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# CHOICES & CHALLENGES

A Guide for the Battalion Commander's Wife

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US ARMY WAR COLLEGE

Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

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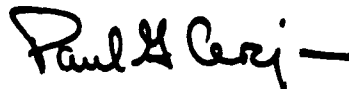
FOREWORD

Choices and Challenges is an excellent guide for the Battalion Command Team. Although addressed to the commander's wife, it offers the wisdom from successful command tours and should be read by both the perspective commander and his wife. It clarifies many of the expectations inherent in command responsibility, many of which are not addressed in regulations. It will be a tremendous aid in building a successful command team.

This informational booklet represents the dedicated and caring work of wives of students at the US Army War College, Class of 1991. Through a year-long commitment of time, concern for others, and a desire to promote a wider understanding of leadership, these women generously contributed to the military tradition of supporting and helping one another. The Army War College extends its sincere appreciation and gratitude.

Cathy Speer and Kathleen McElwee, co-editors of Choices and Challenges, deserve special recognition for their involvement with this project. They came forward with a request to undertake the book, organized its development, and were responsible for carrying it through to completion. Their efforts have been especially significant, and we offer them our particular thanks.

I hope that this guide will be a useful and important resource for you as you meet the challenges of command.



PAUL G. CERJAN  
Major General, U.S. Army  
Commandant



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## CHAPTER 1

### WHY WE WROTE THIS BOOK

We are excited about this book! Who are WE? We are a group of 1991 Army War College students' wives who got together at Carlisle Barracks to share our past experiences as battalion commanders' wives. We are Army, Air Force and Marines Corps wives, and our husbands commanded different types of battalions representing various branches of those services.

We are a diverse group. We range from 27 to 48 years old, have been married for 4 to 24 years, come from different backgrounds, and have a variety of interests. Some of us have children from toddler to college age, and some do not have children. We have a broad span of educational experiences and credentials. During our husbands' commands some of us worked full time outside the home, while some did not. We encompass many professions: teachers, artists, civil servants, trainers, and various positions in business. We are also volunteers and homemakers. We are today's women and defy stereotypes. We share an important commitment to ourselves, our families, and the military.

We all enjoyed our roles as battalion commanders' wives, especially being part of command teams with our husbands and being involved with the leadership of the battalions' families. This book is based on our experiences, in addition to the examples set by the many commanders' wives we've known throughout the years. It is a collection of our thoughts, ideas, experiences, headaches, joys, what worked and what did not.

Throughout the process of writing, we affectionately referred to this guide as "The Book" because just the right title eluded us. As we completed the final touches, we realized our guide is all about choices and challenges. Thus, our title was born. It helps to clarify the many choices a battalion commander's wife faces today and gives examples and ideas we hope will serve to make the challenges more manageable.

We think it is important that the commander's wife take an active role. You need to decide for yourself what your role will be and what you want to accomplish. We felt that choosing not to accept the role would have left a void in the unit. We received many rewards for our efforts. Among them were growing and developing as individuals, and we certainly gained insight into our own strengths and weaknesses! We also found that by our examples and leadership, other military wives learned to care

about one another and to share their talents with each other, the unit, and community around them.

Each command and leadership experience is different. You may need to take this information and adjust it to your situation. We wrote with traditional roles in mind, but we realize that with today's dynamic society these roles are changing. So although we refer to "wife" and "she," you can substitute "spouse" and "he." For easy reading, we used "battalion" and "company"; substitute "squadron" or "battery/troop" to fit your circumstances. Also, any unit or individual names in our samples are truly fictional!

Remember, these are OUR views and what worked for us. The chemistry of the people in your group will vary and will make your experience unique. Our recommendation to you is to trust your own instincts. Have confidence in yourself and do what feels right.

Be kind to yourself! Don't gauge your success as a leader by anyone else's yardstick or by comparing yourself to others. Make your goals and expectations realistic and then live by them. Don't measure your success by numbers or by "thank yous." Recognize that people may not immediately perceive or value your efforts. In fact, you may never know just how much you have influenced others. Your legacy will be the leadership of tomorrow.

Enjoy yourself! Have fun! Welcome to an exciting time of Choices and Challenges!

Mary Baskett  
Karin Craven  
Kim Fess  
Shelley Hancock  
Jean Kraus

Pam Lord  
Kathleen McElwee  
Kay Rhodes  
Ines Roe  
Cathy Speer



## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

You may find this book overwhelming at first; especially if you read it in one sitting. We recommend you go through the book the first time to generally see what it contains. Then, once you have "your feet wet" and have a better appreciation of what your role entails, refer back to the areas which may help you. We want this book to be a reference guide for you; information that will be beneficial to you throughout the two years.

We know that there is a lot of information here. We are not suggesting that you must do everything! We tried to think of every aspect of command life that you may encounter, in order to give you a complete resource guide. You need to decide what you want to do, what seems possible and realistic for you, and what will work for your group.

We divided this book into chapters, each covering a different subject. Each chapter has six sections and follows the same format: WHY IT'S IMPORTANT, HOW TO APPROACH IT, PRACTICAL IDEAS, HELPFUL HINTS, FRUSTRATIONS, and IMPLICATIONS. We also included appendices with examples. An explanation of each section is:

### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Our reasons why we think this particular subject is important and why it is in this book.

### HOW TO APPROACH IT

Our suggestions on how to start or accomplish this task.

### PRACTICAL IDEAS

Sounds great on paper, but this is the real world! This section offers examples of what worked for us.

## HELPFUL HINTS

Tips and pointers to think about....

## FRUSTRATIONS

Things to look out for...what didn't work and why...  
considerations to make life easier.

## IMPLICATIONS

What are the potential benefits? What are the liabilities if  
this subject is ignored?

## CHAPTER 2

### WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH?

Congratulations! Your husband has been selected for battalion command. Now what do you do?!?

First, you need to decide if you want to accept the role of a battalion commander's wife AND the obligation and commitment that go with it. If you are undecided about accepting this role or would rather say "no," then you and your husband should ask someone else to take your place. We think the unit wives really do deserve to have a leader, a person who can respond to their particular needs. In our opinions, it is essential to have a focal point; without it, wives and families and even the unit will suffer.

Then, if you are willing to accept the role, you must ask yourself: "What would I like to accomplish over the next two years?"

Consider: How much can you do? The unit will take time and energy. You may have personal career goals. Then there are family needs and commitments. Believe it or not, you can do all three. Family well-being, wage earning, and being part of the command team are not mutually exclusive; but, they require coordination. Each area cannot receive continual 100% attention. You must decide which one gets priority at any given point. Talk the situation over with your husband and learn his expectations, as well.

What do you want your role to be? Do you want to make a difference? How? What are your goals? What do you want to get done? What makes you comfortable?

Keep in mind: This period in your life can provide satisfying personal growth as you develop leadership skills and learn to balance the concerns of self, home, and unit. It can be a wonderful chance to give of yourself as you help others in your own special way. It also can be a time to appreciate what others may extend to you in the way of friendship and opportunities to learn.

### WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

Now, you must decide how you want to define your role. The younger wives will look to you for direction and guidance in many ways. You are probably more experienced than the other wives

(naturally because of your years as a military wife, not your age!), and it's important for you to share some of your knowledge and experience with them. Will you have all the answers? Probably not, and that's OK!

We felt our primary role as commanders' wives was to serve as a mentor to the younger wives. To us that meant being role models, teachers, advisors, and basically setting the example whenever possible. We felt we accomplished our goal, but we also know that we weren't perfect. As the battalion commander's wife, you are in a unique position to lead the battalion families. Here are some areas for you to consider if you choose to fulfill this role:

- relationship with your husband (partner of a team)
- your attitude as an Army wife (moving, work hours, few weekends, little time off, pride in unit, "rolling with the punches," keeping your cool, channeling others' energies)
- personal commitment, participation, involvement
- time for yourself
- fairness and consistency with other wives.
- responsibility in community
- "messenger" (keeping lines of communication open)
- sense of family within the unit (focusing on and caring for others)
- friendliness (getting to know everyone)
- leadership style and qualities
- coach of the team
- customs and courtesies (military, R.s.v.p., thank you notes, etc.)
- conduct of meetings
- organizational skills (giving others experience by delegating)
- sounding board for others
- conflict management
- sensitivity to others

#### DO YOU WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

We wanted our time with the battalion to be special, not only for us but for the people within the battalion family. The most important ingredient that we found to make a difference with everyone was to have a caring and sincere attitude. If people know they can trust you, it is easier for them to turn to you or follow you.

Let people know that they really matter to you. Listen to what's going on around you. Let others have a voice in decisions; ask for their opinions. Make people feel good about themselves and the support they are giving.

Your example can be vital in developing unit esprit de corps and high morale within the group. Your positive attitude can foster enthusiastic support for the unit and help build the wives into a productive and cooperative group.

Get involved -- roll up your sleeves and pitch in like everyone else. Once people see you are willing to do what you ask of them, they will be more willing to participate.

If you do not like some aspect of the "system," work to improve it! Sometimes you can promote change by becoming committed to finding solutions to the problem. Encourage people to do the same. It could help others down the road.

Be yourself. Do what is most comfortable for you, but do not be afraid of growth and change. Keep your sense of humor. If you are not having fun, it may be time to reevaluate.

#### WHERE DO YOU START?

The purpose of this book is to give you practical ideas and helpful hints to do the job. Ask yourself: "What do I want to get done?" For instance, you may be wondering about:

1. Knowing how to join the battalion (Chapter 3).
2. Making everyone feel a part of the battalion; sense of family (Chapters 4, 5, Appendices A, B, F).
3. Keeping everyone informed of battalion and community news (Chapter 4, Appendix F).
4. Running organized and worthwhile coffees (Chapter 10, Appendix M).
5. Establishing a Family Support Group (Chapter 5, Appendices H, I).
6. Getting volunteers when needed (Chapter 7).
7. Giving out volunteer job descriptions (Appendix L).
8. Establishing a working relationship with the company commanders' wives and the CSM's wife (Chapter 5, 6, Appendix D).
9. Using special touches (Helpful Hints in all Chapters).
10. Dealing with difficult situations (Chapter 9, Frustrations in all Chapters).

11. Finding easier ways to entertain (Chapter 11, Appendix N).
12. Learning to communicate effectively (Chapter 4, Appendices E, G, I, M).
13. Keeping records and details of functions and events (Appendix S).
14. Publishing a newsletter (Appendix F).
15. Teaching military etiquette (Appendices O, P).
16. Making people feel welcome through sponsorship (Appendix B).
17. Keeping track of newly arrived families (Appendix C).
18. Orienting new wives into the military (Chapter 8).
19. Coping with trauma in the battalion (Chapter 9).
20. Running effective meetings (Appendix M).
21. Explaining the role of a company commander's wife (Appendix D, H).
22. Learning techniques to speak before a large group (Appendix R).
23. Organizing what to tell a successor (Appendix T).
24. Saying good-bye after two years (Chapter 12).

**IT'S ALL WORTHWHILE!**

You will learn how to interact meaningfully with people and, most importantly, you will learn about yourself. You have a chance to make a special contribution!

## CHAPTER 3

### COMING INTO THE BATTALION

#### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

We wanted to make the best first impression we could as we joined the battalion. We knew that others would form opinions about us quickly and with little information. We also realized that the initial perception people had of us would have a marked impact on our entry into the unit. So we made an extra effort to try to influence the attitudes of others in a positive way.

We began thinking about our command team role early and making preparations for our arrival. We planned ahead as much as we could. We felt that once we were in the battalion demands upon our time and energy would be extensive and relentless. We believed we would benefit from organizing in advance because there would not be as many opportunities later!

#### HOW TO APPROACH IT

We found the following guidelines very effective in getting us off to a favorable start. In the period leading up to command, you might want to:

- Talk, talk, talk with your husband.
- Attend the Pre-Command Course at Ft. Leavenworth.
- Consider possible benefits of accompanying your husband to his branch pre-command school.
- Formulate your individual and command team goals.
- Decide methods for achieving your objectives.
- Seek out information and insights from written materials and other people. Be curious and go after answers to any of your questions.

- Get in shape. You'll feel better about yourself and be physically fit for meeting the upcoming challenges.
- Estimate and budget for the expenses you may encounter during command.
- Discuss the responsibilities and commitments you intend to take on with your children, parents, in-laws, friends. Assist others in knowing about and understanding, if possible, the changes that may occur in your lifestyle.

## PRACTICAL IDEAS

### BEFORE COMMAND BEGINS

- Maximize the opportunities at pre-command schools. Brainstorm ideas or concerns with others.
- Check your branch school PX and gift store. It may be a good place to pick up small presents, posters for your husband's office or the unit, branch slogans, and other paraphernalia.
- Give yourself time to settle into your new home and attend to family matters. Familiarize yourself with the military and civilian communities; learn about programs, facilities, and resources; get to know neighbors.
- Make the most of occasions to meet and talk with the outgoing commander's wife or command team. She may provide useful and important information to you. If not, graciously pose your questions and request guidance.
- Begin a journal or scrapbook.
- Review your wardrobe (and your husband's?). Be ready to attend a large number of varying social functions.
- Prepare to entertain large numbers of people. Think about what you may need and want.
- Mull over your individual and/or command team gift philosophy. For instance, you may want presents for weddings, babies, farewells, welcomes, thank yous, etc. Standardize and buy ahead. Caution: don't forget anyone and continue the tradition you establish.



