** **

**EOCR CLASS 22 HOTEL 69**

**50 YEAR REUNION**

**AFTER ACTION REVIEW**

**Event Reviewed:** Banquet

**Reviewed By:** Jim Wilson

**Date:** 17 October 2019

**Give A Summary Of Your Area Of Consideration:**

Five of our seven member Reunion Planning Team were attendees at our 45th Reunion. There was a Saturday night banquet at that reunion and we decided to follow suit. That would be one of the easiest and quickest decisions we would make in the banquet arena. Several concerns and discussions arose over time to include even one hour prior to the actual event.

The banquet location was a decision that was carefully analyzed and evaluated. We considered having the banquet at three possible locations: Fort Belvoir (Officers Club), Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall (Officers Club) or at our hotel location – the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. Contacts were made with points of contact at both military installations to include: access, tours, transportation, and catering at the Officers Clubs. (Appendix 1 – Information Sheet for Fort Belvoir and Appendix 2 – Information Sheet for Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall). After careful consideration of all three locations, we decided on having the banquet at The Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel. The overriding considerations were convenience, costs of renting a bus, and Sunday being a travel day home. (Appendix #3 Hotel Proposals - Sheraton Pentagon City) helped us reach a consensus. Gary Cochard, OIC Hotel and Other Considerations, and Joe Tavares, OIC for the Banquet both made an onsite visit to the Sheraton on 7 September, 2018. The original ball room area assigned to us was the Galaxy Room but this was later upgraded to the larger Cavalier Room (Appendix #4 –Cavalier Room Floor Plan). Less than a month out – we were approached about not being able to use the Cavalier Room due to a scheduling conflict with another group. Gary Cochard made another on-site visit and determined the suggested Concourse Room would not be suitable. It all worked out in the end with the Cavalier Room and there were no issues with the floor space.

One of the many decisions to be reached related to the Banquet was the Banquet Menu. (Appendix #5 – Email from Joe Tavares to Team) gave two different options for the dinner meal which would be served as a buffet. The final selection (Appendix #6) from Joe to team shows the Chop House Buffet was chosen over the Mediterranean Hot Buffet. There were options available for entrees, desserts and salads. Of significance at the actual banquet was this statement: “*Special diet entrees are available*.” That same email lists our total price as $75 per person (inclusive of gratuities, all fees and taxes). This amount would become an issue about a month prior to the reunion date. (See Individual Review for Program – Event Order). We did have three attendees with special dietary needs: vegetarian, gluten free, lactose intolerant, and more. Those needs were met as a meal was created for each of the three. The chef and waiter staff also provided fruit only plates for desserts.

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**Program Changes:**

One of the major items for discussion and it seemed, constant updates, was the program for the banquet. (See Individual Review for Program for the final version). Our team was a creative lot and several different ideas were “floated” for the program. One concept was Comic Skits (Appendix #7 – Comic Skits) which featured proposed skits from old television shows. Those skits were: “What’s My Line”, “I’ve Got A Secret”, and “To Tell The Truth.”

There was limited discussion on hiring live bands, impersonators, or contacting military bands for entertainment. (Appendix #8 - Entertainment). Worthy of our consideration was a detailed and lengthy scripted presentation from OCS Class 11 Lima 67. (Appendix #9 – OCS Script Program). Though very creative, the script presentation was too long for the time allotted. In summary all of the above were considered but not included in the program.

The creative juices were not completely over, as yet another even was proposed – a “Pinning Ceremony.” We were going to present each attendee two specially designed reunion lapel pins (Appendix #10 – Reunion Logo) and why not make that into a ceremony at the banquet? Additionally, we had Viet Nam Era Lapel pins (donated) which could also be “pinned.” It seemed like a good idea until one team member suggested we include the lapel pins in the attendee’s gift bags. The gift bags were to be given out at Registration on Thursday. It begged the question – why wait until Saturday night to wear a lapel pin when it could be worn Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Yet, another innovative idea bit the dust! The pinning ceremony joined the “let’s have a raffle” concept.

