** **

**EOCR CLASS 22 HOTEL 69**

**50 YEAR REUNION**

**AFTER ACTION REVIEW**

**Event Reviewed:**  Hotel Considerations and Banquet Program

**Reviewed By:** Gary Cochard

**Date:** 16 October 2019

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

One of the first things we did in planning our reunion was to try and locate a venue that would meet our needs. Primary concerns were “cost” and “location”. It’s important to personally visit different hotels as opposed to trying to select one via the internet or via phone conversations. Face-to-face interviews and personally viewing the different facilities is paramount to making a proper selection. ( Appendix #1) – Hotel Proposals Spreadsheet was used to compare relevant criteria from four different facilities.

As mentioned earlier, we visited several locations in the Arlington area and finally settled on the Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel (Appendix #2 –Lodging Pentagon Sheraton) as it gave us the best “group rate” (room cost). The Sheraton is located close to Reagan National Airport, from which they provide free shuttle service to-and-from. This hotel is also close to many areas of interest (monuments, museums, memorials, etc.) in the DC area which added further value to its location. Visiting and being able to personally view the hotel rooms, lobby area, restaurant, bar, parking and banquet halls allowed us to assess the venue in its entirety and confirm our selection. (Appendix #3 – Booking at the Sheraton) and (Appendix #4 – Trip Advisor Reviews)

Having met our two primary concerns of cost and location, we turned our attention to a major secondary concern of wanting to have a private area for our attendees to meet and reconnect. We wanted a space large enough to allow for memorabilia to be displayed, room for comfortable seating for 50 people, room for food and beverage presentation, and room for video displays. Through coordination with the Sheraton, we were able to secure a hospitality suite located on the 15th floor of the hotel (The Pentagon Room 1 and Pentagon Room II ) that met all our needs. The suite had a magnificent view out across the Pentagon and beyond toward DC. (Appendix **#5**) Through negotiation with the Sheraton, the room was provided free of charge, with the exception of a one-time “cleaning fee”. This room proved to be a true “home away from home” as attendees gathered there daily to reminisce, laugh and enjoy each other’s company. Beer, wine, soda, water and finger foods were provided which further added to the enjoyment of all.

Another major part of our planning was to secure a place for a banquet. It had been decided that we wanted to have a formal banquet on the final evening of our reunion (5 October 2019).Following discussions with the planning team, it was decided that to avoid transportation

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and traffic issues, we would try to find space at the Sheraton for our banquet. A follow-up visit to the Sheraton proved beneficial as it allowed for a thorough review of the space and amenities offered. Through discussions with the Group Sales Manager, we were able to secure the Cavalier Room, which easily met our needs (space, ambience, décor, etc.) for what proved to be a highly successful banquet.

A very important part of the banquet was to finalize and approve the Banquet Event Order (BEO). The BEO is a document that states in detail the time, function, and location for all activities for each day of the reunion, to include the menu and any special dietary requests. It also includes such things as the layout for the hospitality room and the banquet hall as well as all special requests items (ice, trash receptacles, registration tables, easels, refrigerators, etc., to name a few). The BEO should be reviewed in detail to ensure all needed items, to the smallest detail are included (and the cost for such items, if applicable). In our case, a BEO for each day of the event had to be approved and signed three days in advance. We went through three iterations of the BEO before reaching a final document. (Appendix # 6 - Final and Corrected Event Order. That document was signed and faxed to the hotel on 30 September 2019.

An important part of our banquet was to recognize our deceased classmates and to raise a “toast” to them. One way to do this was through the placement of a “Missing Man Table” in the banquet room. The Sheraton was very helpful in this regard. The hotel provided the chair, table, white tablecloth, black napkin, dinnerware, plate, pinch of salt, slice of lemon, lighted candle and an inverted glass. Everything was provided except a red rose, which we provided along with a vase. We had arranged with the Sheraton that we would provide champagne to be used for the traditional toasts prior to dining. We were fortunate the Sheraton allowed us to bring in our own champagne and we were not charged a corkage fee. This was a big cost saving and of which we were very appreciative. Following the cocktail hour and just prior to the beginning of the program the wait staff poured the champagne. Following an explanation of the items on the Missing Man table by the Master of Ceremonies**,** (Appendix #7 - Missing Man Table Description) we followed with five traditional toasts (to the United States Army, to the EOCR Regiment, to our class, to our deceased classmates and to the ladies present). (Appendix #8 - Order OfEvents). This went very smoothly and was received with patriotism by all present and with reverence to those deceased.