- Take dance lessons; brush up on your speaking skills; collect recipes for group gatherings; get ready for your first round of in-home entertaining.
- Know what your role will be at the change of command and reception. Reacquaint yourself with military protocol. Be sensitive to the outgoing command team's wishes and arrangements.
- Mention tactfully any special requests for the change of command or reception (i.e., having someone videotape the ceremony or having your guest book at the reception).
- Have your guest list ready. Try to have complete, legible, up-to-date addresses. Be prompt in meeting the due date. (Husband's responsibility, but....)

#### AS COMMAND BEGINS

- Send thank you notes promptly. Recipients may include the outgoing command team, your husband's new boss and wife, particularly helpful individuals from higher headquarters, your new unit (for your flowers and change of command ceremony and reception), and any other appropriate people you wish to recognize.
- Get a unit roster and a wives' roster as quickly as possible. Make a point to learn and use first names. Carry a pocket notebook to jot down names and information as you continue to meet others. This will help you remember!
- Agree on how your husband and you wish to be addressed. Avoid confusion by informing others. Accept that some people may not comply with your request.
- Take the lead in socializing (see "Entertaining," Chapter 11). Think about how you may want to open your home to others.
- Meet soon with other key wives. That probably would mean the Command Sergeant Major's (CSM) wife (see "Partnership," Chapter 6) and the Battalion Executive Officer's (XO) wife. Begin to get to know each other and to discuss "business." Don't hesitate to see the next higher headquarter's commander's wife, also.
- Know what to expect at your first wives' gathering. Is it purely social? Will there be business that needs attention? Who will be attending? Determine your role and be prepared.

- Consider doing a needs questionnaire with your wives (see Appendix A). It will show your desire for input and allows everyone to "own" the direction of the group.
- Forge a strong working relationship with the unit S1 and chaplain. Potentially they are excellent resource people concerning unit personnel and family matters.
- Keep notes and files on EVERYTHING. Consider after action reports (see Appendix S) for major projects. All details and information may be invaluable to the next commander's wife and a useful reference for yourself.
- Schedule a regular, weekly time you can sit and talk with your husband about unit activities, his calendar and yours, battalion family member issues, and other unit information.
- Use nametags at initial functions.

## HELPFUL HINTS

### BEFORE COMMAND BEGINS

- Be open-minded, flexible, and keep a healthy perspective.
- Avoid contact with the unit unless initiated by the current command team.
- Be aware that arrangements for planning or paying for a change of command and reception vary greatly. The local custom or protocol may not be what you would like or expected. Be gracious. Your turn will come!
- Decide your course of action if no one has contacted you about making plans for your welcome coffee. If you intend to organize a gathering, do whatever possible beforehand.
- Be as patient and as easy going as you can manage. The time before the change of command is hectic.
- Give thought to the stress and anxiety many in the unit may be feeling due to the change in leadership. Think over how you might want to respond to the situation.

## AS COMMAND BEGINS

- Set the example. Model the behavior and values you hope others will emulate. Everyone WILL be watching.
- Consider carefully what you advocate. Others may well identify your position with power and influence. What you say could carry considerable weight because of your role. Be cautious about expressing your personal causes and private beliefs.
- Try to be yourself. Sincerity is crucial.
- Think twice about immediate, overwhelming changes. Even though you may be eager to get moving, hold off for a bit. Watch, listen, and learn.
- Attend every unit event at this point. Give people the opportunity to see that you are interested, that you care about knowing others, and that the unit matters to you and you will be supporting it.
- Try very hard not to be monopolized by a few people. Move in all circles.
- Show your interest in people! They may be tentative, shy, awkward, and even unwilling to approach you. Take the initiative! Introduce yourself, start conversations, and ask endless questions.
- Recognize that there is truth in "it's lonely at the top." Seek support from your husband. Develop friendships outside the unit. Network with peers. Share information, support, and concerns. Be there for each other.
- Take time for yourself although it may seem impossible. Allow yourself personal space if only for brief periods.
- Realize that the unit and its people will have expectations of you. You are the commander's wife. You will be on center stage and in the spotlight. Once the command is underway, if you have chosen to be involved, have confidence in yourself and charge on!
- You may ask yourself, "What in the world have I gotten myself into?!?!" It all can seem a little mind-boggling in the beginning. Things will settle down, and you should feel more comfortable in your new role.

## FRUSTRATIONS

Keep in mind, you are a newcomer. The wives may welcome you with open arms and much warmth -- or they may hold back and come around slowly. Don't take it personally. They may have lost a friend with the departure of the last battalion commander's wife. Give them time to respond to the change and their sadness.

The individuals in the unit may be different than you expected, imagined, or remembered from other group experiences. You may need to adjust your perspective.

You are no longer one of the gang, depressing though that realization may be. You may wonder why the unit wives don't call you to go out to eat, to go shopping, or to a movie. Think back to when you were a lieutenant's or captain's wife. Did you run around with the battalion commander's wife and spend most of your time with her? Probably not. This is no different. Don't be discouraged. Accept that there will be some limitations that "come with the territory." Turn to your peers outside the battalion for the deeper friendships and special closeness you may seek.

Your relationships with battalion wives and peers should not be the same. Recognize the line between friend and confidante. Choose your friends wisely in the battalion. Don't be perceived as having favorites. Spot the informal leaders in your group and draw upon their talents, ideas, and energies.

Sometimes you may need to act as a buffer between brigade or higher command levels and the battalion wives. Decide which battles you will fight. Approach situations with fairness and concern for all.

Remember, you shadow your husband. You may find the wives blaming you for what happens at work. Try to be understanding, but also frank. Tell them that you aren't part of the official side of the Army house. You're a wife, too. Keep battalion and business issues and family and social issues separate.

Will everyone like you? Who knows? You may not please the entire group -- but don't see yourself as needing to win a popularity contest. Keep a sound perspective on who you are and where you are.

Don't be surprised if people treat you in a stereotyped way, especially in the beginning. They may see only the position or the role and not you the person. Be patient and, hopefully, this will soon change.

You may encounter the "What's in it for me?" mindset of others. Take heart and don't feel as though you are somehow at fault for their attitudes and values. Hang in there, keep trying, and don't let others' self-centeredness get you down.

There are flaws and room for disappointments in the most carefully crafted plans. Try to prepare and to act wisely. Surprises will occur. Events may not unfold as we suggest. In your circumstances give it your best effort and don't agonize over "what if?"

## IMPLICATIONS

Battalion members may expect that you will arrive as a prepared and competent individual. Due to any number of factors, correct or not, people seem to identify a battalion commander's wife with certain skills and aptitudes.

Don't bemoan this fact, but give yourself every chance to establish your credibility by thinking and planning ahead. Otherwise, you may face an uphill battle. People will be assessing you from the start. Show them your talents and strengths.

Coming into the battalion with your "act together" also will allow you to be more flexible and in a better position to be more adaptable. You can then face decisions and people with confidence. You will have a greater understanding of the options and opportunities before you.

Preparedness and readiness are key in giving the battalion and its people a calming sense of security. They will be looking for some measure of consistency. They will want to know where you stand, how you operate, and what you are like. If you are ready, these stressful and awkward issues and times should be manageable.

It is an advantage to know what you want your role to be -- you'll then feel less pressure to "do it all" yourself. You can quickly demonstrate your willingness to work with others.

## CHAPTER 4

### COMMUNICATING

#### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Good communication was essential to us! We found that keeping an open line of communication between ourselves and the wives accomplished many things. It showed that we:

- cared about other people
- were aware of the need for community information to flow to the group
- were a reliable source of good information
- were sincere about our efforts

We thought communication followed many avenues: personal contacts, meetings, newsletters, etc. All were valuable.

#### HOW TO APPROACH IT

The wives' communication channels closely parallel the military's chain of command. Basically, communication passes from you and the CSM's wife to the company commanders' and First Sergeants' (1SG) wives. They, in turn, pass the information to the wives in each of the companies.

It's important that the company commanders' and 1SGs' wives work to establish and maintain contact with the company wives. They can offer interesting activities and provide useful information to them.

Effective communication can:

1. Show that you CARE.

- welcome and farewell people in the unit
- listen to the group
- respond to special needs
- share group joys and sorrows
- work WITH the group to plan and organize what THEY want to do
- support programs improving family quality of life

2. Distribute necessary INFORMATION.

- news during deployments
- unit or post wives' social activities
- post or family support programs
- community activities and opportunities
- special unit policies or traditions

3. Demonstrate that you are RELIABLE.

- be consistent
- guard confidentiality
- gather and pass information

PRACTICAL IDEAS

Put emergency-type telephone numbers (i.e., agencies, battalion, medical) on an index card and keep it in your purse.

Ask people to keep you informed so there are no surprises. Periodically, meet with your husband to go over the unit calendar so you can avoid or stop rumors.

Does everyone want or need to see all the information you collect? What interests some may not interest others. Don't overload people with too much information. Pick and choose. For instance, be selective in how often you use your telephone tree (see Appendix G). Send only time-sensitive messages. Consolidate community news on one to two pages. You can hand it out at coffees, meetings, and in newsletters that month.

Be consistent with your personal touches such as cards and gifts. If you decide to send cards for special occasions, make sure you don't leave out anyone. It's helpful to decide ahead what your baby and wedding gifts will be and then make them the same for everyone.

Communication can take place through:

PERSONAL CONTACT

- home visits
- phone calls: social and telephone tree (see Appendix G)
- welcome and sponsorship (see Appendix B)
- letters prior to arrival
- hospital visits
- special touch cards: birthday, get well, anniversary

## WRITTEN PUBLICATIONS

- rosters
- formal welcome letter
- battalion newsletter (see Appendix F)
- company newsletter
- monthly meeting newsletter
- welcome packets
- activities' calendar
- family information guide

GROUP ACTIVITIES: battalion/company/platoon levels  
(see Appendix K)

- parties: formal or informal
- open houses
- organizational days and picnics
- deployment briefings
- couples and family get-togethers
- fund raisers (see Appendix J)
- wives' gatherings

## HELPFUL HINTS

You don't have to be a walking encyclopedia! A wise woman once said, "I don't clutter my mind with things I can look up!" You can always get back to someone with an answer to a question.

Call the company representatives' wives periodically to find out how they are doing. Once they know you are interested in them, they will feel more relaxed about sharing many aspects of company life with you.

Don't get discouraged if you find out about something after the fact. It will happen! Think about how to prevent it from occurring again and encourage others to do the same.

## FRUSTRATIONS

Meetings...meetings...meetings.... Yes, there are many meetings! But it is necessary for you to go in order to gather information to distribute to others. If it is an important meeting and you cannot attend, send someone else in your place. You can also gather information by consulting the installation volunteer chairperson and using the community calendar and post bulletin.



People will always have the excuse, "I didn't know about it." It will probably be impossible for you to reach every single person. However, you can hand out typed information at your monthly meetings or coffees and then mail it (or send through distribution) to those who did not come. You can't make them read it; but you can say you made the information available.

## IMPLICATIONS

Keeping others informed is vital in a closely knit group because you are telling them you care and think they are important.

There will always be people who do not participate and therefore stay uninformed. Sending out newsletters or periodic information sheets lets them know that you still want them to hear what's happening. It may be the catalyst for them to become involved at a later date.

## CHAPTER 5

# FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS

### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

We learned that providing a good support network among family members contributed to the general well-being, morale, and esprit de corps of the entire battalion. "The military takes care of its own" became true.

Since the personal readiness of an individual soldier contributes to the fundamental goal of unit readiness, taking care of that soldier's family is important. While the military chain of command monitors the Dependent Eligibility Enrollment System (DEERS), wills, ID cards, powers of attorney, banking accounts, etc., for the soldier and his family, the wives are the ones who often take the lead in communicating and interacting with the soldier's family.

There are many aspects to a Family Support Group (FSG). Though this chapter will emphasize the wives' contributions to FSG, the military also has its own vital role to play. We found that working together produced the best results.

Our definition of an FSG is a group of interested wives who care for each other; who provide a helping hand when asked; who are there to answer questions and give moral support. Our FSG goal was to establish a sense of family within the battalion.

### HOW TO APPROACH IT

The FSG begins at the top. The commander (at all levels) is responsible for the unit FSG. The commander (at all levels) must believe in the unit's FSG and be 100% behind the efforts of those who support the FSG. It may be helpful if the commander appoints a military point of contact (POC) for the FSG. This could be the CSM, chaplain, or other principal staff officer. It should be emphasized, however, that this individual must be willing to coordinate FSG issues for the unit and assist you with official FSG activities.

All unit wives play important roles, too. As family members we do not have rank, are not in the military, do not have people

working for us, and do not have job descriptions. But we may assume unofficial responsibilities relating to family support. We should be the communication and social link between the family members and the commander. Family support is a team effort.

The key to a successful FSG is that you project an attitude of concern for each of the wives and their families. We found the main ingredients of an FSG were CARING and SHARING. If we were sincere in our efforts, it came through loud and clear to those we were trying to reach.

To be honest, family support is a full-time job. Creating and maintaining a wholesome, reassuring, and caring atmosphere among the wives in any unit is hard work. It can be done, however, even if the leader's wife works outside the home or has small children. There may be numerous obstacles, but the FSG is extremely important and must be given attention.

The wives need consideration and care when the soldiers are in garrison as well as when they are in the field. The FSG is an ongoing activity within the battalion. It is not just for deployments! Naturally, it is more critical when the battalion is away. Having a strong rear detachment commander during deployments helps immensely. If the FSG is in place, it should run smoothly whether the battalion is in garrison or not.

The wives' chain of communication generally follows the same chain of command established by the military. Each wife along that chain may accept unofficial responsibilities according to her leadership role. Ask each one if she is interested in working with the battalion FSG.

