



Missing Man Table & Honors Ceremony

National League of Families of American Prisoners and Missing in Southeast Asia was incorporated in the District of Columbia on May 28, 1970. Voting membership is comprised solely of the wives, children, parents and other close relatives of Americans who were or are listed as prisoners of war, missing in action, killed in action/body not recovered and returned Vietnam War U.S. POWs. Associate membership is comprised of extended relations of POW/MIAs who do not meet voting membership requirements and other concerned citizens.

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 comrades.

Set for six, the empty places represent 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 today/tonight were very young when the Vietnam War began; however, all Americans should never forget our brave men and women who answered our nation's call and served the cause of freedom in a special way.

As the Honor Guard places one of the five service covers or a civilian cap on each empty plate, I would like to ask you to consider their sacrifices, followed by a moment of silent prayer.

Honor Guard:

(In silence or with dignified, reverent music as background, the Honor Guard moves into position around the table and simultaneously places one of the service covers, of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard, or a civilian hat, on each empty 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 men still missing.

The cloth 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 their loved ones and friends 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 toast.

The chairs are empty - they are missing.

Let us now raise our water glasses in a toast to honor America's POW/MIA's and to the success of our efforts to account for them.