Another part of our program was recognition of our TACs (Training, Advising, and Counseling) Officers. Unfortunately, our Second Platoon TAC (LT Charles R. Ware) died about a month prior to the reunion. First Platoon had two TACs represented at our gathering. Jon Dawson was scheduled to come, but unexpected health issues made that impossible. Karl Heien did attend and both were recognized at the banquet. Former LT Dawsons’ remarks were read by a member of First Platoon and former LT Heien gave his own remarks. Both former TACs full remarks are

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given in Appendices # 9 and #10 ). Additionally, links to both speeches were emailed to all class members

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

**There were many successes:**

1. The Cavalier Room provided the perfect venue for our banquet. The layout was spacious, yet warm.
2. The Hospitality Suite met all our needs and expectations.
3. The dinner menu proved satisfying and delicious and received many compliments.
4. The hotel restaurant provided discount vouchers (10%) for all meals.
5. The hotel rooms were clean and spacious**.**

**What Could Be Improved And How?**

1. During the planning period (some 18 months) we had to deal with 4 different Conference Service Managers (CSMs). This caused communication problems which in turn caused us to have to go over details multiple times. This proved very frustrating and can only be improved if the Hotel is able to assign a CSM that will be present during the entire planning period, or by having better communication between their CSMs if multiple CSMs are necessary. We struggled, and survived, working with 4 separate CSMs.
2. I believe assigning only one person to deal with the hotel staff on ALL hotel related matters would be beneficial. We had an individual assigned to lodging issues and one assigned to the banquet issues. Though these two areas appear very different in nature, in fact, they have many overlapping concerns that could be more properly addressed if only one individual was responsible for all hotel related functions thereby improving the communication between the Hotel and the customer.
3. The hotel printed our program at no cost. However, the quality of the program would have been better had we taken it to a professional copying service. What was provided proved to be adequate, but somewhat below our standard.
4. The hotel initially printed separate meal discount vouchers for each meal. When brought to their attention, they printed one meal voucher valid for all three daily meals and through the end of the reunion.

**Lessons Learned:**

1. Make sure all details are contained in either the Contract, the Banquet Event Order or in an Email. All costs, layout diagrams, items to be provided by the hotel, dinner menu, discounts, etc., MUST be captured in writing. The lodging contract is usually agreed to

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and signed early in the planning stage. Expectedly, additional needs and requests arise and the details of those needs must be captured in writing and agreed to by all parties. Documenting everything is extremely important**.**

1. Identifying the expected number of attendees early-on is critical. Most lodging contracts will include a certain number of rooms (called a room-block) that must be filled if the group (customer) expects to get a group rate below the standard room rate. A minimum amount of “guest room revenue” (usually 80%) will likely be part of the contract. If the customer misses this mark, the stated revenue is still required. We were fortunate in meeting our room-block, but it is a lesson worthy of notice none-the-less. The hotel furnished a Room Reservations List which we used as a tool in reaching our room block. (Appendix #11)

**Recommendations:**

On-site visits are a must. Face-to-face meetings with the hotel staff go a long-way toward having a successful event. It is recommended that the individual designated to arrange for lodging and sign the contract, be a person living relatively near the event location.

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

1. [Hotel Proposals - 50th Reunion - Excel](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/hotel_proposals_22_hotel_50th_reunion.xlsx)
2. [Hotel Proposal -Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel - Excel](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/hotel_proposals_-_sheraton_pentagon_city.xlsx)
3. [Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel - Booking](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/booking.docx)
4. [Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel - Reviews](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/reviews.docx)
5. [Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel - View From Pentagon Room (Hospitality Suite)](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/view_from_pentagon_room.png)
6. [Final Banquet Event Order](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/final_and_corrected_event_order_-_30_sep_19.pdf)
7. [Banquet - "Missing Man Table" - Description And Photo](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/missing_man_table_-_description.docx)
8. [Banquet Program - Order Of Events](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/program_-_events_schedule_-__28__sep_19_rm_albion.docx)
9. [Banquet - Remarks By Jon Dawson](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/banquet_-_jon_dawsons_remarks.docx)
10. [Banquet - Remarks By Karl Heien](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/karl_heiens_remarks.docx)
11. [Sheraton Pentagon City Hotel - Room Reservations List](http://www.engineers1969hotel22class.org/uploads/5/6/7/4/56741349/rooming_list_-_12_aug_19.pdf)