Does an FSG have to be a formal group in the battalion with an established charter and by-laws? NO! Three ways to possibly approach an FSG are:

1. An established council of wives of company representatives with positions (President, etc.). These wives are not necessarily the company commanders' wives and 1SGs' wives. This group has a charter and by-laws and determines the direction of the battalion FSG. It meets on a regular, perhaps monthly, basis.

2. An executive council or steering committee with both military and wife representation. The President is military (XO or chaplain), the advisors are you and the CSM's wife, and both military and wife company representatives are the members. This council has an established charter, meets periodically to discuss the battalion FSG, and decides future activities.

3. The wives with command support. It is established at company level with the company commander's, 1SG's or company representative's wife in charge. You and the CSM's wife meet monthly with the company representatives to offer guidance, direction, and moral support.

We found that the most successful way to make an FSG work is to emphasize it at the company level (see Appendix H for an example of a company-level FSG).

Keeping people informed, showing that you care, and helping when needed are the first steps to strengthening the bonds of your FSG. To do that at any level:

- Communicate regularly with wives through personal contact, written publications, and large or small group activities.
- Begin a chain of concern -- a telephone chart that includes principal names and phone numbers (see Appendix E). Update it regularly. Make sure every family has one.
- Successful communication is not done without a lot of cooperation from many people. Fundamental to good communication is the 1SG in each company who must keep the wives up-to-date on the company. The company and platoon contact persons are also critical players in this process.
- Getting together socially is also important. Why? Some of the reasons for social interaction are: meet new people, put names to faces, enjoy friendships, share experiences and talents, learn about the community, enhance esprit de corps, and grow together through Army life.

#### PRACTICAL IDEAS

Here are some examples of three key aspects of an FSG: personal contacts, written publications, and group activities. These can be done at the battalion, company, platoon, or squad level.

## PERSONAL CONTACTS

Telephone Tree: established in each company; means to relay information more quickly; requires constant updating (see Appendix G).

Home Visits: welcoming newcomers.

Phone Calls: to welcome newcomers; see how things are going; should be done at the lowest level possible.

Welcome Wagon: see if there is a local chapter; great way to let the new person know the area.

Newcomers' Brief: could be at the battalion or company level; invite the wives; give a tour of the unit; check for a post-wide tour.

## WRITTEN PUBLICATIONS

Battalion Newsletter: mail to each wife; constantly update addresses; need editor and company reporters (see Appendix F).

Unit Welcome Packets: include welcome letter, chain of concern, telephone tree, social rosters, latest newsletter, coffee group information, and post welcome packet.

## GROUP ACTIVITIES

Monthly Meetings: provide a great support system; pass on information; socialize and get to know one another better.

1. Company representatives. Key leaders of the FSG attend: you, CSM's wife, company commanders' wives, 1SG's wives, and company representatives.

2. Company wives. Invite everyone: officer, NCO, and enlisted wives. Company commander's and 1SG's wives run this together.

3. Officers' wives. Attendees could include the battalion officers' wives, female officers, and the CSM's wife.

Deployment Briefings/Information Briefings: held as often as required; run by your husband and his staff; purpose is to pass on information; you and the CSM's wife should seriously consider taking part; invite community representatives (i.e., ACS, JAG, commissary, AAFES, Red Cross, CHAMPUS, post

hospital, etc.); can be mandatory for the married and single parent soldiers; provide babysitting (check your local regulations).

Company Events: open houses; activities with soldiers and families; get-togethers while men are in the field; parties for special events.

Battalion Events: get-togethers while men are in the field; Christmas parties; single soldiers' Christmas dinner; organizational day -- games, picnic; battalion dining out, an all-ranks formal; fun walks or runs; family PT day; holiday activities; family day in the field; additional ideas are in Appendix K.

Welcome Home Celebrations: goodies and signs to welcome soldiers home from deployments.

Fundraising Events: bake sales (donation only), food booth sales, auctions and raffles (days off or passes for soldiers are illegal). Check your local regulations regarding raffles. Local merchants may be happy to donate items for fund raisers! See Appendix J for more ideas.

#### HELPFUL HINTS

- Don't judge success by numbers! You are simply providing others with opportunities.
- Wives are concerned volunteers, NOT professional counselors! Turn to the battalion chaplain and local helping agencies when necessary.
- There is no rank among wives. However, people will know who you are because of your husband. You'll gain respect by being yourself and working alongside others.
- Recognize helpers and thank them for their time and efforts. Visit them while they volunteer.
- Establish goals and policies for your group; ask for input; revise as appropriate.
- There will be differences of opinions. Try to get group consensus. If not, make the decision.
- Be positive and enthusiastic.

- Delegate! Don't do everything yourself. Use others' talents.
- Ask for help; others will feel they are needed and contributing.
- Life goes on when the unit deploys. See this time as an opportunity to build family and unit closeness as well as pursue your own interests.
- A military-wide point of contact for family and family issues is:

Family Liaison Office  
 HQDA, (DAPE-ZAP)  
 Room 2D653, The Pentagon  
 Washington, DC 20310-0300  
 (A) 225-7714 or commercial 202-695-7714

- More information about FSG is in DA Pam 608-47, "A Guide to Establishing Family Support Groups."

## FRUSTRATIONS

Even though you have the right ingredients (caring and sharing), things may not work according to "the plan." So what do you do? Don't give up! Reassess, look for fresh approaches, and adjust your FSG goals.

What if there are many unfilled positions when you compare people and roles? One of the leaders along the chain may be a bachelor, or another's wife may not accompany him, or a wife may choose not to participate. You cannot assume that a wife will be willing to participate solely because of her husband's position.

Under those circumstances, ask the military commander to find another wife to serve as his representative. We found some of our most enthusiastic workers were company representatives. It is more effective if the commander asks a wife to fill the role than if you asked. The commander is ultimately responsible for the FSG.

It is unusual if you have 100% participation from wives available for leadership roles. Not everyone will share your commitment. If you do not have a representative from each section, ask the men to update rosters, hand out flyers, etc. It won't take long before someone is interested from that section!

What if you get lip-service and no action from a person who has a role but doesn't fulfill it? Since these wives are volunteers, you can't MAKE them do anything. Once they volunteer and commit themselves to serve in a role, then you can hold them to their commitment. If there is still no action, tactfully ask them to step down and find a replacement.

What about working wives? Remember, ALL wives work whether they receive a salary or not. You need to be sensitive to this fact, so that those wives who work in the home don't get "stuck" with all the volunteer tasks.

Many wives employed outside the home are struggling to merge the Army's transient lifestyle with the realities of career opportunities. The need for Army family support may not be a current priority.

How can you be sensitive to both groups and still get the job done? You need to find a balance so no one gets left out or feels taken for granted. Some suggestions are: vary the time of your functions, use the strengths of both groups, and encourage them to participate as much as they can (i.e., one bakes, the other sells at bake sales). Appreciate the efforts of everyone and demonstrate it with "thank yous."

Your biggest frustrations might be finding out when new wives arrive in the unit and keeping addresses and phone numbers current. Check with the commander (at any level) to see if there is already a system in place. One suggestion: Ask your husband to request the SI shop to notify you of newcomers. Give them a sheet asking for pertinent information about the family (see Appendix C). Every married and single parent soldier should fill out one when they inprocess. (Print the information sheet on PINK paper; they'll know it's for you. They will be prompt in getting it to you because having pink paper on their desks isn't Army!) The companies will need to help you with addresses and phone numbers. Get the company FSG representatives involved in gathering information.

Single parent soldiers and families with both parents in the military are becoming more prevalent. They have unique circumstances. Without being a nuisance, find out if there are any special requirements. The chain of command also should help in this situation.

Be aware that there are some people who are reluctant to get involved with the FSG or share personal or family concerns, because of their perception of the negative impact it may have on their husband's career.

As you face a unit deployment, you may find yourself feeling "down." Try to examine and understand your husband's point of



view. Be careful not to reinforce his natural guilt feelings about leaving. Your mindset and behavior will affect you, your husband, your family, and other unit wives. You may want to specifically address this issue with those involved. Your support and understanding will help your husband focus on his job, you and your family adjust to his absence, and other wives more easily accept their separations.

## IMPLICATIONS

NONE OF THIS IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY UNTIL YOU ACCEPT IT. What happens if you decide this is not for you? Please find someone else who is willing to take on this role. The wives in the unit do need a leader; the question is "Who will lead them?"

The unit is everyone's family away from home. As Army wives we are different from our civilian counterparts. People want to feel part of a community. Reaching out to others and having them understand that we care may be just what they need to be happy. If a family is well-adjusted and enjoys Army life, it also could aid in retaining the soldier in the military.

Remember, these unofficial wives' responsibilities are defined as a starting point. You may reject, add, or adjust them to apply to your situation, personality, and goals. You have an opportunity to teach the younger wives so that when their turns come, they will be ready!

Having an established FSG provides a sense of security for the wives because they then realize that someone is there to help and they are part of the greater Army family. It's a relief for the service members because they know their families are being taken care of while they are in the field. The FSG helps promote health, welfare, and unit readiness.

## CHAPTER 6

# OFFICER/NCO WIVES' PARTNERSHIP

### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

We found that having a good working relationship with the CSM's wife in the battalion was invaluable. It made for a very satisfying command tour. Having two people share the load made life easier and definitely more rewarding. Working together also helped us fulfill our goal of mentoring and setting an example for other officer and NCO wives' relationships at all levels.

### HOW TO APPROACH IT

Each wife along the chain of communication holds unofficial responsibilities according to her leadership role. You will find these volunteer roles outlined in many references (see Appendix U). We thought it also would be helpful to list them here.

#### Battalion/Company/Platoon Commanders' Wife:

- leading lady in unit
- supports the next higher level wife
- develops good working relationship with leading NCO/enlisted wives
- maintains close relationship to officers' wives
- assists lower level wives
- conducts meetings with other levels of leadership
- identifies needs and interests of group
- organizes activities
- gathers and passes information
- focuses not only on unit but community affairs

#### CSM/1SG/NCO Wife:

- leading lady of NCO/enlisted wives in unit
- supports commander's wife
- maintains close working relationship with commander's wife
- keeps commander's wife informed
- link between commander's wife and NCO/enlisted wives
- maintains close relationship to NCO/enlisted wives

- conducts meetings
- gathers and passes information
- organizes activities
- focuses not only on unit but community affairs
- may be the actual leading lady in unit (under some circumstances)

## PRACTICAL IDEAS

In an ideal setting the commander's wife and the CSM's wife work as a team -- the "wives' command team." What exactly does this mean?

1. Working together:

- be equal partners; co-workers
- share the workload
- conduct meetings
- solve problems

2. Communicating with one another:

- keep in constant contact
- keep lines of communication open
- keep each other informed

3. Setting the example:

- use "we" and "our"
- be sincere, enthusiastic, and feel proud of the unit
- keep company representatives informed; let them handle their own affairs and solve their own problems

4. Demonstrating teamwork:

- appreciate each other
- be the role model for other levels as to "how it should work"
- be a sounding board for each other
- develop and enjoy a friendship

To make it a true partnership, recognize that the CSM's wife is in fact the leading lady of the NCO/enlisted wives. Her role closely parallels yours in all ways, and the courtesies shown to her should be the same as those shown to you. You may need to be the catalyst to facilitate this happening, i.e., welcomes, farewells, etc.

## HELPFUL HINTS

Can you overcome the officer/NCO wives' barriers and actually be friends with a woman whose husband is a different rank than yours? YES! The relationship between you and the CSM's wife is an example for all - "starting at the top." Several hints to help that happen are:

- wives wear no rank
- be yourself
- roll up your sleeves and work like everyone else
- be on a first-name basis with the wives
- develop a social relationship among all the wives
- encourage wives' activities ("all ranks")
- share the workload with everyone (delegate)
- let everyone know they have a voice
- expose people to a variety of experiences
- be consistent and fair to all
- be sincere and have a caring attitude

You may develop a wonderful relationship with all the wives and set the standard for the best wives' command team in the military. Yet the officers' wives may go to the commander's wife and NCO/enlisted wives may go to the CSM/1SG's wives to talk, seek support, or to spend time. And this is OK! You want to establish an open line of communication, but you do not want to force yourself on anyone or make people feel ill at ease. Go with the flow!

## FRUSTRATIONS

Often the ideal world is not what really exists. Sometimes the commander's wife and the CSM's wife cannot work as a team. What if a void occurs? Someone must be found to fill this role.

Why do barriers still exist today between women who do not have military rank but are married to officers or NCOs? We think a few reasons are:

- Stereotypes and false perceptions persist.
- Traditionally, the military is a class system.
- Soldiers transfer their fears and misconceptions to their wives.
- People identify you with your husband's rank.
- Past negative experiences with individuals and groups cloud the situation.
- Lack of common backgrounds and experiences are seen as pitfalls.

Understand that these obstacles may persist despite what you do.

There will be women who agree to participate, but then don't follow through. It's not easy, but you must confront them and ask if they are truly willing to help. Even though you are working with volunteers, if someone makes a commitment, you can hold them accountable.

You probably will need to work hard to get the other wives to call you by your first name. Keep encouraging them, but don't make them feel uncomfortable.

If the relationship with the NCO wives does not happen, are you a failure? NO! You can only extend the hand of friendship. Know that you have tried.

