaraderie of the mess night.

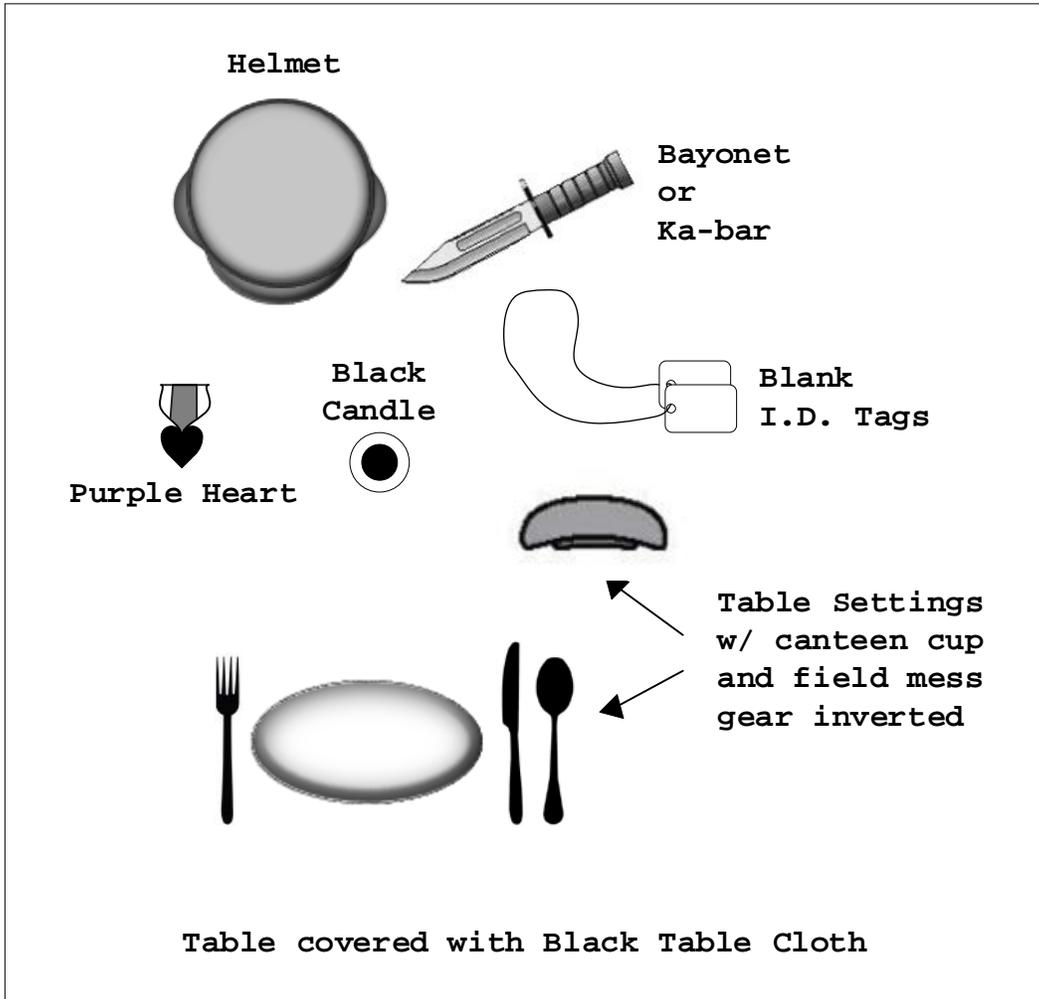


Figure D-4.--Fallen Comrades Table, Field Mess Night.