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REPORT TO
ATTENTION OF:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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Dining In
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14 November 1983

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MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIRMAN, DEPARTMENT OF WAR GAMING

SUBJECT: The Dining-In

1. PURPOSE: To provide information and establish guidelines and policy for the conduct of an organization's formal Dining-In. Furthermore, this memorandum may serve as the historical foundation and a guide for dining-ins conducted by other units or commands.

2. BACKGROUND:

a. In the United States Army of today, the Dining-In Tradition has practically become extinct. Formal dining has largely fallen victim to the many social changes occurring within our society which are reflected in our Army. Rapid turnover of personnel which is standard in today's Army, has made it difficult for officers to become attached to the traditions of a unit.

b. The officers of the United States Army belong to a select fraternity, rich in history and tradition. Each officer should endeavor to become familiar with, and partake of, these traditions. It is for this reason that the custom of "Dining-In" takes on added importance. At a formal gathering of the officers of a unit, the esprit and rapport, so important to the proper functioning of the military, are reaffirmed and renewed. In addition, when new and uninitiated officers are brought into the fold they learn, not so much by direction, but by absorption of that intangible quality which makes their unit and its corps of officers unique.

c. In the United States Army, formal customs for dining were never officially established. However, in the late 1800s and early 1900s, many post and regimental messes had requirements for formal attire in the evenings and conducted regularly scheduled banquets for the officers which were governed by strict observance of etiquette, local customs and regimental traditions. Because of the reorganization and redesignation of many units and the frequent transfer of officers from one organization to another, it became increasingly difficult to distinguish whose traditions were whose. Also, unlike the European and British officers who joined and spent their entire career in one regiment, the American officers found it difficult to identify themselves with regimental customs. As a result, the traditions of regimental dining died out between the World Wars. During the Second World War, however, close association with the British caused a renewed interest in the tradition of the Dining-In among the officers of the U.S. Army.

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d. This memorandum contains an explanation of the history, organization, planning, and execution of the formal military dinner commonly referred to in the U.S. Army as a Dining-In. Procedures set out herein are generally in accordance with accepted practice, custom and tradition. Variations from what may be considered the general form of proceedings have been made as a wish of this department to carry on traditions established within the Army. These variations, however, will not be found in the general proceedings but rather in small details.

e. Major T. J. Edwards, M.B.E., in MILITARY CUSTOMS, writes:

"Nothing is more embarrassing and, sometimes, humiliating, to a young officer than to be entertained in an officers' mess, other than his own, and unwittingly fail to observe its long-established customs. The officers' mess is, for the time being at least, an officers' home, and the messes, like homes, conform to a certain amount of domestic ritual which they expect their guests to respect. If therefore, a young officer does not want to be regarded as ignorant, boorish, and unobservant, he should ascertain all he can about the customs observed in a mess to which he has been invited, or to which he may be temporarily attached."

Instructions contained herein are written in detail purely for the convenience of the officer, for it is believed that each would rather have access to a complete guide rather than risk possible embarrassment at a social affair. If all officers know the origin and meaning of some of these customs, it might remove antipathy and may even stimulate enthusiasm to prevent their dying out. It is with this desire in mind that the following explanation of a formal mess night is presented.

3. HISTORY: Since the beginning of organized society, there has been a military establishment and it may be assumed that, ever since, regardless of how simple or unorganized, there have been occasions when the leaders of that military organization have set themselves down to dinner, elaborate in service, and formal in style. It is a well-known fact that the Roman Legions held great banquets to celebrate their past victories or to parade the prizes of their most recent enterprise. It may be presumed that their enemies did likewise.

Down through the ages officers have enjoyed each other's company at dinner and, on special occasions, have gone to great pains to make these dinners elaborate and formal. It is from this custom of celebrating special events in the organization's history that we have a formal mess night in its present form.

Contrary to the popular belief of a great many officers, formal dinners are not held to ensure that all have the required articles or uniform currently in vogue. Such affairs are conducted in this manner to lend a special air of dignity to the occasion, whether it be to celebrate a special occasion, to commemorate the loss of our fallen comrades, to say farewell to a member of our ranks, or to apply honor to a distinguished visitor.

The general pattern for a Dining-In has been carefully checked with reference to its historical background and has been found, in most cases, to agree with the customs of the Regimental messes of the British Army. These findings are not at all surprising when we consider that, in the early 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 War, and it is most likely that they became indoctrinated in the formal aspects of military life as practiced by men of that period. Therefore, when our forefathers were confronted with the task of establishing their own permanent military organization and system, they borrowed from every source available. It was only natural, then, that they borrow from the British system with which they were familiar. Not only did they acquire their opponents' tactical structure, but also their uniform style, weapons, music, habits, and not a few of their many customs.