### IMPLICATIONS

Unfortunately, too often people don't willingly take on roles and leadership positions with glad hearts. However, if you do not make the effort to form a working relationship with the CSM's wife, you won't provide a role model for other officer and NCO wives; barriers will still continue; and you will not be in the position to mentor or set an example. Try to foster an atmosphere where you inspire teamwork, and you then may begin to find sincerely happy people.

## CHAPTER 7

# PARTICIPATING AND VOLUNTEERING

### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

What would military posts do without their volunteers? From ACS to the Thrift Shop to Red Cross, as battalion commanders' wives we were often asked to recruit volunteers from the unit. Our family support programs and battalion activities were built on the participation of its members. The esprit de corps of the unit relied heavily on the involvement and contributions of each member.

### HOW TO APPROACH IT

Many battalion events require active participation. Bake sales need goodies as well as sellers. Newsletters need contributors as well as typists and envelope stuffers. Each activity has its own specific job requirements, commitments, and rewards.

Potential volunteers want to know the type of job to which they are committing their time and energy. They deserve to know what is expected of them before deciding whether or not they are interested in volunteering. Each volunteer request does not have to be formal and stilted but should include a job description (see Appendix L) containing the following information:

- job title
- importance of the job to overall program goal
- benefits to the volunteer
- specific requirements of the volunteer
- limitations of the position
- time commitment
- supervision

People have different strengths and weaknesses. Try to fit the individual's talent to the particular job.

## PRACTICAL IDEAS

Volunteers have various reasons for giving their time and energy. Recognition is more than just a thank you; it's assessing the motivations of each individual and then meeting their needs.

Here are some suggested ways of handling recognition:

1. When the motivation is achievement...

- write a letter of recommendation with accomplishments identified in terms that can be used in a business setting
- provide training and opportunities that further personal growth and satisfaction; give certificates of training
- publicly acknowledge the volunteers at a luncheon or in front of the entire battalion (i.e., at a deployment briefing)
- explain that through their experience in this position, they are acquiring more training in this field for future references
- suggest they add this experience to their resumes
- explain that by learning a new skill, they may be experimenting with a new career path
- salute them through the installation volunteer recognition program

2. When the motivation is self-expression...

- invite ideas
- provide an opportunity to work without close supervision
- delegate
- emphasize their particular talent for this job

3. When the motivation is service...

- urge letters of appreciation from people who are actually helped by the program

- publicly appreciate their selfless devotion to the project and their assistance in its success
  - tell them how important their contribution is to the community
4. When the motivation is social...
- provide an atmosphere of comradeship
  - allow opportunities for social interaction
  - encourage the development of friendships
  - make it fun

### HELPFUL HINTS

People often become volunteers because someone asked them. Don't be afraid of a "NO!", but remember you can't receive a "YES!" until you ask.

To sell your request for participation in a particular program, explain the benefits or needs met by volunteering according to the point of view of your audience.

Volunteers have the right to be treated with courtesy and appreciation. They also should be held accountable for their commitments in order to legitimize their contributions.

Be positive in presenting the need; you don't have to apologize for asking for volunteers.

You may have a few loyal people who volunteer for everything. Be sensitive that you don't overuse them!

### FRUSTRATIONS

When a program has difficulty attracting volunteers, maybe it is not essential. If a program is really needed by the community and its existence is threatened, volunteers may appear.

If you are having trouble filling an important position or getting volunteers for a worthwhile cause, suggest that the job be filled for a limited time only or have more than one person share the responsibility.



Occasionally the wives in the battalion may not be able to or are not interested in volunteering. You may have to communicate this to a higher headquarters. Don't view this as a personal failure AND guard against trying to carry the burden by yourself. You're a volunteer, too, and can handle only so much on your own.

#### IMPLICATIONS

As a leader, your approach to volunteering can either foster or squelch a positive attitude in others. Be enthusiastic! Volunteering is rewarding and crucial to the success of many programs.

## CHAPTER 8

### WIVES NEW TO THE MILITARY

#### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Everyone is new to the military at one time or another.

Maybe you married your husband late in his career and now find yourself facing the role of a battalion commander's wife. You may ask, "How will I know what to do without all the years of experience growing up within the ranks?"

You are bringing your own ideas and approaches with you that may clash with military tradition. As you try to integrate the two perspectives, be open and willing to learn about your new lifestyle. It may take time.

If you've had a career and wish to continue to work outside the home as a commander's wife, you should feel free to do so. Recognize your strengths and limitations. Ask others to help you -- delegate!

Another common situation is that one of the leader's wives in the battalion is newly married and doesn't know what her role should be. This is not unusual among company commanders' and, especially, platoon leaders' wives.

Be sensitive that this new wife may have her own interests, doesn't know what her new role entails, and may be eager to learn all she can. Be patient and teach her!

#### HOW TO APPROACH IT

For either yourself or the new wife, you may want to read some books on military protocol and roles of the Army wife (see Appendix U). Of course, no manual has every answer.

Let the new wife know you are there to answer any questions and give guidance about her new role. Give her suggestions and be encouraging.

There will be a new language you have to learn as a military wife -- that is, if you want to participate in conversations!

For example:

- TDY = temporary duty (a business trip)
- PCS = permanent change of station (moving)
- PX/BX = post/base exchange (department store)
- MP = military police
- ACS = Army Community Service
- LES = leave and earnings statement (pay voucher)
- JAG = Judge Advocate General (legal affairs)
- OWC = Officers' Wives' Club
- CHAMPUS = Civilian Health and Medical Program of Uniformed Services (civilian health insurance)
- BOQ = bachelor officers' quarters
- VOQ = visiting officers' quarters
- SOP = standing operating procedures
- DB = daily bulletin
- CG = Commanding General
- DOD = Department of Defense
- DA = Department of the Army
- BDU = battle dress uniform (fatigues)

If you are interested in more information and other acronyms, a handy booklet is Military Jargon (see Appendix U).

Military members and wives use terms and acronyms without realizing the new wife is in the dark. Speak up -- ask for an explanation.

### PRACTICAL IDEAS

Seek out a mentor -- someone who can serve as a role model, leader, teacher, advisor, and confidante. Look for a supportive relationship, even if it means relying on a person who lives far away.

A mentor relationship may not be a possibility; however, other ways exist to access information. Take the initiative and ask questions. Most people enjoy an attentive listener who engages them in conversation about their experiences. You are filling in your knowledge gaps while at the same time validating their life experiences, insights, and perceptions.

Consider attending various meetings of interest and inviting other new wives to go with you. It's a great chance to learn together. Your attendance will show an interest that may enhance your acceptance by others.

Look for community or unit orientations for newcomers.

Community resources provide a wealth of information and professional services. Familiarize yourself with different agencies and seek out a contact person within each one. The following list is a general guide of resource agencies available at most installations.

- COUNSELING, PERSONAL PROBLEMS, SOCIAL SERVICES.  
Hospital, community counseling centers, mental health clinics, chaplain, unit commander, ACS
- EMERGENCY.  
Hospital, community counseling centers, Red Cross, military police, unit commander, ACS (AER, community food locker)
- MOVING.  
Transportation office, family housing office, post newspaper, Thrift Shop, post bulletin boards
- NEIGHBORHOOD PROBLEMS.  
Military police, post engineers, fire department, community commander
- RECREATION.  
Recreation services office, Information Tours and Travel (ITT) office, Scheduled Airline Ticket Office (SATO), youth center, chapel, ACS

#### HELPFUL HINTS

The lack of experiential knowledge in the military can be overwhelming at times, particularly if you are in a leadership role. Don't despair or fall into the trap of thinking that you are all alone! There are people and resources to help you.

Take the initiative and responsibility in cultivating friendships outside the unit. Make plans to get together with others regularly -- both formally and informally.

Resist the urge to "prove" yourself too quickly. Allow time to be your best ally. Accept help from others. Learn the lay of the land and think about the various ways in which your unique interests, abilities, and background may be needed and appreciated.

Exude the idea that you feel you are discovering a rich, worthwhile new lifestyle instead of being "sucked into a black hole!"

## FRUSTRATIONS

As a newcomer uninitiated to living within the military community, you may be an object of discussion and curiosity to others. You also may discover your own preconceived ideas about military wives! Stereotypes are often a two-way street.

It is all too easy to judge people based on stereotypes. As you are in the throes of feeling very much like a newcomer, remember that it takes initiative and persistence to become acquainted with others and to overcome your initial impressions of them. Adopt the attitude that every person you meet represents a unique opportunity to learn something that only they can impart. Such an approach breaks down barriers of fear and apprehension and becomes an encounter that brings out the best in everyone!

## IMPLICATIONS

The nomadic lifestyle of the military puts everyone in the position of being a newcomer at one time or another. This should create an environment where new people are always made to feel welcome in the unit. Unfortunately, this doesn't always occur and that can lead to a very stressful tour. The people you meet, nonetheless, can make it all worthwhile!

Because military people have a common base of experiences you do not have, they may not readily accept you. Don't be discouraged. You can work through initial roadblocks.

## CHAPTER 9

### COPING WITH TRAUMA

#### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

"Spare nothing in your efforts to assist the survivors in every way." -General Maxwell Thurman

In the family life of a unit, death is a real possibility. Loss is a continuing reality to military families. We found that the way in which it was handled had long range effects on the unit family and the immediate survivors.

Dealing with trauma requires special reflection. There are various types of trauma (divorce, miscarriages, death), and each one is difficult for the individuals involved. Realize that discomfort and awkwardness occur for all concerned. People who want to help may feel guilty because they haven't suffered this particular tragedy; value and belief systems may clash; or they simply may not know what to say or do.

#### HOW TO APPROACH IT

In the event of the death of a service member, the military handles all the casualty assistance requirements. Hopefully, you will not have to concern yourself with that aspect of the situation. You may offer to help, but let the survival assistance officer (SAO) do his job. Ensure that you have one person identified to coordinate with the SAO.

You can take care of the family support issues. Sometimes you need to inquire discreetly about these items and not bother the grieving family. Other times you need to involve them in the decision-making process. Some areas of assistance are:

1. Household-related items:
  - Are they in quarters?
  - Are rent or utility bills due?
  - Will gifts of food be needed?
  - Are there any dietary restrictions?
  - Are there pets needing care?

2. Children:

- Do they need babysitting?
- What are their ages?
- Are there any medical problems?
- What about school arrangements?
- Should they go to friends' houses?

3. Family and friends:

- Do they want to see anyone or be left alone?
- Who needs to be contacted?
- Do they need lodging?
- Are there any transportation requirements?
- Are there friends nearby? Neighbors?
- Does everyone speak and understand English?

4. Outside influences:

- Was the employer contacted?
- Are there any other support institutions involved?
- What about church support?
- Are there appointments to be canceled?

5. Unit family:

- Who in the FSG can best help (listener, meal preparers, babysitters, transporters, etc.)?
- What impact is this having on the unit?
- Is there a need to talk or process?
- What has been done to dispel rumors?
- Does everyone know it is okay to show emotion?
- Has a list of those who provided support to the family been prepared for their future reference?

6. Special arrangements for funerals:

- Should people send flowers or donate money to a fund?
- Does the family need help in preparing clothes for the service?
- Is there a special request that the unit can fulfill?
- What about the children during the service?
- Will there be a gathering after the service? Do arrangements need to be made for the food, place, etc.?

## PRACTICAL IDEAS

How people can show they care:

- provide meals
- send a note, card, book, or poem
- offer to do chores or run errands
- give a plant or flowers
- provide names of those who have had similar losses
- attend any service
- take care of children
- drive or pick up family
- offer to help with housework or lawn care
- housesit during funeral
- call
- help with moving if necessary

If the family remains in the area, you may want to consider doing the following some weeks after the tragedy:

- call periodically
- invite them to dinner
- encourage members of FSG to keep in contact with them

## HELPFUL HINTS

Take your cue from the family or their closest friends regarding the needs of the grieving family. Use the chaplain to get advice.

The extent of your involvement with the family depends on your personal relationship with them. Be supportive and sincere in your efforts.

Being the commander's wife doesn't mean you have to be the one to spend all your time with the grieving family. There should be other close friends who would like to become involved, too.

When there is a tragedy, you may feel as though you have to be doing something all the time. Often just being there and being a good listener is what the family needs.



## FRUSTRATIONS

Be aware that at times like these people may criticize you for doing the wrong thing or doing too much or too little. Remember, though some may not have experienced the loss, they are affected by it just the same. Broaden your shoulders and let them vent their anger and grief. Although it's not easy, you should try to remain calm, considerate, and caring to everyone.

You may need to consider the possibility that the widow may want to continue participating in your group. Understand that this can be a delicate and highly charged situation for both you and the group.

## IMPLICATIONS

You may see many benefits by being a caring commander's wife and helping in whatever way you can in a trauma situation. The unit as a family will grow as members see your concern for others in a difficult situation.

You have no official responsibility in the unit when a loss occurs. When you reach out, you will be doing so because you care for the members of the unit. People respond to loss situations in different ways. Do whatever you feel is comfortable and don't be afraid to ask others for help.

## CHAPTER 10

### COFFEES

#### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Coffees are part of military tradition for wives. We still use the term today when we refer to our monthly meetings with the different wives' groups. Do you ever hear snickers when you use the term "coffee" because people think that we get together at coffees to eat, drink, and gossip? Well, we know that's not true.

Some people object to the term "coffee" and want to use "meeting." It doesn't matter what they're called, as long as you have them!

We thought coffees were an extremely important aspect of building group cohesiveness. It was a chance for women in the battalion to get together socially and form friendships. We wanted everyone to have the opportunity to grow together and unite as a group.

We also used this informal setting to teach meeting management techniques. We showed that meetings can accomplish an objective and still be fun!

