

Missing Man Table and Honors Ceremony (instructions)

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 six, the empty places represent Americans still [our men] missing from each of the five services -- Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard - and civilians. 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 and a civilian cap 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, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard, and a civilian hat, on the dinner plate at each table setting. The Honor Guard then departs.)

(continued)

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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 red 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 Bible represents the strength gained through faith to sustain those lost from our country, founded as one nation under God.

The glass is inverted -- to symbolize their inability to share this evening's [morning's/day's] 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.