**Guest Speaker:**

There were several individuals considered to serve as guest speaker. One well qualified person was MG (retired) Richard (Rich) O. Wightman, the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. (Appendix #11). Mr. Wightman was also a graduate of the Engineer Officer Candidate Regiment. The majority of the team decided not to have a guest speaker ( 5 March Meeting Minutes - *2. Banquet. There was agreement that we not use an outside guest speaker or any guest speaker.* Despite that decision – it was reversed in April - *SPEAKER – Dennis Gehley will be our only banquet speaker if he is physically able. Joe has talked to Dennis about revising his speech from the 45th reunion. Dennis will add another 5 minutes to that speech and his presentation should last about twenty minutes. Each TAC will be given an opportunity to comment after receiving his award. Joe is to notify each TAC who will be attending that he will be recognized at the banquet.*

Our decision was reversed because Dennis was the driving force for the 45th Reunion. He was the chief planner and executioner. Dennis also paid for several reunion expenses from his own personal account. He was scheduled to be the speaker at that reunion – but left his notes at

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home. His speech had been posted on our class website and after reading it – we unanimously changed our minds.

His full speech as well as the written remarks by TACs Jon Dawson (unable to attend) and Karl Heien will be posted on our class website. Links to speeches will also be emailed to each 22 Hotel graduate regardless of attendance.

Of note - we did not finalize the final program until two weeks prior to 3 October, 2019.

**Decorations:**

Our attendance count for the banquet was a total of 54 – 52 graduates with guests and a son and daughter-in-law of one of our team members. Tables were an item of discussion and change. Initially there were scheduled 7 tables of 8 (number at each table). That changed to 6 tables of 10 which would accommodate any additional diners and allow more walking space for the Color Guard. The centerpieces were tall vases with one floating candle in blue tinted water. That coordinated well with the alternating blue and red table clothes on top of the full white table clothes. Each table also was numbered. We saw no need for any other decorations. Note (The Missing Man Table is in Individual Review – Program).

**Dress Code:**

The dress code was Cocktail Attire or Business Casual and was included in our Saturday itinerary (Appendix #12 – Saturday Itinerary) and emphasized in numerous emailings to attendees. *Dress Code: Women will use their own discretion. Gentlemen are encouraged to wear either a suit or a sports coat, dress shirt with tie, and slacks. If your Class A (Green Service Uniform) or Dress Blue Uniform fits you are encouraged to wear it.*

**Layout:**

Attachment #13 – lists the layout arrangement per our Event Order. That room layout proved not to be functional. Gary Cochard took the initiative to change the arrangement of the: podium, projector screen, flag stands, bar, photo backdrop, color guard entrance/exit, and buffet tables. The hotel set up crew and our Conference Service Manager, Nakia Charles aided in the rearrangement. The new set up worked perfectly for all impacted areas: Posting and retiring of the colors, Master of Ceremonies and other speakers, “In Memoriam Video”, Cash Bar, Buffet Tables, and backdrop for photography. The original seating arrangement by platoons was changed to “open seating” and worked well. The elimination of a registration table provided additional space and more time for reuniting.

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**Color Guard:**

The volunteer attendee Color Guard added to the “military flavor” and sense of patriotism in our fellow graduates. The same four members from the 45th Reunion stood tall and looked good in their military dress blue uniforms. (Appendix #14 – Color Guard from 45th Reunion). The members were: Chuck Engelberger, Kit Kitson, Ed Sviti, and Ray Murray (OIC). Arrangements were made with the DPTMS (Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization, and Security) at Fort Belvoir to hand receipt the American and US Army Flags. Also on loan from the Directorate were flag poles and stands. The 22 Hotel flag was in the possession of Dennis Gehley, Chairman of the 45th Reunion. Ray Murray furnished harnesses and white gloves and an order of ceremony. The only area of concern was the securing of an Engineer Flag. Phone calls to Fort Belvoir and Leonard Wood proved futile. One month prior to our reunion, Ed Svitil secured an Engineer flag from the DC Corps of Engineers. All borrowed flags, poles, and stands were returned the Monday after the banquet. The Guard practiced in full uniform, with flags and music in the hotel ball room prior to the banquet. The posting and retiring of the colors accompanied by the Pledge of Allegiance made us all feel a sense of pride in having served our great nation.