Originally, the word "mess" was nothing more than a portion of food - "a mess of pottage." Later it meant the taking of meals together. In the 19th Century, British officers were expected to provide their own meals from a ration allowance. Many officers found it convenient to "club together" or pool their resources and eat as a group. Officers and enlisted men were billeted wherever lodging was available. Whenever a Battalion entered a town, it would hold a parade highlighted by the grouping of the colors at the officers' billet. Often the officers would be quartered in various houses, but would dine together at a central facility, usually an inn or tavern, which was known as the Officers' Mess. In addition as a place of nourishment, the "mess" served as a meeting place where officers awaited the orders of their commander and as a place of relaxation upon the conclusion of their daily duties.

From CUSTOMS OF THE SERVICES, by Group Captain A.H. Stradling, O.B.E., comes:

"Officers' messes were no doubt instituted for the sake of companionship, convenience, and economy. THE NEW ART OF WAR, published in 1740 under the heading, "The Duty of an Ensign and How He Ought to Behave Himself," stated:

"He must be frugal some days in the week, that he may be enabled to keep company with his officers when they do him the honor to ask him to drink a bottle with them. This was unanimously approved, and the ensigns and lieutenants were thereby capacitated to keep company at a tavern with their superior officers and thereby have an opportunity to improve themselves in many respects."

Probably the first deliberately constructed Officers' Mess was at the Royal Artillery Mess at Woolwich in 1783. Over the decades each regimental mess evolved to reflect the different customs, traditions, and honors of the regiment as well as the whims and idiosyncrasies of its commanders. The officers' mess served three basic functions; it was the home for all bachelor officers, a club for the married officers, and the center of social life of a post or station.

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"Mess kit" (dress uniform) was worn to dinner four times each week, and dinner jacket on the other three evenings. Once a week, a "Guest Night" was scheduled. Married officers were required to attend, the band was present, buglers sounded mess call, and the "loyal toast" was drunk per regimental custom. This event was also known as "Mess Night," "Formal Mess Dinner," or "Band Night" and it is from this "Guest Night" that the U.S. Army "Dining-In" is derived.

4. EXECUTION:

a. Organization. The agenda, or working program of the dinner, gives an overall picture of the main pattern, but without the full details of operation and procedure as to what goes on behind the scenes--the research, the planning, the many hours of preparation and cooperation necessary to make such an evening successful--it would be impossible to reconstruct the whole procedure for use by the officer who may be called upon to execute a similar affair.

Unlike many such affairs as this, there is never any rehearsal of the participants from one dinner to the next, and it is not fair to assume that everyone remembers exactly what he or someone else did before. It is the hope, therefore, that the following detailed account of every phase of the dinner will be of benefit to those officers concerned and of material help to those who are sincerely interested in seeing or being part of a job well done. All officers should familiarize themselves not only with specific details of this office's Dining-In procedures but with such procedures in general.

b. Officers of the Mess. In a British unit, the position of "President of the Mess" (POM) is usually an additional duty rotated among the senior captains of the regiment. The Commanding Officer will exercise his influence through the POM. However, it has become the American custom for the Commanding Officer to be the POM. The "Vice President of the Mess" (known as Mr. Vice or Madam Vice) is appointed by the President and is either the Adjutant, the junior lieutenant, or the junior officer in the command. Well in advance of the selected date, the President will inform the Vice President that he desires to have a Dining-In on a certain night. He should also inform him of his wishes concerning guests. In the past, planning for the Dining-In has begun six to eight months in advance to ensure reservation of an appropriate Mess site as well as to arrange attendance of an appropriate Guest of Honor.

(1) Mr. Vice will open the lounge at the appropriate time, ring the chimes (or have the bugler sound "Mess call") to announce the dinner hour and after observing that all members of the mess have taken their places, he will so inform the POM.

(2) He will precede the President of the Mess and the honored guests into the room and will announce their arrival to the members of the mess. Upon request of the President of the Mess, he will direct the posting and retiring of the colors and will light or extinguish the smoking lamp. He may be called upon to provide poems and witticisms in good taste relating to particular personalities present. He will be seated alone at a separate table at the opposite end of the banquet hall from the President to permit the POM to easily face him during the dinner. Normally the President of the Mess will make only one toast personally, (to the United States of America) and will call upon Mr. Vice to give any other toasts which he deems appropriate. Mr. Vice may offer these toasts personally or call upon members of the mess to do so.

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(3) The President at his option may appoint other officers of the Mess as the needs and demands of time arise. Other officers might include a Chaplain, Arrangement Officer, a Mess Officer, and a Protocol Officer.

