

POW/MIA HAT TABLE CEREMONY

1.1. Personnel.

1.1.1. Officer in Charge/Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge (OIC/NCOIC) (1).

1.1.2. Hat Bearers (5).

1.2. Equipment.

1.2.1. Ceremonial Army hat (1).

1.2.2. Ceremonial Marine hat (1).

1.2.3. Ceremonial Navy hat (1).

1.2.4. Ceremonial Air Force hat (1).

1.2.5. Ceremonial Coast Guard hat (1).

1.3. Support Materials.

1.3.1. Red rose (1).

1.3.2. Yellow ribbon (1).

1.3.3. Slice of lemon on a coaster with a pinch of salt (1).

1.3.4. Place setting at an open table (1).

1.3.5. Wine glasses (5).

1.3.6. Vase (1).

Note: The host should supply all support materials.

1.4. Preparation.

1.4.1. OIC/NCOIC meets with host upon arrival at ceremony site to go over specifics:

1.4.1.1. Entrance cue.

1.4.1.2. Entrance and departure area.

1.4.1.3. Make sure that there is enough room around the table for all team members to walk.

1.4.1.4. Proper set-up of the table:

1.4.1.4.1. Yellow ribbon tied around vase, placed in the middle of the table.

1.4.1.4.2. Coaster with slice of lemon and pinch of salt on it is placed next to the vase.

1.4.1.4.3. There is only one place setting with plate, silverware, and wineglass.

1.4.1.4.4. The other four wineglasses should be placed evenly around the table in empty place settings.

1.4.1.4.5. Have team practice at least once prior to the ceremony.

1.5. Sequence of Events.

1.5.1. 15 minutes prior to ceremony the team lines up outside of the entrance: holding hats in correct Joint Service order (Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard), at waist level, and with the bill of the hat pointing out.

1.5.2. Once the narrator starts reading the POW/MIA HAT TABLE script the team is queued and enters the room headed toward the table.

1.5.3. Upon reaching the table the team circles it once and the OIC/NCOIC calls **HALT** when the Air Force hat is in front of the full place setting for the second time.

1.5.4. OIC/NCOIC calls **Ready, FACE** and the team faces the table.

1.5.5. The OIC/NCOIC starts the movement and at the same time all hat bearers move their right hands slowly around the front of the bill to the left side of the hat, touching their left hand. Then letting go with the left hand and keeping it in position, turning the hat around 180-degrees. Hat bearers then bend over and place hats in the place setting.

1.5.6. The hat bearers let go of the hat, stand up at Attention and reach out with their right hand and cup the wineglass. All wineglasses will be lifted out in front of the hat bearers meeting in the center of the table. Glasses are turned upside down and then lowered back down to the table.

1.5.7. When the glasses are securely on the table the bearers come back to the position of Attention.

1.5.8. OIC/NCOIC calls **Present, ARMS**. The hat bearers perform a three-second **Present, Arms** and a three-second **Order, Arms**. *Note: All commands are subdued and called only loud enough for the members of the team to hear.*

1.5.9. Once back at the position of Attention the OIC/NCOIC calls **Ready, FACE**. All hat bearers perform a **Right, Face**, wait one count, and then step off with no arm swing toward the predetermined departure area. *Note: If the host wishes, after the dinner is over the team may go back in and collect the hats. This is performed in the exact opposite order.*

1.6. Script.

1.6.1. The following pages are the recommended script according to the POW/MIA league of families and endorsed by the Department of Defense.

1.6.2. The number of personnel in the ceremony can vary from one to five. Deviations to the ceremony are authorized, but not suggested to maintain standardization and continuity.

Circumstance may exist where accommodations must be made based on the number of hats equal to the number of personnel. Personnel can set the hats in place during the latter part of the script as appropriate (e.g. "the invert the glass" portion of the script).

MISSING MAN TABLE & HONORS CEREMONY

Courtesy of: NATIONAL LEAGUE OF FAMILIES OF AMERICAN PRISONERS AND MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Moderator: As you entered the dining area, you may have noticed a table at the front, raised to call your attention to its purpose -- it is reserved to honor our missing loved ones [or missing comrades in arms, for veterans]. Set for five, the empty places represent Americans still [our men] missing from each of the five services -- Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard. This Honors Ceremony symbolizes that they are with us, here in spirit. Some [here] in this room were very young when they were sent into combat; however, all Americans should never forget the brave men and women who answered our nation's call [to serve] and served the cause of freedom in a special way. I would like to ask you to stand, and remain standing for a moment of silent prayer, as the Honor Guard places the five service covers on each empty plate.

Honor Guard: (In silence or with dignified, quiet music as background, the Honor Guard moves into position around the table and simultaneously places the covers of the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard, on the dinner plate at each table setting. The Honor Guard then departs.)

Moderator: Please be seated..... I would like to explain the meaning of the items on this special table. The table is round -- to show our everlasting concern for our missing men. The tablecloth is white -- symbolizing the purity of their motives when answering the call to duty. The single red rose, displayed in a vase, reminds us of the life of each of the missing, and the(ir) loved ones and friends of these Americans who keep the faith, awaiting answers. The vase is tied with a yellow ribbon, symbol of our continued determination to account for our missing. A slice of lemon on the bread plate is to remind us of the bitter fate of those captured and missing in a foreign land. A pinch of salt symbolizes the tears endured by those missing and their families who seek answers. The glass is inverted -- to symbolize their inability to share this evening's [morning's/days] toast. The chairs are empty -- they are missing. Let us now raise our water glasses in a toast to honor America's POW/MIAs and to the success of our efforts to account for them.

Note: The playing of Taps during the POW/MIA ceremony is not prohibited, however it is highly recommended that Taps is not played. The justification for this is that Taps is played in honor of our fallen comrades who have served this country. The POW/MIA ceremony is to recognize those individuals who have served this country, but are not necessarily deceased. The playing of Taps in this case may be premature and could be deemed as offensive.