**Audio Visual:**

David Jones, a member of Second Platoon created an awesome “In Memoriam Video”. The video captured the names of all twenty of our deceased classmates. As their names scrolled individually on the screen, background photos of Arlington National Cemetery were accompanied by orchestra music complete with bagpipes. (Appendix #15 – In Memoriam Video). This was a very emotional time for each of us as memories of our deceased classmates came to mind. The video was also a reminder of how precious and sacred are our own days on this earth. PSAV, the audio visual sub-contractor for the hotel was going to bill us over $750 for AV equipment and setup. Joe Tavares used his expertise to locate a local vendor who supplied only what was needed. Joe’s initiative saved our reunion over $550 in costs.

**What Went Well – What Were The Successes?**

Every item listed in this review was a success and a wonderful climax to a memorable time of reuniting.

**What Could Be Improved And How ? Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

**Lessons Learned:**

Seven minds and opinions are better than one and first decisions are not necessarily the best ones

It’s challenging to maintain contact with four different Conference Service Managers

On site visits to venues are the best means of evaluating that venue

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**Recommendations:**

Conference calls are preferred over emails for team communication

Consideration should be given to a less formal banquet especially as related to dress code and menu selection

Any audio visual presentations should be practiced at home prior to the reunion. All equipment to be used: projector and laptop settings should have a trial run. Once at the reunion – the presentation should be viewed prior to the day and time of the reunion. Our “In Memoriam” video was not ready to be shown until one hour prior to the Cash Bar which opened our Banquet.

The cash bar was overpriced - we should have had the prices given to our attendees prior to the reunion

During the color guard rehearsal, it became apparent that the low ceilings prevented the color guard from placing the flags in the harnesses.  As a result the flags were hand-carried and still had to be dipped even lower to navigate some areas of the banquet room. The minimum height requirement for posting and retiring the colors should be predetermined prior to securing flags and poles. This predetermination may mean using shorter poles and flag stands.

**A P P E N D I C E S**

1. [Fort Belvoir - Information Sheet](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/information_sheet.docx)
2. [Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Information Sheet](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/information_sheet.docx)
3. [Hotel Proposal - Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel - Excel](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/hotel_proposals_-_sheraton_pentagon_city.xlsx)
4. [Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel - Cavalier Room Layout](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/cavalier_room_-_layout.png)
5. [Banquet Menu - Joe Tavares](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/from_joe_tavares_-_re_banquet_menu.docx)
6. [Menu Selections - Joe Tavares - 24 Jan 19](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/from_joe_-_menu_selections_-_24_jan_19.docx)
7. [Banquet - Comic Skits](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/comic_skits.docx)
8. [Banquet - Entertainment](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/entertainment.docx)
9. [Banquet - Class 11 Lima 67 - Scripted Program](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/ocs_script__program__-_class_11__lima_67.docx)
10. [Reunion Theme Graphic](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/reunion_theme_graphic_-_3_colors.jpg)
11. [Banquet - Guest Speaker - MG Richard O. Wightman, Jr.](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/richard_o_wightman_jr.docx)
12. [Saturday (5 Oct 19) Itinerary](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/saturday_itinerary_-_5_october_2019.docx)
13. [Banquet Room Layout Per Event Order](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/banquet_room_layout_per_event_order.png)
14. [Color Guard Photo - 45th Reunion](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/color_guard_-_45th_reunion.jpg)
15. [Video - "In Memoriam" To Honor Our Deceased](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/in_memoriam_-_u_tube_-_12_sep_19.docx)