(a) Arrangements Officer: The Arrangement Officer will be responsible for previewing all equipment, accouterments, and service support (except waiters, bartenders) to include but not limited to the following:

- 1 Table and seating arrangement chart; menu cards; place cards (only rank and last name should be used on place cards and they should be readable from the standing position).
- 2 Appropriate flags and colors.
- 3 Decorations.
- 4 Table mounted rostrum with light.
- 5 Public address system (convenient microphones on rostrum and by Mr. Vice's table).
- 6 Gavel and sounding board at President's table.
- 7 Dinner chimes at Mr. Vice's seat.
- 8 PIO coverage.
- 9 Biographical sketches of guests and VIP as appropriate.
- 10 Publish detailed agenda and guest list.
- 11 Appropriate lamp for use as smoking lamp. (Optional)
- 12 Two (2) snare drummers and one (1) bass drummer. (Optional)
- 13 Color bearers and color guards. (Optional)

(b) Mess Officer: The Mess Officer's responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following:

- 1 Reserve dining facility.
- 2 Arrange menu with appropriate wine(s); notify Arrangements Officer of menu selections well enough in advance so that menu cards can be printed.
- 3 Ensure that lounge facilities and sufficient bar service is available for both the cocktail hour and the informal session after dinner.
- 4 Arrange for collection of funds and payment of charges for any items which are not covered by the club billing system.

(c) Protocol Officer: The Protocol Officer's responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following:

- 1 Arrange to have invitations printed sufficiently in advance so that they may be sent out and received two (2) weeks prior to the event. President of the Mess may direct that invitations be sent only to individuals who are not members of the organizations.
- 2 Coordinate guest list with President of the Mess, ensure that invitations are sent in a timely manner.

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- 3 Establish seating arrangement in accordance with protocol and coordinate with Arrangements Officer on preparation of seating chart.
- 4 Assist President of the Mess on selection of host officers for VIP's.
- 5 Brief as required on protocol matters; establish protocol guidelines.

(d) Host Officer: The Host Officer(s) will contact the individual he will be entertaining at the Dining-In one (1) week in advance of the event in order to notify the guest that he will be his host for the evening, and to ensure that the guest is briefed and made familiar with the history of the Dining-In and the sequence of events for the evening. He will arrange to meet the guest in the lobby prior to the cocktail hour and, if the guest is not to be a member of the receiving line, will introduce him to the Adjutant as he is received. During the cocktail hour, before the dinner, he will ensure that the guest has a drink in his hand at all times unless he specifically wishes otherwise, (host officers will be reimbursed from the mess fund for this expense) and will introduce the guest to as many members of the department as is practicable within the realm of propriety. During the informal period after the dinner, the Host Officer will ensure that the guest for whom he is responsible is provided with drinks and is engaged in conversation. During the informal period, if the guest seems to be able to keep himself busy, it will not be necessary for the Host Officer to remain with him constantly. But he will check back with his guest frequently and will be sure, when the guest is ready to leave, to escort him to his quarters, thank him for honoring us with his presence, and express the hope that he has enjoyed the opportunity to share an evening of traditions with the officers of the department.

c. Guests. There are three types of guests: The Guest of Honor is a guest of the Mess as a whole and as such, his expenses are shared by the Mess. It might be noted that the selection of a Guest of Honor for mess night should be chosen with a great deal of discretion. It is better to have no guest, in fact, on certain occasions more desirable, than to so honor someone that does not rate so noble a distinction. As a general guide, it would be considered improper to honor an officer junior to the senior officer of the mess, unless that junior officer had, in some way, exemplarily distinguished himself or was a foreign national. It is always proper to so honor a prominent public figure. The second type guest is the personal guest, who is also a guest of the mess and whose expenses are absorbed by the mess. Personal guests are limited in number and are determined by the commanding officer. The third type of guest is the paying guest, friends of the mess who desire to attend at their own expense, such as members of sister services and/or reserve units.

d. A Dining-In is a formal dinner attended by all officers of the unit. It is customary for members not desiring to attend such affairs to request in writing to be excused by the President. These affairs are always attended by the officers alone, never in the company with their spouses. Should there be women officers in the unit, they will be expected to attend.

e. Warning Order and Invitations:

(1) Two to six months prior to the Dining-In, a Warning Order should be published. This generates interest and helps individuals and units to make plans that will preclude conflicts with other scheduled activities.

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(2) Invitations: Fifteen to thirty days before the dinner, invitations are extended to all guests, not members, of the mess. If the invitation is extended to a person primarily because he is the incumbent of a certain billet, his command title is used; however, if such is not the case, the invitation should specify his grade and last name only. The following standard forms may be modified as is deemed appropriate.