#### HOW TO APPROACH IT

There may be three different levels of coffees in the battalion:

1. Officers' wives. These meetings are normally held monthly to conduct business and socialize. You might want to include female officers and the CSM's wife.
2. Company representatives. This is a monthly meeting with you and the wives of the CSM, company commanders, 1SGs and company representatives. Don't overlook the significance of this meeting, because it's a chance for these wives to give support to one another and share the ups and downs of their company family support programs. It also is a time to plan new or upcoming activities, evaluate existing programs, and discuss problems and

find solutions. You and the CSM's wife may run this meeting together.

3. Company wives. Everyone (officer, NCO, and enlisted wives) who belongs to the company should be invited. Each company usually takes on its own personality and traditions. It's important for the company commander's and 1SG's wives to use the team approach and work as equals. This is the best opportunity for the wives to get together on a smaller scale to form a bond with each other.

On occasion you may consider inviting the brigade commander's wife to either the officers' wives' coffee or the company representative meeting. It allows the women to get to know her in a small group setting. If you know of someone who would make a great guest speaker, invite that person. Encourage the group members to bring visiting relatives to the coffees.

Rotating hostesses gives people the opportunity to excel. Encourage co-hostessing. As a group discuss the level of entertaining at your coffees, i.e., snacks, beverages, meals, etc. Try to keep them simple so no one becomes intimidated and feels that she couldn't possibly have one.

Talk over, then establish some procedures for coffees. For instance, will you have dues and who will be the treasurer? What about a farewell gift and the payment procedure? Should the business part come first? Will you have a raffle and if so, who provides the gift?

The hostess needs to know how many people will attend her coffee. Discuss with the group how you want to handle this: R.s.v.p. or regrets only or call if you're coming. You may have to make the final decision.

Even though your coffees may be on the same day of each month, the hostess needs to send invitations. Let the hostess use her imagination with the type of invitation she chooses. The group may want to decide how to send the monthly invitations (mail or distribution) or leave it up to the hostess. Make sure your roster of the officers' wives is up-to-date for the hostess!

If you want to model effective meeting management techniques (see Appendix M), then you need to have an agenda for the coffee. Have a newsletter or information letter prepared to send out ahead of time or give out at the coffee. This way you have an outline and the women don't have to jot down everything you say. Forward it to those who don't attend. If you send it ahead, it might be fun to have a "pop quiz" once in a while to see if they've read the information! Give a small prize to the person who has the most correct answers! How about a free year's subscription to the coffee newsletter?!?!

## PRACTICAL IDEAS

The hostess may want to have a demonstration or develop a theme for her coffee. Encourage this kind of initiative! Suggest some options to the group for an activity at the coffee. Some possibilities are:

- wedding or baby pictures
- slumber party
- costume party
- tacky coffee
- white elephant sales
- cooking class
- Christmas ornament exchange
- shopping tips from department stores
- lessons on Army protocol (see Appendix O, P)
- community representatives
- share-a-craft
- recipe swaps
- question & answer session with the chaplain or battalion commander
- book swap
- couples' coffee

What should you include in your coffee group newsletter?

- upcoming battalion or company activities with dates
- future coffee dates and hostesses
- update on past activities or group decisions
- welcomes and farewells
- birthdays or anniversaries that month
- updated roster
- telephone tree (see Appendix G)
- dates at a glance
- fun personal information

When you need volunteers for the Thrift Shop, hostesses for coffees, or help with upcoming unit activities, have a sign-up sheet already prepared with the activity title and date.

## HELPFUL HINTS

You should decide as a group whether you will have group special touches, i.e., cards and gifts. If the group wants to do this, make sure you don't leave out anyone. You may want to put someone in charge.

One sensitive area is baby showers: when; where; for which number baby; individual or group gift. Make a group decision if possible. One suggestion would be not to hold baby showers at coffees. You may want to start a baby basket at coffees. Gifts are anonymously placed in the basket to be opened later at home. For babies other than first born, you may want to have a money tree.

## FRUSTRATIONS

What about R.s.v.p.? This is definitely a frustration. You need to decide how you will handle this for the coffees. Advantages and disadvantages for each method are:

1. Regrets only. This means you only call the hostess if you are not coming. Pro: It saves those who always attend an extra phone call. Con: You can't be sure that the people who don't call are actually coming. Perhaps they didn't receive the invitation.

2. Call if you are attending. You call the hostess only if you plan to attend. Pro: The hostess knows the number of attendees. Con: You can't be sure the people who don't call aren't coming.

3. R.s.v.p. You call whether you're attending or not. Pro: The hostess knows who is attending. Con: The hostess may have to phone everyone who doesn't call her.

If you find the solution to this universal problem, market it because you will make a lot of money!

## IMPLICATIONS

People are busy and have diverse interests in the 1990s. Coffees are still important for the group. Often coffees build the foundation for special friendships and support systems.

Don't be discouraged with attendance. This is easier said than done. Remember, those who want to attend will be there. You are providing a needed outlet.

## CHAPTER 11

### ENTERTAINING

#### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

We learned that entertaining people from the battalion accomplished many things:

- We got to know them better in a more informal atmosphere.
- They saw that the commander and his wife were human!
- It gave everyone the chance to ask questions or seek the advice of both the commander and his wife.
- It provided a chance to demonstrate the art of hospitality.
- It was an important part of building a team and cohesive unit.
- They got to know each other better away from work.
- Gathering in a smaller group made interaction fun.

We also found it important and very beneficial to have the senior leaders (brigade commander, division commander) and their wives over for informal dinners with the company commanders or staff. It gave the younger officers some exposure to senior leaders and also provided time to talk in a relaxed setting.

A closely knit group doesn't just happen; it takes work. We saw that the more opportunities we had to learn about each other, the easier life became. And we had a good time doing it!

#### HOW TO APPROACH IT

Entertaining can be great! How much you do is totally up to you. We do have some thoughts about who and how to entertain as the command team.

#### Soon after the change of command:

- company commanders, staff, CSM
- all officers and CSM (especially if there was no other specific battalion event to welcome you)
- ideas: cocktails, buffet, ice cream social, cook-out, heavy appetizers, food themes

#### Get-togethers:

- newcomers (small group as soon as possible after arrival)
- small groups of lieutenants (annually); mix up companies
- CSM and XO (new or annually)
- principal staff (annually); XO may entertain staff more frequently
- company commanders (every other month; rotate houses; go out to dinner)
- farewells (CSM, XO, S-3, company commanders)
- parties (officers, senior NCOs)
- ideas: sit-down dinners, buffet with trays, cook-out, brunch, food themes, luncheon, dessert, potlucks, heavy appetizers

#### New Year's Day Reception:

- Army tradition; can be held at other times
- all officers and CSM
- brigade commander, XO, CSM
- shifts by companies (45 minutes each) or all at one time (2 hours)
- traditionally dress blues/Sunday dress
- ideas: heavy appetizers, punch, desserts (see Appendix N)

#### Wives only:

- get-togethers during deployments
- meetings
- ideas: potlucks, game night, desserts, food themes

#### Other ways of getting together:

- go to a restaurant
- picnics
- have informal get-togethers at the O'Club Friday night. Then suggest staying for dinner (dutch!). Impromptu gatherings are sometimes more fun than a scheduled event.

## PRACTICAL IDEAS

- serve dinner an hour after arrival
- serve soup or salad at end of the social hour while the guests are still seated in the living room
- choose menu so individual dishes take about the same amount of time to prepare and cook
- invest in lap trays
- serve everything on one plate when using trays; have utensils and napkin already on tray
- collect large serving bowls, platters, utensils
- collect and use recipes for main dish casseroles

## HELPFUL HINTS

- keep it simple
- use what you're comfortable with -- china, stoneware, paper
- don't be afraid to serve a formal sit-down dinner with a small group
- don't be afraid to try a new dish
- is not necessary to have a lot of appetizers
- try not to spend all your time in the kitchen
- keep away from last minute sauces, etc.
- keep a diary of what and whom you serve
- stay relaxed and your guests will too
- rent or borrow items from rental companies, OWC, O'Club, or neighbors

## FRUSTRATIONS

R.s.v.p.: Since the invitation is to the commander's house, it is appropriate for the S1 to call those who have not responded a couple of days before the function. It would be better if your husband gave the list to the S1 instead of you.

Your husband may want to talk to the officers about R.s.v.p. It is important for military members to learn early in their careers about this act of common courtesy. For the married couples, either the military member or his wife may respond to the invitation.

You may not receive a hospitality gift from your invited guests (i.e., flowers, candy, wine). Graciously thank those who



do bring one. It is not appropriate for you to point out this custom. You can always set the example if you're invited to someone's house.

Do not expect reciprocal invitations. All guests may not return your invitation with one of their own. Don't feel slighted! They may not even think that they should.

Not everyone will send you a thank you note after coming to your house. Just appreciate the ones you do receive. Again, set the example by writing a note after you have attended a special function.

Entertaining is expensive. Having others to your home puts the burden of the expense on you and not the guest (except for babysitting). Find dishes that are not costly.

### IMPLICATIONS

Entertaining can help defuse the inherent competition in any group. By getting the group together, cohesion develops and the competition becomes healthy because everyone starts caring for each other and the unit.

It's much easier to get to know your unit in small groups than at a hail and farewell. It is especially nice to get to know those you seldom see.

The command group (battalion commander and company commanders and wives) can especially benefit from frequent informal gatherings. It helps build a unified team. It also makes the time everyone spends in the unit special!

Having frequent service members' only social gatherings can create potentially serious problems. Be sure wives are included as much as possible.

## CHAPTER 12

### LEAVING THE BATTALION

#### WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

The departure of a command couple is a major event in the life of the unit. It is the end of your chapter in the continuing story of the battalion and the beginning of another. We found that this period encompassed strong emotions, much social activity, the meeting of final responsibilities, the expression of gratitude, and the difficult task of saying farewell. We think that with forethought and an abiding concern for others, this can be a positive and special time for all.

#### HOW TO APPROACH IT

We believe that you should consider giving at least as much effort and energy to leaving the battalion as you did to joining the unit and its people. In many regards, you may wish to invest even more of yourself. At this stage, as you read this segment of the book, we imagine you may readily agree.

Having now lived, worked, made friends, shared experiences, and been intertwined in the life of the battalion, you will undoubtedly have many ideas about how you want to leave. We offer the following recommendations because we have been down a similar road:

- Decide in advance as a couple and as an individual how you will leave the battalion. Plan the activities you will host.
- As early as you can and as makes sense, establish contact with the incoming commander's wife. Begin to coordinate with her to smooth her way into the unit.
- Seriously think about how you want to spend your time immediately following the change of command.
- Discuss the change of command and reception with your husband. Though both affairs are official military functions, offer your input.

- Lay the groundwork for moving if you will PCS.
- Watch for and prepare to handle heightened emotions.
- Contemplate your public and private "thank yous."
- A heart-to-heart talk with a friend who has already "been there" will help you to anticipate your feelings and understand they are normal.

## PRACTICAL IDEAS

### BEFORE THE CHANGE OF COMMAND

In the early stages of communicating with the incoming commander's wife, give her:

- Copies of the battalion officers' roster and your wives' group roster.
- Any available group pictures. Let her begin putting faces to the names.
- Information about housing, the local military and civilian communities, the climate, schools, PX, medical support, the commissary, license and car tag procedures, and any other items that might be of concern or interest.
- The opportunity to ask questions, which may require answers sooner rather than later.

When the incoming commander's wife arrives:

- Personally and warmly welcome her.
- Offer your assistance with getting settled.
- Invite the new command team into your home. Consider organizing or giving a social function to introduce them to key people from the unit.
- Brief her on specifics of the unit (see Appendix T). Give her any after action reports, notes, historical material, or details at your disposal.
- Although the husbands should be exchanging information, check to make sure she has no questions and understands plans for the change of command and reception.

- It is thoughtful if you can arrange to meet with her before the actual start of the ceremony. A small welcome gift is nice at this point. Spend a little time talking, absorb and enjoy the wonder of the day, and tell her to have a ball! Walk over to the ceremony grounds and enter together.

Give generously of your time and attention to those in the battalion:

- Be open and respond to the approaching changes. Talk about nervousness over what's ahead, questions on people's minds, where you'll be going, a bit about the new command team.
- Throw your final round of parties.
- Give farewell gifts, mementos, or flowers.
- Write letters of appreciation or recommendation (you or your husband) for unit contributions and support.
- Though it may be "old hat" for some, go over the ins and outs of a change of command ceremony and the reception.
- Ensure that a welcome, traditionally coordinated by the XO's wife, is being planned for the new commander's wife. Quietly monitor the arrangements, if necessary.
- If the wives are planning a farewell for you, in addition to a welcome for the new commander's wife, talk over with the XO's wife the division of responsibilities. It may be too much work for her to handle both. Get the S3's wife or others involved.
- This will be a period of many unit activities and commitments. Be up front with the wives. Tell them a few months ahead what they might expect as far as time and financial considerations (special parties, dinners, flowers, gifts, etc.).
- It may come in handy to carry and give out notecards with your new address. Or, you could send it later in your thank yous.

Don't overlook those outside the battalion:

- Have a special gathering for your husband's boss and wife with key battalion members. Publicly thank them.

- Write personal notes to anyone in the community who showed you particular kindness, was an especially helpful advisor or mentor, or for whatever reason was "there" for you.
- Get together with sister battalion commanders and wives for a last time. Show your gratitude for their friendship and team support.

