

THE CHANGE OF COMMAND CEREMONY

The change of command ceremony is not prescribed specifically by U.S. Navy regulations, but rather is a long standing Naval tradition. Only in the military does the instantaneous transfer of complete authority and total responsibility from one individual to another exist. Our Navy, an organization of explicit discipline, lends itself to the perpetuation of the more venerated customs, heroic traditions, and dignified ceremonies. The change of command ceremony is designed to publicize to the officers, men and women of the command the absolute transfer of authority from one commander to another. The ceremony is by tradition formal and impressive. This strengthens respect for authority and is the underpinning of good order and discipline, which is vital to any military organization.

The culmination of the ceremony is the formal reading of the official orders. The public reading of orders began in the days when the movement of mail and personnel was slow and unreliable. The ceremony was thus designed to ensure only duly authorized officers held command and that all aboard were aware of the authenticity of the new commander. The responsibility of command passes from one to the other when the relieving officer states *"I relieve you, sir/ma'am."* *The officer being relieved responds, "I stand relieved."*

The simple ceremony passes authority and responsibility to yet another fine officer, and reflects the dedication of free men and women serving their nation proudly.

"I RELIEVE YOU, SIR/MA'AM" "I STAND RELIEVED"

CHANGE OF COMMAND AND BEYOND SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

- Talk extensively with your spouse about your individual and command tour goals.
- Discuss the responsibilities you intend to take on with your family and friends.
- Get answers to any questions you may have about command. Discuss ideas and concerns with other people.
- Estimate and budget for the expenses you may encounter during the command.
- Contact outgoing CO's spouse
 - Schedule a time to meet for a turnover
 - Who is the Ombudsman?
 - Find out structure of the Family Readiness Group
 - Identify active groups
 - Obtain wardroom roster
 - Obtain phone tree(s)
- Know what your role will be at the change of command and reception. Be aware of what arrangements have been made for planning and paying for the change of command. What is the tradition in that area? Who gets VIP seating? Are flowers given to anyone at the ceremony? What will your costs be for the reception? How much input about food and location will you have?

Although the outgoing couple is the honored party, it is advantageous for the couples to meet and mutually agree on the issues. The average amount spent is from \$500 - \$1,000 per couple and is usually split evenly.

The couples determine the menu and the location for the reception, with the departing ones generally taking the lead. Heavy hors d'oeuvres are usually served. These days, alcohol is a big issue. Traditionally, beer and wine have been served. Check into the policy at your new base.

- Make sure your guest list is ready and accurate. It is never too early to begin researching the addresses of those with whom you have lost contact.
- Use the command's newsletter to announce and describe the COC, and invite the crewmembers' spouses. You will have no control over this as an incoming CO's spouse other than as a suggestion, but may do so when outgoing.

- Check into hotels and BOQ availability for out of town guests. Reserve a block of rooms; usually this can be done at a reduced rate. Disperse this information in adequate time for guests to make reservations since there is usually a deadline for those special rates. Remember they are on their own – everyone cannot stay at your home.
- Make a map that gives directions to all the COC activities.
- Consider whether you wish to entertain before and/or after the change of command. If entertaining, whom will you invite? Will you prepare all the food, have it catered, or make arrangements at a local restaurant or hotel? How much assistance do you desire? Check with outgoing couple to see if they are inviting the wardroom; if not you may want to consider this.
- If needed, make arrangements for a baby-sitter to watch the children of out of town guests either at their hotel or your house.
- Make inquiries about special area attractions your guests may be interested in visiting if they remain in the area after the COC.
- Be prompt with thank you notes.
- Begin a scrapbook/photo album.