(a) FORMAL INVITATION TO GUEST OF HONOR:

The Officers of
 Department of History, United States Military Academy
 request the honour of the presence of
 The Superintendent of the United States Military Academy
 at a Dining-In
 on Saturday the Second of October
 at eighteen hundred
 Officers' Open Mess
 United States Military Academy, West Point
 New York

RSVP
 Mr. Vice (LT Doe, 938-4138)

Dress Blue or Blue Mess

(b) FORMAL INVITATION TO PERSONAL GUEST:

The Officers of
 Department of History, United States Military Academy
 request the pleasure of your presence
 at a Dining-In
 On Saturday the Second of October
 at eighteen hundred
 United States Military Academy, West Point
 New York

RSVP
 Mr. Vice (LT Doe, 938-4138)

Dress Blue or Blue Mess

On invitations to the Guest of Honor, the English spelling of "honour" is used. For persons in the military, standard military time is used.

(c) GENERAL INVITATION: A General Invitation is mailed to units and friends of the unit who will attend in a paying guest status.

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|------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Cocktails:</i> | 1800 | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Officers of Department of History, United States Military Academy cordially invite you to attend a Dining-In on Saturday the Second of October at the West Point Officers' Open Mess West Point, New York</i></p> |
| <i>Dinner:</i> | 1900 | |
| <i>Guest of Honor:</i> | The Honorable Albert B. Fletcher, Jr. Chief Judge, United States Court of Military Appeals | |
| <i>Uniform:</i> | Evening Dress or Mess | |
| <i>Cost:</i> | \$20.00 (all inclusive) | |
| <i>RSVP:</i> | Captain Richard Hoffman Department of History United States Military Academy West Point, New York With checks made payable to: West Point Officers Mess and noted "Dining In Night" Last Reservations Accepted: 27 September 1982 | |
| | | |

f. Appropriate Dress. Black tie is the appropriate dress for a formal Dining-In. Civilians wear the tuxedo, while military personnel wear the black tie with one of the four appropriate uniforms: Army Blue, Army Mess Blue, Army White, or Army Mess White. The "black tie" designation implies the wearing of miniature medals on the Army Mess Blue, the Army Mess White, or Tuxedo, the wearing of ribbons, miniature medals, or regular medals on the Army Blue or Army White uniforms. Normally, "black tie" also includes the wearing of white gloves by all personnel in uniform but this is rarely done at most Dining-Ins.

g. Planning. The Vice should immediately begin his preliminary preparations. It might be well to note that the Vice is completely responsible for the proper organization and execution of the Dining-In. He will ascertain the number of officers who are planning to attend and ensure that sufficient space is available at the Mess for both cocktails and dining. For these details he must confer with the manager of the Mess. Reservations should be completed at least one week prior to the date, giving the Mess manager an opportunity to complete his planning and to prepare the menu, and the Vice an opportunity to prepare a seating chart.

(1) Two weeks prior to the event the Vice should make an inspection of all colors and standards to be used and see to their cleaning and pressing. He should meet with the bandmaster if a band will be in attendance and go over proposed music for the evening, ensuring that the band is thoroughly familiar with the national anthems or unit marches of the guests who are to be toasted. He is 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 toasts. It has become a tradition to utilize bagpipes and drums for the field music.

(2) One week prior to the dinner, he checks again with the mess manager, and gives him a final figure of those attending, firms up the menu for the evening, ensures that the proper type of wine is available in sufficient quantities, and sees that the waiters to be used are familiar with the serving procedure for a formal dinner.

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h. Day of the Dinner. Mr. Vice should be at the mess early in the morning of the dinner day with a working party available to assist him in the final preparations. He must have assembled the unit silver (if available), the appropriate flags, decorations, paintings, and photographs. The national and organizational colors are placed behind the President's chair; another set may be displayed in the cocktail room. Pictures and paintings, such as combat art series, have previously been utilized as part of the decor. The table is set in the proper manner with a placecard for each individual. Seating arrangement is posted in the cocktail lounge so that each officer will know where he is to be seated. The punch bowl for the traditional punch is positioned, and the punch is mixed.

i. Evening of the Dinner. Mr. Vice must be at the mess at least one-half hour prior to the commencement of the Dining-In. He must make a final check of all details and ensure that nothing has been left to chance.

(1) Receiving Line: Optional, in fact, it is rarely an element of a Dining-In unless the commander desires it.