#### FOLLOWING THE CHANGE OF COMMAND

- Understand the need to cut ties. Allow loyalties to begin to shift. Accept that the unit and you must move on.
- Don't attend the new commander's wife's welcome.
- If staying in the area or joining the old unit's higher headquarters, be kind and keep your distance. This may be impossible in all instances, but generally, try not to interfere or impede the changes that should be taking place.
- Send thank you notes for any farewell gifts, dinners, parties, get-togethers. If you received gifts, you may want to know who participated so that the appropriate people can be thanked.
- Have plans for the rest of the change of command day. Perhaps be very, very busy? Think about getting away.
- Talk about the command tour with your husband and family. Discuss the pros and cons, what you learned, how you fared in reaching your goals, what was a surprise, and what were never-to-be-forgotten moments.

<b>HELPFUL HINTS</b>
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Think about what you have learned and gained as a person from the command experience. Feel good about yourself and take pride in your contributions. It may literally be years before others truly understand or appreciate what you did for them or gave to the unit. Inwardly, at a minimum, feel satisfied and happy about your efforts.

When talking with your successor, honestly share both the ups and downs of your two years with her. Tell her about your

accomplishments, super moments, and special times. But be open as well about the difficulties, sacrifices, and tough days.

If you are an active person, realize that your daily pace may not be the same after the change of command. Suddenly, you may have a life of your own again. Find some activity or interest into which to channel your energies.

If, however, you're ready for a rest, take one. Be good to yourself for awhile, unwind, and just relax. This will give you energy to refocus and forge on.

Talk, talk, talk with your husband. Leaving is much easier said than done. You may still think about, worry, wonder, and continually have the unit in your thoughts. This is only natural. Let your husband know how you feel; chances are he's thinking many of the same thoughts!

Don't feel guilty if you're glad the command tour is over. There are lots of valid reasons why you could be ready to move on. There are probably as many reactions to leaving as there are people involved. Don't be drawn into comparisons with others.

Avoid making promises that you can't keep. If you say you'll write, follow through. If you explain you'd rather not discuss unit business once you've left, don't start in with the first phone call or letter. If you invite virtually everyone to drop by or stop in at your next duty station, be prepared to have company.

Be discreet. You may have many stories and tales to tell. Be respectful and considerate of others in deciding what to repeat.

Be willing to discuss what command time meant to you, what it was like, and what you learned. Don't miss opportunities to pool your ideas, programs, or resource materials with people who are interested or could benefit. You have a lot of valuable information, and you have been down a path still new to others. Throw your two cents worth into the pot!

## FRUSTRATIONS

You may just be getting the hang of your role and, surprise, it's time to call it quits. This can be irritating, unnerving, and sad all at the same time.

You may find that the wives and people in the battalion show more emotion, interest, and friendship toward you at the end of

your tour than at any other point. You may wish they had been that way sooner! Accept their attention and special kindnesses with gratitude and grace.

There can be a feeling of utter loneliness and absolute separation after the change of command. Everything is OVER, the people are GONE, and you are ALONE. It has to be this way. Others will think it is hard, too. The break needs to be made and life must go on.

Try not to be perturbed when the new commander's wife does not follow the footsteps you left in the sand. "Change is good." Remember that even when a program important to you, which you took great pains to get off the ground, is dropped. It really is her ballgame now and you're not on the team anymore. This may make you miserable or angry, but that should be the end of it.

### IMPLICATIONS

How you handle leaving the battalion sets the example. Some will be going through the experience for the first time and not know what to expect. Others will know or realize that they can look to you for their cues. Model and lead to the end. You can teach and support by what you say and do.

If you organize in advance for your departure, you should have time for "special touches." You will be glad you aren't rushed beyond belief and have the chance to show people how much they mean to you. Particularly at this point, everyone appreciates your gratitude and individual attention.

If you choose not to brief your successor and do whatever possible to ease the transition, there probably will be a considerable cost to both her and the unit. She will be forced to work in a vacuum and everyone will likely suffer the consequences. In our opinions, this is unfair and should be avoided.

If you think through leaving the battalion and can even find bright spots looming ahead, it should help you make a cleaner break. You will have a deeper understanding of your accomplishments. You will free yourself and your family to make plans for the future. You may discover a renewed interest in activities, people, and events outside the unit. You might actually look forward to having greater personal space and independence again.





## TOPICS YOU MIGHT INCLUDE

As you ask questions in different areas, state first what is currently happening. See if they agree with that policy. Then offer some alternatives and let them choose various options. Include a line for their ideas on the subject whenever you can.

### 1. MONTHLY COFFEES:

State the purpose and tone of coffees as you would like to see them.

Then ask about,

- a. Programs and activities? Ideas?
- b. Same day each month? Time of day?
- c. Raffles? Who provides the gift?
- d. Secret pal? How often?
- e. Dues each month? Set amount per year or per tour?

### 2. WELCOMING NEWCOMERS:

Explain the importance of welcoming new people into the battalion.

Then ask,

- a. What should they receive?
- b. Ideas: meal, plant, visit, phone call, unit pin, welcome letter, welcome packet contents?
- c. Establish committee?

### 3. FAREWELL GIFT:

Explain the current farewell gift policy.

Then ask,

- a. Is there already one? Satisfied or want new one?
- b. How many choices?
- c. Limit cost? How much?
- d. Options:
  - Treasury help pay? How much?
  - Wife pay all? Treasury pay all?

### 4. PROVIDING MEALS:

Explain the current policy for providing meals in the battalion.

Then ask,

- a. Should there be a program? Should we continue?
- b. Committee run or all participate?
- c. Identify meal preparers? Keep roster?
- d. Who receives meals?

5. BABY SHOWERS:

Explain what's happening now.

Then ask,

- a. Held concurrently with coffees?
- b. Or separate function?
- c. For first baby only or any baby?
- d. For those who participate in coffees only?
- e. Ideas: offer suggestions and ask for theirs

6. SOCIAL FUNCTIONS:

State your tentative plans. Tell them what basics you have in mind.

Then ask,

- a. What to do as a battalion?
- b. More wives' functions during deployments? Ideas?
- c. "All-ranks" wives' functions? Ideas?
- d. Annual dinner dance? What rank?
- e. Hail and farewell ideas?
- f. Holiday parties: Christmas, Easter?
- g. As a group interested in going out to lunch, dinner? Suggestions?
- h. How many activities with children?

7. FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP:

Outline the battalion's family support requirements.

Then ask,

- a. What should the battalion do to support families?
- b. Interested in separate company coffees?

8. NEWSLETTER:

State the importance of a newsletter.

Then ask,

- a. Think it's a good idea?
- b. Willing to help?
- c. What should be included?

9. VOLUNTEERING:

Explain the battalion's involvement in community volunteering.

Then ask,

- a. Like to volunteer?
- b. Interested in volunteering? Thrift Shop? Others?

**NOTES:**

1. We think a survey is a great idea, but be warned the response may be minimal.
2. You don't need to announce the exact number of completed questionnaires returned to you.
3. Know that you've made the effort and offered the wives the opportunity to give you their ideas.

## APPENDIX B

### SPONSORSHIP

The military chain of command generally provides for an official sponsorship program. There is also an opportunity for you as an individual and leader to positively influence this issue.

We believe that how you welcome someone into the unit sends an important message. We think you should consider becoming involved so you can maximize initial good feelings, supplement active duty efforts in a meaningful way, and model the warmest of regard for others.

By showing your concern and interest, you can get newcomers off to the most favorable start possible. You might:

1. Include your own sponsorship letter in packets sent to incoming unit members.
  - write about: housing, PX, commissary, medical support, the weather, unit events, schools, job market, local attractions; be upbeat
  - convince them they are joining a terrific organization
  - say you're anxious to meet them and have them in the unit
2. Willingly and happily participate in giving newcomers a first-rate welcome into the battalion.
  - seek them out
  - introduce yourself, talk, offer assistance
  - meet one-on-one with officers' wives
  - enclose a personal welcome letter in unit information folders
  - enthusiastically describe and show pride in the unit
  - promote a sense of family
  - tell them how important they will be to the unit and how glad people are to have them there
  - take part in unit newcomers' briefings
  - trouble shoot major difficulties you may hear about: alert the official side of the house and attempt to get help as needed
  - freely introduce them around whenever there's a chance

3. Encourage EVERYONE to take part in reaching out and supporting others.
  - whether serving as an official sponsor or not, appeal to unit members to be active in lending a hand
  - call to say hello
  - offer help with settling in
  - have new folks over to your home
  - show around the post and local area
  - invite and bring to first functions
  - approach them at gatherings; don't force them to come to you
  - assist them with meeting others
  - check to make sure they are receiving unit information and know about upcoming events
  
4. If you have time and wish to take it on, you may want to develop a "Newcomers' Guide" for the officers and their families.
  - cover sheet with unit name and crest
  - entry for each officer (to include wife, children, and pets)
  - each page has photo, brief biographical information, hobbies and interests
  - after initial production of guide, hand out latest additions at newcomers' hail; everyone then puts in existing book
  - guide given to newcomers when inprocessing into the unit; can immediately begin to recognize faces and names; help to start conversations
  - may be appreciated by your husband's boss and his wife who see unit personnel and family members less frequently



**NOTES:**

1. This is an example of an information sheet that the S1 shop could give to every married soldier and single parent as they inprocess into the battalion.
2. Routing suggestions from the S1 shop:
  - a. The chaplain may want it for reference. The chaplain could initial it and then give it to your husband.
  - b. Your husband could give it to you.
  - c. You could then give the sheets to the appropriate company representatives at your monthly meetings.
3. The information on this sheet would be helpful not only for the family support leaders in the companies, but also for you in updating your address listings for the battalion newsletter!









**NOTES:**

1. Use any company representative in place of the above and put the appropriate title, i.e., Executive Officer's Wife, etc.

2. When the unit deploys, add:

Rear Detachment Commander	LT I. M. Glad	555-0987
Rear Detachment Chaplain	CH Jim	555-5634

APPENDIX F

**FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP COMMAND LETTERS**

Check your local post regulations concerning a unit newsletter. If your battalion newsletter is command sponsored and contains family support group information, you can mail it to all family members in your battalion at government expense. To do this, however, you must follow your local regulations.

A few items to think about when publishing a battalion newsletter are:

1. Be sure to read chapter 4-2 of DA Pam 608-47, "A Guide to Establishing Family Support Groups."

2. Use your unit nickname in the title (i.e., "The Blue Zebras Chronicle") on the front page. You also can include your unit crest or logo.

3. You must use the term "Family Support Group Command Letter" rather than "Newsletter."

4. Your husband needs to write a command information letter on the front page.

5. You can mail 5 pieces of standard-size (8 1/2 x 11) paper (which equates to 10 pages if you are printing double-sided) before the postage increases.

6. Use legal size envelopes with the return address of the unit in the upper left-hand corner.

7. You cannot include flyers or recipes. This is a command FSG letter. You may be able to include personal information, i.e., births, promotions, newcomers, etc. The intent of this letter is to provide information to all members of the unit and to help build unit esprit de corps.

8. If you are not the editor, make sure you read the newsletter before it goes final.

9. It may be difficult to get information from the company reporters. Send reminders a week before the deadline date. Two other ideas you may use if you don't receive information are:

- a. Ask your husband to remind the company that they haven't submitted the information that month.

b. Print "No information submitted this month" on that company's page.

10. Keeping updated rosters will be difficult. Ask your husband to help with this one. The companies will need to provide you with the information.

11. Instead of mailing the newsletter to each family, try attaching it to the soldier's LES.

12. As the battalion gets newsletters returned for incorrect addresses, ask your husband if he will give these out to the company commanders at the next command and staff meeting. At the same time he could emphasize why this letter is important!

13. You can send everyone a newsletter to keep them informed, but you can't make them read it. So to add humor to an important problem, have a "pop quiz" at your next wives gathering to see if everyone has read the last newsletter!

#### WHAT DO YOU INCLUDE IN THIS LETTER?

Use your imagination to make your newsletter interesting and fun to read. Find someone who is creative and put her on your editing staff! You can use graphics and/or photos as long as they don't take up the whole page. The newsletter contents could include:

Page 1: Title, unit crest or logo  
Commander's letter

Page 2: Chain of Concern

Page 3: Letter from you  
(thank yous, expand on upcoming events, reflections on previous events, recruiting for volunteers, solicit ideas and information, congratulations, awards, rumor control, cheerleading)

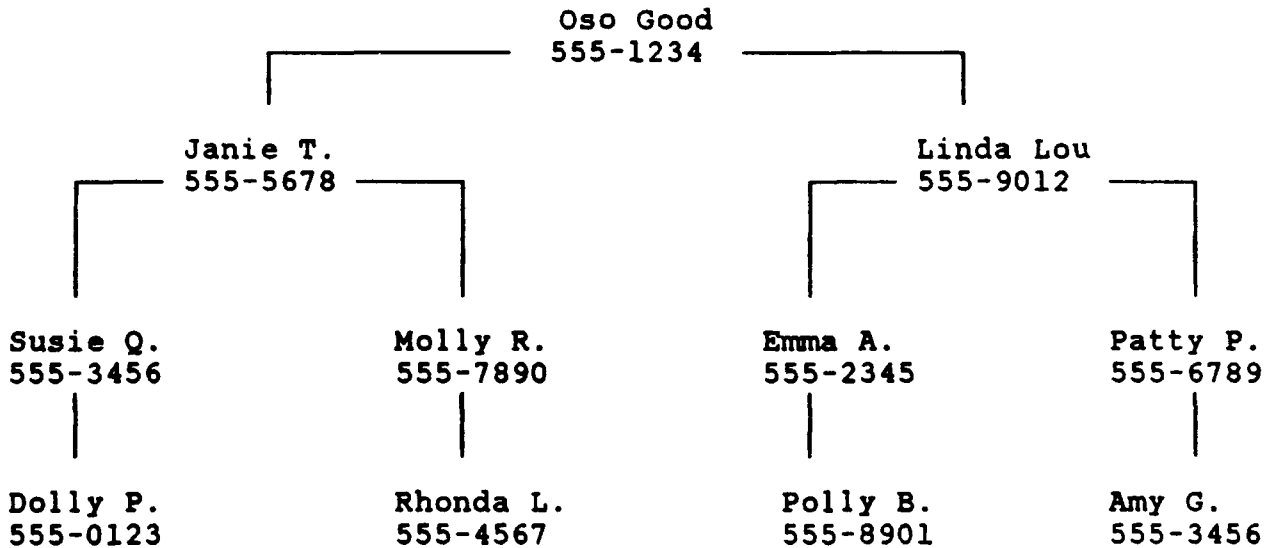
Additional pages: Letter from battalion CSM  
Letter from battalion CSM's wife  
Letter from chaplain  
Company Information (HHC, A, B, C, D)  
Community News  
Unit Dates at a Glance  
Reminders of Events

APPENDIX G

TELEPHONE TREE (SAMPLE)



19-91ST BATTALION OFFICERS' WIVES' TELEPHONE TREE



You call the person below your name. If that person does not answer, skip her and go to the next name and pass on the message. BUT please keep trying to contact the name you skipped. The last name in each row calls Oso back to let her know you received the message.

