**MISSING MAN TABLE OF HONOR CEREMONY**

*An appropriate ceremony for lunch or banquet settings. Careful attention should be given to the proper layout of the table.*

Master of Ceremonies “Before we begin our festivities this evening, I would like to recognize our POWs/MIAs by calling your attention to this small table which occupies a place of honor near the head table. It is set for one, symbolizing the fact that members of our armed forces are missing from our ranks. They are referred to as POWs/MIAs; we call them brothers. They are unable to be with their loved ones and families tonight, so we join with them in this humble tribute. This table, set for one, is small— symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner alone against his oppressors. The tablecloth is white, symbolizing the purity of their intentions to respond to their country’s call to arms. The single rose displayed in the vase reminds us of the families and friends of our missing brothers who keep faith while awaiting their return. The red ribbon tied prominently on the vase reminds us of the brothers who are not among us tonight. A slice of lemon on the plate reminds us of their bitter fate. Salt sprinkled on the plate reminds us of the countless fallen tears of families as they wait. (Optional Step: The Bible, Torah, or other book of faith, 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 chair is empty—they are missing. The candle is reminiscent of the light of hope which lives in our hearts to light the way home, away from their captors to the open arms of a grateful nation. Let us now rise and raise our glasses in a toast to honor America’s POW/MIAs and to the success of our efforts to account for them.

**ALTERNATE CEREMONY SET FOR SIX**

Master of Ceremonies “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 [our men] still missing from each of the five services— Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard—and civilians. This Honors Ceremony symbolizes that they are with us, here in spirit. Some 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 and served the cause of freedom in a special way. I 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, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard, and a civilian hat, on the dinner plate at each table setting. The Honor Guard then departs. Master of Ceremonies “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 loved ones and friends of these Americans who keep the faith, awaiting answers. The vase is tied with a red ribbon, a 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. (Optional Step: The Bible, Torah, or other book of faith, 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 rise and raise our glasses in a silent toast to honor America’s POW/MIAs and to the success of our efforts to account for them.

**POW/MIA RITUAL TRIBUTE TO COMRADES**

*The Post room will be set theater fashion with the altar or small table at front center to receive the symbolic tributes. The POW/MIA flag should be properly displayed. Post officers in order of rank, or comrades representing them, will be seated in the front row, right of the center aisle. If the Ladies Auxiliary is to participate, the officers or representatives will be seated in the front row, left of the center aisle. The Officer of the Day (O.D.) or other proficient comrade will give the preliminary address and act as master of ceremonies during this ritual*

Suggested opening address:

O.D.: “Honored guests, comrades, sisters and friends, the members of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Post # \_\_\_\_\_\_ Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States, are assembled here to remember comrades who are being held as prisoners of war or missing in action. We must not forget the sacrifices these comrades are still making and the suffering they are still enduring for us and our way of life. They must remain alive in our minds and hearts until we know they have returned home to their loved ones or have been called to the bosom of Our Heavenly Father. We must continue to give moral support to their families who continue to suffer along with them.

O.D.: “Color Guard! Prepare to post Colors!”

O.D.: “All rise! Present Arms!”

*The Colors will enter by way of the center aisle and be posted on each side of the altar. The bearers and guards will remain with the Colors during the ceremony.*

O.D.: “Order Arms! Parade, rest! Uncover!”

Chaplain: “Almighty God and merciful Father, we praise and glorify You. Thank You for the many blessings You have bestowed upon our great nation. Heavenly Father, we beseech You to guide our missing comrades through every day and night. Give them unbound strength and courage to continue their efforts to survive and return to their loved ones. If they perish, Lord, we ask You to welcome them to the house You have prepared for them where they will rest in peace. Amen.”

O.D.: “Let us all rededicate ourselves to the flag of our country by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.” “Attention! Cover! Present Arms!

[O.D. will lead in the recitation of the pledge.]

O.D.: “Order Arms! You may be seated.”

O.D.: “Before you is the flag of the United States, the flag of our country for which our imprisoned and missing comrades are still suffering and dying. Look closely upon this beautiful symbol and listen to the words of our officers as they present their symbolic tributes.”

The O.D. will introduce Post officers in turn. They will come forward and hold the symbol in view of the audience while speaking.

The symbols are:

Laurel Wreath—victory over death, presented by Commander

Evergreen Sprig—love of comrades, presented by Chaplain

Blue Flowers—love of country, presented by Officer of the Day White Flowers—devotion to duty, presented by Senior Vice Commander

Red Flowers—courage and gallantry, presented by Junior Vice Commander

*When finished speaking, the officer will turn, place the symbol on the altar, salute and return to his/her seat. If the Ladies Auxiliary are to participate, they will be introduced along with their counterpart of the Post. Each lady, instead of the Post officer, will hold a symbol in view of the audience while the Post officer is speaking. Then both will turn, place the symbol, salute and return to their seats.*

Junior Vice Commander: “The flag of the United States reflects our imprisoned and missing comrades. The red stripes reflect their courage and willingness to sacrifice, even their lives if necessary. The red of our country’s flag has been made redder by their heroism. Therefore, we place these red flowers to symbolize their courage and gallantry.”

Senior Vice Commander: “The white stripes symbolize the purity of purpose that our comrades have in serving under this beautiful flag. The white becomes more stainlessly pure by the motives which impel them. We place these white flowers as a reminder of their unselfish devotion to duty.”

Officer of the Day: “The blue of our flag symbolizes truth and fidelity and represents the desire of our missing comrades for peace and happiness throughout the world. Therefore, we place these blue flowers to symbolize the great love that our comrades have for our flag and our country.”

Chaplain: “As our flag symbolizes undying love for our country, this evergreen tribute, whose color bespeaks life everlasting, symbolizes our undying love for our imprisoned and missing comrades.”

Commander: “As the flag of the United States symbolizes victory over oppression for the living, so this laurel wreath symbolizes victory over death for those who have made the supreme sacrifice. Therefore, we place this last token of affection in honor of our missing comrades who have gone to their final reward.”

*If the Ladies Auxiliary is participating, the O.D. will call for the Ladies chaplain to offer the closing benediction. If not, he will call on the Post chaplain.*

O.D.: “All rise! Uncover! Parade, rest!”

Chaplain: “Almighty God, we praise Thee, we glorify Thee, and we thank Thee for sparing us from the grasp of our enemies. Grant us full understandings of the suffering being endured by our comrades who are being held as prisoners of war or are still missing. “We ask Thy blessings upon them, that whatever comforts they are denied, whatever evil they must endure may rebound to their everlasting happiness. “Especially do we seek Thy support for their loved ones. May Thy grace be with them, always giving them the strength to do their daily tasks and the courage to meet the problems of life. “We pray for those missing comrades who have been called to Thy bosom that whatever justice they have been denied in this life has been granted them a hundredfold. Amen.” O.D.: “Color Guard! Prepare to retire the Colors!

O.D.: “Comrades attention! Cover! Present Arms!”

*The national anthem will be sung, then the Colors will be retired.* O.D.: “Order Arms! This concludes our ceremony.”