(2) Members of the Mess: Members of the mess should arrive no later than five (5) minutes prior to the appointed hour so that headgear and coats, if appropriate, may be secured. Leave white gloves on through the receiving line as only gloves which are exclusively intended for outdoor wear are removed when shaking hands. The receiving line will never be delayed except by the late arrival of the Guest of Honor. The President of the Mess will be on the right of the receiving line and the guest of honor will be on his left; the Adjutant is positioned to the right of the President. As one proceeds through the line and comes abreast of the Adjutant, one announces his name but does not shake hands with him. Never assume that the Adjutant will automatically remember one's name even though you may have had a long-lasting friendship with him. The Adjutant will in turn introduce the officer or guest to the President of the Mess, whereby handclasps and greetings are exchanged; the POM will then introduce you to the person on his left and the procedure will be repeated through the receiving line. Should your name become lost in the process, repeat it to the person being greeted. Always face the person being greeted and move promptly to the next person, engaging in conversation only if progress through the line is delayed.

j. The Punch Hour or Cocktail Hour. The cocktail lounge set aside for punch should command a great deal of the Vice's energy, as this is where his brother officers and the 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. The room should be illuminated by subdued lighting.

(1) Execution: The Punch Hour should last not longer than forty-five minutes, and it should be understood that this time is used merely to allow sufficient time for all officers to assemble before proceeding to the dining room. Each officer should consider himself a guest of the senior officer of the mess and must conduct himself accordingly. Excessive drinking before dinner is discouraged. There will be sufficient time after dinner to completely satisfy any thirst. It is customary for every officer upon arrival to greet the senior officer present. At some-time during the cocktail hour every member should make it a point to introduce himself to each of the guests and consult the seating chart to locate his appointed place at the dining table.

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(2) Although it is the specific duty of the President to greet each guest as that person arrives at the mess, it is also a duty of all members of the mess to introduce themselves and pay attention to the guests. It is a good plan to make certain that all officers understand that there should be three or four officers attending to each guest at all times prior to, and after, the dinner. Members will rotate between groups of officers and guests to assure that the guest has an opportunity to converse with three or four different members at all times.

(3) During the cocktail hour there should be no formal "Hors D'oeuvres" served, though 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. It at all possible, this should be played by the unit's own band. However, in our modern world of electronics, it is expedient to have a phonograph take over these duties. 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. All officers must be in the cocktail lounge at least ten minutes prior to the hour fixed for dinner.

(4) You may smoke during this period. No one will enter the Banquet Hall until the dinner chimes have been sounded. At the discretion of the President of the Mess, the unit punchbowl may be opened in lieu of cocktails. If this is the case, the ceremony for the Opening of the Punchbowl will be performed and will be observed by members of the mess in an air of decorum befitting the solemnity of the occasion. Once the Junior Officer Present and the President of the Mess have tasted the punch and the POM has invited the members of the mess to join him, move forward, fill your glass, step aside, and wait until the presiding officer toasts the health of the JOP. When the toast is offered, respond with "Hear, Hear", take a sip and immediately resume informal conversation. Feel free to refill your glass at your leisure. An important note: once the members of the mess have entered the banquet hall, no one is to leave the table without the permission of the President of the Mess.

k. Call to Dinner. Ten minutes prior to dinner Mr. Vice should sound the dinner chimes to alert the members to prepare for the dinner. Many units will have bugle or fife sound "officers' call" in lieu of dinner chimes. At the appointed hour, the music will commence to play the officers to dinner. If fife and drum are used, "Officers' Call" is used for the former, "The Roast Beef of England" for the latter; with bagpipes and drums, "All the Bluebonnets," and "Brose and Brachen," respectively. Music will start playing in the anteroom, march into the dining room around the table, where they halt. As soon as the music starts, all officers not seated at the top of table, should dispose of their drinks, cigarettes, cigars, and pipes. These items will not be carried into the dining room. By the time the music has returned to the cocktail lounge all officers, except those to be seated at the top table, must have retired to the dining room and found their respective places at the table. They stand quietly behind their chairs.

Those officers to be seated at the top table will remain in the cocktail lounge. When the senior officer indicates he is ready to dine, the President will form those officers to be seated at the top table in the order to which they are to march into the dining room. The President, with the honored guest on his right, followed by the next senior officer and the next senior guest, etc., followed by the remaining officers in order of seniority prepare to enter the dining room. At this time there will be no one in the cocktail lounge, except those to be seated at the top table, and the musicians.

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Upon having all guests ready to enter the dining room, the President will inform the leader of the music that he may proceed with the ceremony. The music will strike up The Official Army Song (or continue playing "Brose and Brachen", if pipes are used), enter the dining room, march around the table, and halt. Once the music has entered the dining room and reached the far end of that room, the President will lead the top table guests to their seats. As soon as the last officer to be seated has stopped and turned to face his place setting, the music will cease playing, execute prescribed facing movements, and march out of the dining room to a single drum beat.