10 June 1991



**NOTES:**

1. Describe the audience in the title (i.e., 19-91st Battalion Officers' Wives' Telephone Tree).
2. Adapt this to any company or section. The company commander's and LSG's wives could be at the top and the columns would be for each platoon.
3. If long distance calls are involved, try to arrange the columns to minimize them.
4. Remember to put the new date on the tree when you update it!
5. When giving instructions for using the tree, tell callers to identify the call as "THIS IS A TELEPHONE TREE MESSAGE." It will indicate that the message needs to be transmitted quickly.
6. Tell the group to let you know if there is a mistake with the information printed on the telephone tree so you can correct it.







## APPENDIX I

### AGENDA FOR A COMPANY-LEVEL FSG MEETING

This is an example of a first meeting with a company-level family support group. You can adapt it to your situation and revise it to use for later meetings.

#### 1. Introduction

a. Introduce yourself, other speakers, and key persons. Explain the purpose of this meeting. Be upbeat, enthusiastic, and keep your remarks brief. This is your opportunity to set the tone of not only this meeting but what you want to accomplish with the program.

b. State the goals of the meeting. For the first meeting your goals might be to:

- get to know each other
- decide how to form an FSG
- outline the goals of the FSG
- have some fun

c. Go over the ground rules/group norms. Some suggested ones are:

- all wives are equal regardless of their husband's rank
- respect each other's ideas
- keep what's said confidential
- try to stay on track

d. Present your agenda. For example:

- introduction (goals and ground rules)
- ice breaker
- large group discussion and survey
- small group discussion
- small group reports and survey results
- closing
- refreshments

e. It might be helpful to present the goals, ground rules, and agenda on charts or in handouts.

f. Ask for any questions or need for clarification.

## 2. Ice Breaker

- a. The purpose of an ice breaker is to help people feel more comfortable in a group so they can get to know each other better.
- b. There are lots of different ice breakers you can use. Some examples are at the end of this appendix.

## 3. Large Group Discussion

- a. Brainstorming is an effective technique for soliciting ideas from a group.
- b. Quickly go over the basic rules for brainstorming:
  - all ideas are acceptable
  - no discussion allowed
  - it's OK to "piggyback" ideas
  - don't judge any ideas at this point
- c. Brainstorm together the issue under consideration. For your first meeting you may want to discuss this question: "What do we want our family support group to do in this company?"
- d. Record all responses and then start eliminating some ideas to come up with the three most important goals. This process should take 10 minutes or so.
- e. If you would like to survey the group, this would be the best time to do it. One way to accomplish this is to give out a questionnaire. Collect it once completed.

## 4. Small Group Discussion

- a. Divide into small groups.
- b. Now brainstorm ways you can accomplish the goals you developed during the large group discussion. Allow 15-20 minutes.
- c. Have chart paper and markers available for each group.
- d. Ask the group to select a recorder during the brainstorming session and a presenter to report their results to the large group.

## 5. Small Group Reports and Results

- a. Ask presenters to report their ideas. Be complimentary.

b. Share the results of the survey with the group.

c. The group may have decided a specific course of action to take for the company after the brainstorming sessions. Encourage them and ask for volunteers to head committees.

6. Closing

a. Determine date, time, and location of next meeting.

b. Ask if they have specific goals to suggest for that second meeting.

c. Thank them for coming. Express your appreciation for their support and enthusiasm.

7. Refreshments

a. A great way to end a meeting is to eat!

b. This is also a good way to keep the discussion and enthusiasm alive within the group and allow for small talk among themselves.



**SAMPLE ICE BREAKERS**

**A. SENTENCE STEMS:**

1. I see myself in 10 years doing \_\_\_\_\_.

2. I choose friends who \_\_\_\_\_.

3. One place I've never been, but would like to go is \_\_\_\_\_.

4. If I had \$2 million, I would \_\_\_\_\_.

5. I met my husband \_\_\_\_\_.

**B. WORLD MAP:** people get together according to previous assignments.

**C. STATE MAP:** people get together according to where they grew up.

D. FAMILY SIZE: people get together according to the number of children they have.

E. SPORTS: people get together according to the favorite sport they either play or watch.

F. BINGO:

1. Prizes may be awarded for the first person to complete the sheet.

2. Allow 15-30 minutes to finish.

BINGO

Directions: Find ONE person to sign each block. A person can sign your sheet only once. Fill your blocks until you have BINGO.

---

likes to	*	same	*	doesn't wear	*	same birth	*	likes
read	*	home state	*	a watch	*	month	*	to
	*		*		*		*	walk

---

has most	*	same last	*	same color	*	likes to	*	likes
children	*	assignment	*	of eyes	*	bowl	*	horses

---

lives off	*	new	*		*	wearing	*	same
post	*	mother	*	FREE	*	black	*	middle
	*		*		*	shoes	*	initial

---

same	*	married	*	pregnant	*	does not	*	plays
age	*	same	*	with first	*	drive	*	piano
	*	month	*	child	*		*	

---

likes to	*	lives	*	never lived	*	has no	*	likes
sew	*	on post	*	in	*	children	*	to ski
	*		*	Germany	*		*	

---



APPENDIX J

**IDEAS FOR FUND RAISERS**

Check local regulations before planning fundraising events. The first step is to call either JAG or the Directorate of Personnel and Community Activities (DPCA). Do not take this lightly!

Some local merchants gladly donate items for fund raisers!

**Carnivals:**

game booths (basketball throw and dunk tank)  
food booths

**Fun Run/Volksmarches:**

entry fee  
sponsorship of \$\$\$ per mile  
food booths along the way or at the end  
prizes (solicit donations)

**Car Washes (donations are best)**

**Dog Washes**

**Surprise Packs:**

package boxes of donated items (baked goods, gum, soda, candy, toothpaste, razors, etc.)  
have auction  
sell raffle tickets; pick winner out in field

**Bake Sales:**

company areas, PX  
pick specific days of week; repeat day after pay day  
at special training sites  
meal time or evenings  
donation only

**Baked Goods' Bags:**

gather together at someone's house (bake cookies, make candy)  
put in plastic bags  
auction off in field  
ask for donations

**Booths:**

food (taco, hot dog, popcorn, cotton candy, nachos,  
sandwiches)  
take advantage of post celebrations (July 4th)  
at sporting events  
bazaars

**Auctions:**

services (yardwork, meals, housework, babysitting, car wash)  
white elephant  
concealed package  
boxed meals  
silent (have items; put list by item; sign list with offer)  
pie throw  
commander's parking space  
commander for the day  
days off or passes for soldiers are illegal!

**Raffles:**

keep tickets cheap  
give buyers bargain with ticket sales (\$1/each; 3 for \$2)  
dinners (with babysitting)  
packages at hotels (solicit)  
quilt  
trips  
at kid's function: raffle popular kid's item  
outdoor adventures  
basket with baby items

**Flea Markets:**

Thrift Shop (unit consignment)  
local swap meet  
donated items  
yard sales and garage sales  
sell table space

**Dirty Deeds:**

decide on item or service to sell (i.e., commander shines  
boots)  
set a goal (\$ or #)  
get celebrity to do something crazy if you reach your goal  
get celebrity to do services (auction or raffle off)

**Fines:**

missing buttons on uniforms  
not wearing unit pin  
not having unit coin

**Games:**

gambling (Reno night)  
bingo  
road rally or scavenger hunt (entry fee; prize for winners)

Unit Store (homemade items on consignment)

Recycling

Piggy Bank (in company area for spare change)

Talent Show

Wrap Gifts at Christmas (wrapping and mailing)

Unit Cookbook



APPENDIX K

**BATTALION ACTIVITIES**

You can never have enough ideas for group get-togethers! Add these to your collection:

roller skating  
bowling  
picnic  
scavenger hunt  
favorite game night  
trash party/tacky party (serve TV dinners/pot pies)  
hobo party (bring a canned item to eat; put all in one pot)  
junk food party  
miniature golf  
skiing  
welcome home from field (chili, soft drinks, stew, cookies)  
children Christmas shopping days (donate items; children buy; wrap items)  
swim or pool party  
ethnic dinners  
coed sports activities  
blue jeans brunch  
casino night  
video night  
road rally  
talent show; gong show  
surprise brown bag lunches in battalion area  
dining facility family nights  
adopt a local charity (orphanage, hospital, nursing home, school, shelter)  
newlywed game  
other TV game shows  
family PT day  
family day in the field  
fun runs and volksmarches  
hairstyling or make-up clinic (solicit from local shop)  
decorate dining facility  
holiday parties (Christmas, Easter, Halloween)  
Thanksgiving dinner for families in dining facility  
adopt a soldier (longer than holidays or during holidays)  
Kris Kringle: boot outside barracks door  
holiday goodies in day rooms  
sew-ins (sew on patches)  
goodie bags for soldiers on holiday duty delivered by the commander

APPENDIX L

VOLUNTEER JOB DESCRIPTIONS (SAMPLE)

OFFICERS' WIVES' HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

We welcome new officers' wives into the 19-91st Battalion through our hospitality committee. We give two welcome gifts: a plant during a visit to the new wife's home and a unit pin at her first coffee.

Our hospitality committee consists of Oso, the chairperson (Linda Lou), and various sponsors. The chairperson's term is one year.

The battalion will notify Oso of newly arrived officers' wives either through a phone call or the 19-91st Battalion Newcomer's Sheet from the S1 shop.

Oso calls Linda Lou.

Linda Lou will then assign a sponsor to the new wife and give the sponsor the newcomer's sheet. The sponsor could be either someone who lives near the new wife or from the same company.

Responsibilities of the sponsor include calling the new wife; getting her pertinent information; buying a welcome plant (reimbursement comes from the treasury); making a welcome visit; and assembling the 19-91st Battalion welcome packet.

The sponsor will:

- call the new wife within three days
- find out something about her and her family (when they arrived; children; interests; where they live; waiting for post housing; where they are coming from)
- tell her of battalion activities: next monthly coffee, upcoming events
- ask if there are any situations we need to know (car problems; unfamiliar with Army benefits -- PX, commissary, hospital; household goods didn't arrive or are damaged; local friends or family; special needs; language barrier)
- get her updated address and phone number
- give her your address and phone number
- arrange for someone to escort her to her first coffee





**MEALS ON WHEELS PROGRAM**

The 19-91st Battalion provides meals to officers' families with illnesses, new babies, emergencies, etc. Our purpose is to help make a situation easier for the family.

Janie T. is the chairperson. There is not a committee of volunteer meal preparers. Janie T. will maintain a roster and call people as we need to provide meals.

Oso will call Janie T. when a meal is needed. Anyone can call Oso if they know first that there is a need for a meal.

Janie T. will call the wife or family who will receive the meal to find out the following:

- determine if there is assistance from another source
- coordinate what day is best for the meal
- find out if there are any special diet restrictions
- make arrangements how to deliver the meal (go directly to family's house, give to the husband at the battalion, or give to a neighbor)
- ask what time is best to deliver the meal
- make sure we have specific directions to the house

Then, Janie T. will call volunteers to prepare the meal according to these guidelines:

- include three to five people so one person is not making most of the meal
- divide the meal into several parts: main dish, vegetable, salad and bread, and dessert
- coordinate delivery among meal preparers (one house as the drop off, give to husband at the battalion, give to neighbor, each preparer take the meal, etc.)
- explain any particular details about delivery
- give directions

Janie T. will maintain a list of who prepares what part of the meal and for whom. This helps us to return the dishes to the proper owners and to avoid calling on the same people over and over.

We include new wives in order to make them feel part of the unit. We ask those wives who work outside the home or have difficulty delivering meals to contribute a dessert or bread and send it in with their husbands.



## APPENDIX M

### MANAGEMENT OF GROUP MEETINGS

We've all attended meetings that were a waste of our time! How can you avoid this from happening? You need to prepare ahead of time, know how to conduct the business, and follow up with the results from the meeting.