REMEMBER: NO ONE MAY TAKE HIS PLACE AT THE TABLE AFTER OFFICERS AND GUESTS WHO ARE TO BE SEATED AT THE TOP TABLE HAVE ENTERED THE DINING ROOM WITHOUT GOING UP TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE MESS AND REQUESTING PERMISSION TO BE SEATED LATE. CONVERSELY, ONCE SEATED, NO ONE MAY LEAVE THE DINING ROOM WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE PRESIDENT.

If music is not used, then once all the members are standing behind their chairs, Mr. Vice informs the POM that the "Mess is present" and returns to his chair. When the POM and guest that will be sitting at the head table enter the dining room, Mr. Vice will announce: "Gentlemen, the Commanding Officer and President of the Mess."

1. Seating Arrangements. Ideally, the entire mess will sit at one table. The POM at the head of the table and Mr. Vice at the opposite end. The senior honored guest on the right of the POM, next senior guest on the President's left. Other officers may be arranged in decreasing order of seniority or by any other suitable method. However, many units, because of the number of officers assigned may render this procedure unsuitable. In that case, 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 top table. Typical diagrams may be a "T", a "U" or an "E" formation. If more than one spur extends from the top table, they should be disjoined to permit passage of the waiters.

m. Posting of the Colors and Grace. Traditionally, the colors are already uncased and in position behind the head table. If this is the situation, then as soon as the music (if any) has left the dining room, the POM will rap three times with a gavel (or spoon) and announces, "The Mess is Open." After a short pause, he repeats a brief non-sectarian grace. The most common grace in a British mess is "For what we are about to receive, thank God." However, if there is a chaplain present, it is his privilege to say grace.

Many units in the U.S. Army prefer to have a color guard post the colors as part of the Dining-In ceremony. If this is the case, the following procedure is suggested: After the guests are standing behind their chairs at the head table, the POM says, "Mr. Vice." Mr. Vice responds, "Yes, Mr. President, what is your pleasure?" The POM replies, "Present the colors." Mr. Vice turns to the color guard and commands, "Color guard present the colors." When the color bearers have halted before the head table all members will execute a facing movement toward the colors (or Mr. Vice may command, "Officers, POST.") The color sergeant will give the command, "Present Arms," at which time the POM will acknowledge the colors. (If, desired, the National Anthem may be played at this time.) The President will then command "Post the colors." This will be followed by the Color Sergeant commanding "Order Arms" and will post the colors behind the head table and marches the color guard out of the dining room. Grace is given as discussed above.

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In some American Dining-Ins, the Adjutant, Executive Officer or Mr. Vice will read the unit's lineage and honors while the colors are presented to the POM. This is never done in a British Mess as all officers are supposedly well versed in their regiment's history.

After the colors are posted and usually before the invocation, the POM raises his wine glass (wine for one toast should have already been poured by the waiters) and announces, "Gentlemen, I propose a toast to the United States of America." When the POM raises his glass to eye-level the members respond, "To the United States of America."

n. Welcome. Upon the closing of the invocation, the POM seats the mess by one rap of the gavel. The POM then makes the welcoming remarks as appropriate. When the POM has concluded his remarks, the dinner begins. Before the main course is served, the head waiter presents a portion to Mr. Vice who rules on its "fitness for human consumption."

o. Table Setting. In a place setting's formality, simplicity of use is the prime consideration. A lay plate is in the center, partially covered by a neatly folded napkin on top of which lies the placecard. A "program" is neither traditional nor acceptable as part of this unit's table setting. To the left of the plate, 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 the 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 (fish), one for red wine (meat), a claret glass for port, 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 or glass, again aiding the choice of the proper tool at the proper time. The dessert implements are normally found on the dessert plate. If not, they will be the innermost utensils of their kind. Butter plates are not used on formal settings.

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. Ashtrays and cigarette containers will be conspicuously absent.

p. Dinner. The backbone of a good dinner is amicable and friendly conversation. Each officer is not only expected, but encouraged, to enjoy himself to the utmost during the dinner hour. Officers are forbidden to indulge in jokes that are off-color, or which are detrimental to guests. It is beneath the conduct of an officer and gentleman to make any comment that might possibly, in any way, offend anyone present. It must be kept in mind that there are guests present who are judging the whole Army by the manner in which the members conduct themselves. In many regiments it was against the rules to talk of sex, women, religion, politics, or "shop."

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A suggested menu for the evening might consist of:

Tomato Juice Cocktail

Fresh Fruit Cup

Onion Soup AuGratin

Baked Filet of Flounder in Lemon Butter

Roast Prime Rib of Beef Au Jus

Tossed Green Salad with Oil & Vinegar Dressing

Butter Pecan Ice Cream

The meal is formal and will be served in courses. The service of the top table will be conducted by two waiters in a fashion so that the honored guest is served first and the President and the hosts last. The waiter will clear the table when each person at the table has finished his course.

REMEMBER: DO NOT DISCIPLINE THE WAITERS. REFER THE MATTER TO THE VICE.

q. Wines. Good wine is as much a part of a formal dinner as the entree. What wine to use follows a very simple color rule . . . white for fish and fowl, and red wine for blood meats. Champagne may be used at anytime. Sherry, sometimes served with soup, is more often omitted. White and sparkling wines are served chilled. Red wine is offered at room temperature. Port, an after-dinner brandy, is reserved for all toasts. The recipe for punch is as follows:

2 parts Rum
 1 part Brandy
 1 part Lemon Juice - freshly squeezed
 1 part Maple Syrup
 1 part* water

Let the entire mixture chill for a day or two prior to serving.

(*maximum)

The wine, in decanters, if available, is served by stewards or placed on the table and passed by the officers. The wine should always be passed from right to left in a clockwise fashion. If the wine has already passed you, you must wait for it to "run full circle." You may ask the POM for a "backhander" i.e. the wine to be passed back to you from the right. This may be in violation of the rules of the mess. The standard procedure (all officers at one table) will have a decanter of port and one of maderia in front of the POM and Mr. Vice. Mr. Vice will pass both to the left when he notices the POM do so. The POM and Mr. Vice are the last to fill their glasses. Mr. Vice should be alert and keep the decanters circulating to the left. If a decanter passed by the POM reaches Mr. Vice who still has one of his own decanters in front of him, Mr. Vice will buy the mess a round of drinks. Should an officer not desire wine, he should put his placecard over the glass to inform the steward that he does not wish wine. 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.

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REMEMBER: AT THE END OF A COURSE THAT CALLED FOR WINE, THE STEWARD WILL PROPERLY REMOVE YOUR GLASS. DO NOT STOP HIM, EVEN THOUGH YOUR GLASS MAY BE FULL.

NEVER TURN YOUR GLASS UPSIDE-DOWN TO INDICATE YOU DO NOT WISH WINE.

Note: The rules for wine have relaxed over the years. Modern convention allows any wine that is pleasing may be used. Also, for those officers and guests who do not wish to drink wine, it is permissible to toast with water.

r. Smoking. Following desert, the entire table will be cleared, except for the port glasses. Port will be served and all glasses should be charged as soon as possible. Do not drink the port yet, however. Ashtrays and cigars will be placed on the table. The POM will command, "Mr. Vice, light the smoking lamp". If a smoking lamp is not used, members may smoke upon observing the POM or senior member doing so. In any case, smoking is absolutely forbidden until permission is granted by the POM by one of the above procedures.

s. Guest Speaker. The POM introduces the guest speaker if there is one. The guest speaker will address the mess at this time.

t. Toasts. It is appropriate here to mention the term "toast" which is quite English in origin. The idea is not older than the seventeenth century and had reference first to the custom of drinking to 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 the water in which she stood and drank 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".

The placement of toasts within the evening is a matter of unit preference. Traditionally, except for the toast to the United States of America, the remaining formal and all informal toasts are presented after completion of the dinner.

When all glasses are charged, toasts will begin. The President will call for a toast to the head of state of the senior foreign guest. After a two-minute period, he 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. The President then turns to the senior foreign guest and calls him by name. The senior foreign guest proposes a toast to the President of the United States, which is not seconded.

If there are no foreign guests or members present, the President will call for a toast to the Commander-in-Chief of the United States as the first toast and then light the smoking lamp. He then proceeds to toast the units represented by United States officers at the dinner. All toasts are with port with the exception of the traditional toast, "TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA", which is offered after the posting of the colors.

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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 by officers at the dinner, according to seniority of the officers concerned, regardless of whether they are members, or guests of the mess.

The floor is then open to the proposal of toasts to individual units, or to services, foreign or domestic, not personally represented. Recognition for one wishing to propose a toast is gained by rising in place and waiting for Mr. Vice to advise the President that a member or guest wishes to address the Mess. Upon being so advised, the President raps three times for attention. The person so recognized then states the reason for proposing the toast and ends with the words of the toast. This is an excellent opportunity for each officer to demonstrate a keen wit and subtle sarcasm.

The President will do nothing if he feels a toast inappropriate and the person standing should resume his seat. Remember, toasts are only made to an officer or an organization; never to an individual by name. If the President approves the toast, he will state, "Mr Vice, a second, please," and Mr. Vice will rise and repeat the toast as before. Two raps of the gavel by the POM signals the mess to rise, the members respond to the toast with the words, "Hear, Hear," and sip the wine. Then the POM raps once with the gavel to seat everyone.

REMEMBER: DO NOT BE CAUGHT WITH AN UNCHARGED GLASS

REMEMBER: DO NOT STAND OR DRINK A TOAST IF YOU REPRESENT THE SERVICE TOASTED, TRADITIONAL TOAST EXCEPTED.

After an appropriate interval for general toasts, the President proposes the final toast:

The President: "Gentlemen, long live the United States and success to the United States Army."

Mr. Vice Adds: "Gentlemen, the United States Army."

Officers: "The Army."

Note: If a band is present it should be prepared to play six (6) bars of the National Anthem for each country toasted as well as the appropriate service songs or regimental marches. The six bars are played after the toast is seconded but before the members respond "Hear, Hear." The band usually plays selections chosen for quiet dining during the dinner.

u. Business. The POM asks Mr. Vice to proceed with the business of the mess. Mr. Vice proceeds by reading a list of mess violations and citing each offender by name. The President then announces the fine and/or verbal rebuff. There are two ways these offenses are noted. The most common method is for a member who observes a breach of decorum to stand and ask to be recognized by saying, "Mr. Vice, I have a Point of Order." Mr. Vice will recognize the member by calling his/her rank and name. The member will, in a polite and forthright manner, advise the President that a certain individual (rank and name) has violated the Mess rules and state as they occurred. Some units find this to interrupt the dinner, so a note is passed via the waiter to Mr. Vice alerting him to the impropriety committed. Some examples of mess violations are:

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- (1) Untimely arrival.
- (2) Smoking at table prior to the lighting of the smoking lamp.
- (3) Haggling over date of rank.
- (4) Inverted cumberbund/uniform violations (improperly worn ribbons, badges, rank and etc.).
- (5) Loud and obtrusive remarks in a foreign language or in English.
- (6) Improper toasting procedure.
- (7) Leaving the dining area without the permission of the President.
- (8) Carrying cocktails into the dining room.
- (9) Foul language.
- (10) Wearing clip-on bow tie at an obvious list.
- (11) Being caught with an uncharged glass.
- (12) Rising to applaud particularly witty, succinct, sarcastic or relevant toasts, unless following the example of the President.
- (13) Passing out at the dinner table.
- (14) Failure to follow schedule of events.
- (15) Eating with elbows on the table.
- (16) Failure to be recognized by Mr. Vice before: a toast, leaving or entering the dining room, or any activity whatsoever.
- (17) Regurgitation without permission from Mr. Vice or the President of the Mess.
- (18) Bringing Dining-In booklet to the Mess.
- (19) Failure to join in the spirit of the evening, or
- (20) Drink toasting wine at anytime other than during a toast.

Any other mess business is also conducted as appropriate

v. Closing of the Mess. When the President of the Mess feels that it is time to close he will rap three times, make his formal closing remarks, and ask the chaplain (if present) to give the benediction. After the benediction, the POM will direct Mr. Vice to extinguish the smoking lamp (if one is used) and all smoking materials go out with it. If colors were presented as part of the ceremony then the POM will instruct Mr. Vice to retire the colors. When the drums roll, all members of the mess will stand, push their chairs in, and stand at attention behind their chairs facing the center of the room. When the retirement of the colors is complete, the POM will rap the gavel twice and declare the mess closed. All personnel will remain in place until the POM and the guests have left the room and will then retire to the lounge or other room so designated for drinks and entertainment.

The formal portion of the evening is over. Officers may unbutton or remove their jackets and may remove ties and loosen collars if they so desire. It will be necessary, however, to get back into uniform before leaving the club or appearing in public.

The custom has grown in some messes for the officers to join into rough and dangerous games after dinner. This is not only dangerous to the individual officer but quite often causes the destruction of mess property.

The Vice should see to it that coffee is made available at the close of dinner and for the balance of the evening.

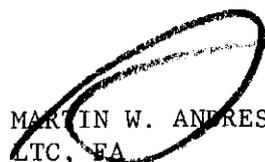
REMEMBER: DO NOT DEPART UNTIL OFFICIAL GUESTS HAVE RETIRED

'AWCAG-B

14 November 1983

SUBJECT: The Dining-In

The President must remain in the mess until all officers senior to himself have retired for the evening, at which time he may designate the Vice to remain as host until all officers have departed. This is necessary to ensure that all officers 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.



MARTIN W. ANDRESEN

LTC, FA

Department of War Gaming "historian"