#### BEFORE A MEETING

- set a purpose
- plan course of meeting and time limits
- write an agenda (be specific; use active voice not passive)
- add personal notes to agendas if necessary
- send out agenda
- gather and disseminate additional information
- brief key people
- develop an opening statement and a starting question
- plan physical setting
- arrange resources
- invite experts
- be there early and come prepared

#### DURING A MEETING

- make introductory remarks
- elicit additions to agenda
- make sure all materials are there
- create proper atmosphere
- keep written record
- watch group dynamics
- be aware of your different roles
- use props
- acknowledge distractions
- set, review and enforce norms
- stick to decisions
- assign tasks with target dates
- watch your time and end on time

#### AFTER A MEETING

- reflect on positives and negatives
- follow up and be available
- send out meeting minutes as soon as possible
- encourage completion of tasks
- deal with unfinished business

## APPENDIX N

### IDEAS FOR A NEW YEAR'S DAY RECEPTION

We know how overwhelming it can be to open your home for a reception to 75+ people! So we thought we would share with you some of our ideas about our New Year's Day Receptions. This information can apply to any reception.

Depending on the amount of room you have in your quarters or house, you can have everyone over together or break the group into shifts. If you must plan for shifts, make sure you allow yourself plenty of time between them (about 20 minutes) to replenish food and beverage.

Whom do you invite? There are no rules. Some ideas are: all the officers and their wives, CSM and his wife, 1SGs and their wives, and Brigade commander/XO/CSM and their wives.

Should you send out invitations? Yes! You can do them yourself by long hand or have some printed. Consider buying holiday note paper and running them on the computer.

What's the dress? You and your husband must decide. Traditionally it is dress blues for the military and Sunday dress for the women.

Does it have to be New Year's Day? Again, that's been the tradition. But you can have it anytime during the holidays. Check for other holiday activities for possible conflicts.

How long should it be? If you can have everyone at once, two hours is sufficient. If you are arranging shifts, consider 45 minutes for each one. Make time adjustments that suit your personal desires.

If you can afford to pay for help, great! Ask your own teenagers or hire others to assist. Otherwise, consider asking the XO and his wife if they wouldn't mind coming the entire time to help you. Make lists ahead for what needs to be done before the reception starts, during shifts, and when it's over.

How much do you need to fix? You should decide what kind of reception you may want to have: heavy or light hors d'oeuvres, desserts only, or combination. It is not necessary to serve a meal!

Because you may have a combination of hot and cold items, you probably will be putting some things out at the last minute. A hint: write down the item on a small piece of paper and put the paper where the item goes on the table. If you have people helping you, it will be easier for them to know where to put trays instead of asking you each time, "Where does this go?" Also, put food everywhere people will be circulating to include the kitchen if you have punch set up there. You want people to eat, so make the food accessible to them!

What about calling cards? That isn't as much of a tradition as it used to be, but people still have calling cards. Put a tray beside your guest book so those who bring cards can leave them. It's actually fun to see who brings them!

Do you put out your silver? Yes! Put out everything you have! You can mix and match pottery, crystal, silver, and pewter. If you have only one punch bowl, use large bowls for the additional ones. You also can use paper plates, napkins, and cups. Check with the O'Club or OWC or borrow from your friends.

What do you serve? Make it easy on yourself. Prepare ahead and freeze. Don't plan too many hot items because you may have a problem keeping them hot. We thought we would give you some suggestions. Because we are not putting actual recipes here, we'll just outline broad items you may want to serve. For a combination reception of heavy and light hors d'oeuvres and desserts:

- Cheese and meat tray with rolls
- condiments: mayo, mustard
- Cheese ball and crackers
- Vegetable tray with dip
- Fruit tray with dip
- Hot cheese or meat dips with chips
- Cold cheese or meat spreads with crackers
- Dips and chips
- Pickles and olives tray
- Holiday cookies, finger cakes
- Mints and nuts
- Punch: fruit punch: alcoholic and nonalcoholic
- eggnog: plain or spiked
- wine punch

To cut costs, you might want to consider coordinating with other battalions and friends who also are having New Year's Day Receptions. It may be an opportunity to reduce the costs of invitations, serving pieces, food, etc.





4. When leaving a unit party, say goodnight to:
- everybody, including the waitress and the cook
  - the senior officer and his wife
  - no one; just cut and run
5. When you receive an invitation to a social function, you should acknowledge it:
- within 24 hours of receiving it
  - never, just go
  - two hours before the social function
  - never, stay home
6. If you have house guests and are invited to a social function in someone's home:
- call your hostess and ask if your guests can come also
  - bring them along without asking
  - leave them at home
  - call and regret because you have guests
7. When someone invites you to dinner at their home, you should:
- ask who else is coming before you decide
  - ask the hostess what she is serving
  - promptly call the hostess with your reply
  - ignore the starting time and arrive when it is convenient for you
8. The commanding general invites you to a New Year's reception and you have a hangover and don't want to go. Do you:
- stay at home with an ice pack
  - send your husband and stay home with an ice pack
  - go, smile, and act brilliant
  - go with an ice pack
9. After having dinner at a senior officer's home, do you:
- go out and spend a month's paycheck on shrimp and lobster and invite them to your home
  - invite them to your home and entertain them within your means
  - reciprocate with coffee and dessert
  - ask them to stop by for a drink

10. When calling on the commander, you and your husband should take calling cards for:

- a. the adults of the family, not to exceed 3 cards apiece
- b. one card for each member including household pets
- c. all the cards you can carry. Use them; your husband is going to be promoted and then they are no longer good.

11. You write a thank you note after:

- a. a luncheon at someone's home
- b. receiving a gift
- c. a dinner party in someone's home
- d. the New Year's reception at the commanding officer's home
- e. receiving a parking ticket

12. When sending invitations for a social function (dinner) in your home, you should:

- a. never put dress, let them guess
- b. put the approximate time you want them to arrive
- c. include the day of the week and the date
- d. send them out the day before the dinner

13. The invitation says "informal." You can wear:

- a. shorts and "keep on truckin'" T-shirt
- b. jeans
- c. your basic black
- d. nice dress

14. The invitation says "informal." Your husband can wear:

- a. his blues
- b. coat and tie
- c. boots and cut-offs
- d. jeans

15. When going through a receiving line:

- a. pause and talk at length with the commander's wife
- b. run through as fast as you can
- c. shake hands with the aide (or S1) but no one else
- d. shake hands with the aide (or S1), then everyone else briefly
- e. go before your husband, greeting everyone briefly

16. When you are talking about your husband to the other unit wives, you should refer to him as:

- a. the old man
- b. his rank with your last name (i.e., LTC Good)
- c. his rank with his first name (i.e., LTC Willy B.)
- d. his first name (i.e., Willy B.)
- e. my husband

17. On Army posts while the flag is being lowered at retreat and you are driving, you:

- a. stop the car, get out, and stand beside the car
- b. drive away
- c. stop the car and run over to where the flag is
- d. stop the car and sit there

18. What is the way to salute the flag when you are outside?

- a. stand stiffly at attention, arms at your sides
- b. stand and place your right hand over your right eyebrow
- c. stand and place your right hand over your heart
- d. give the Brownie or Girl Scout salute

**ANSWER KEY TO A SOCIAL COURTESY QUIZ:**

- |         |                |          |
|---------|----------------|----------|
| 1. b    | 7. c           | 13. c, d |
| 2. c, a | 8. c           | 14. b    |
| 3. c    | 9. b, c, d     | 15. e    |
| 4. b    | 10. a          | 16. d    |
| 5. a    | 11. a, b, c, d | 17. a    |
| 6. c, d | 12. c          | 18. c    |

**HOW COMFORTABLE AM I IN THE WIDE WORLD OF PROTOCOL?**

Answer True or False.

1. If an invitation states "R.s.v.p.", it does not necessarily mean that I have to respond. If I don't, the hostess will assume that I'm not coming.

2. It is in poor taste to ask the hostess, who has extended an invitation, questions like "Who else is coming?" or "What are you serving?"

3. You should not respond orally to an invitation at another party or when you meet your hostess shopping. It may slip her mind.

4. You should respond orally to an invitation within 24 hours in a definite affirmative or negative manner without reservation or "ifs."

5. If an invitation to a cocktail party states: "from six to eight," it is all right for me to stay as long as I want.

6. It is not necessary to send a thank you note after attending a large cocktail party. Since there were so many guests, the hostess probably would not notice if she didn't hear from one person.

7. It is acceptable to phone the hostess after attending a small dinner party and thank her for including me at the function and to extend a few complimentary remarks about its success.

8. Everyone should keep a record of courtesies extended to them and make some kind of repayment.

9. A man of higher rank than my husband has funds with which to entertain.

10. I am not expected, nor encouraged, to extend myself beyond my financial means. To repay an elaborate dinner with a hamburger cookout is appropriate.

11. Since I only have a small living room is reason enough not to give a coffee at my house.

12. When at a large party or hail and farewell, we should wait until a higher ranking person approaches us before we approach him.

13. If the general's wife calls me by my first name, I may also call her by hers.

14. A man is always presented to a woman when introduced, a younger person to an older, and one person to a group.

15. At a unit social function my husband and I can leave the party whenever we want even if the senior ranking man is still there.

16. Always try to be the life of the party.

17. At a change of command overseas, I stand when our national anthem is played, but I may sit down when the host country's anthem is played.

18. If I am not sure about when to stand at a change of command or at a parade, I watch the senior officers and their wives to see what they are doing and then I follow their lead.

19. Calling cards are not used as frequently as they were in the past.

20. Never use calling cards to accompany gifts, to issue and answer invitations, or for short messages.

21. Calling cards are to an officer or NCO what a businessman's cards are to him. Both identify the men and show whom they represent.

22. I am not in the Army, my husband is...so I don't have to be concerned with protocol.

23. We are expected to be perfect and always do everything the right way.

24. Sometimes it is far better to do the wrong thing graciously than the proper thing rudely.

25. Proper protocol leads to respect and creates behavior that makes an atmosphere of friendliness and understanding and prevents chaos.

**TRUE Answers for How Comfortable Am I in the Wide World of Protocol?**  
2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 14, 18, 19, 21, 24, 25.



**INFORMATION LETTER FOR A UNIT DINING OUT  
(SAMPLE)**

Dear Blue Zebra-ettes!

We wanted to tell you how excited we are about our upcoming 19-91st Battalion Spring Dance on 10 June 1991 at the Embers and also to give you some special information about the evening. We truly believe this will be a night to remember! We want to make it very special for everyone, so we have some wonderful things planned!

This special information newsletter will be devoted entirely to that evening. We thought it might be a good idea to tell you more about what we have planned and also go over each event step by step.

We want you to come! It's a chance to dress up, eat a delicious meal, and dance the night away! How can you turn that down?

Let's talk about DRESS. This is a formal dance. The men will wear either their dress blues or greens with a white shirt and bow tie. We are luckier because we can choose what we wear! As you know, today, formal does not mean you must wear a long dress; you can wear short or tea length or long. You do not have to go buy a new dress to come to this dinner dance. A nice Sunday dress or cocktail dress would be perfect! If you have a dress already and want to jazz it up, add some lace or a necklace. You would be surprised what you can do with some accessories! If you still are not sure what to wear, ask your friends what they are wearing. We promise that you will not feel out of place because you will see some short, tea length, and long dresses! Nice, fancy evening slacks are also appropriate. But just a pair of slacks with a sweater or blouse probably will make you feel out of place. So, now you won't be able to say, "I can't go to the dance because I have nothing to wear!" because we know you do!

Please read on and see what's in store for you at the Blue Zebra Spring Dance.....

See you there!

Oso and Susie

\*\*\*\* SEQUENCE OF EVENTS \*\*\*\*

6:30	Arrival
6:30 - 7:30	Receiving Line Cocktail/Social Hour
7:30	Bugle Call for Dinner
7:30 - 7:45	Go to Seats Post Colors Invocation Toasts Commander's Welcome
7:45 - 8:55	Dinner
8:55 - 9:10	Break
9:10 - 9:35	Commander Introduces Speaker Speaker Commander's Closing Retire Colors
9:35 - 12:30	Dancing

\*\*\*\* THE PARTICULARS \*\*\*\*

Now we want to take a few lines to go over the sequence of events item by item:

1. ARRIVAL. Be on time! Your husband will drive up to the front door of the Embers. An usher (one of our 19-91st Battalion soldiers) will open your door and escort you into the lobby while your husband parks the car. You may wait for your husband there, and then he can escort you to the ballroom.

2. RECEIVING LINE. As you enter the ballroom, there will be a receiving line. The receiving line will consist of the following people (and in this order): CPT Paper (Adjutant-S1), LTC Willy B. Good (Commander), Mrs. Oso Good (Commander's wife), MG Higher, Mrs. Higher (honored guests), General N. Spiration (speaker), CSM Rightarm (CSM), and Mrs. Rightarm (CSM's wife). Companies will go through the receiving line together. The schedule is: A Company: 6:30; B Company: 6:40; C Company: 6:50; D Company: 7:00; and HHC: 7:10. However, it may not take that long, so make sure you are there at least 15 minutes before your husband's company is scheduled to go through! You precede your husband through the receiving line, but your husband will give your name to CPT Paper (S1). The purpose of the receiving line is to greet the hosts and hostesses by shaking their hands and saying hello. Do not shake CPT Paper's hand! Also, do not have a drink or cigarette in your hand!

3. COCKTAIL/SOCIAL HOUR. The first hour is a social hour. It's a time to greet friends, discover where you are sitting (there will be seating charts around the room), get your picture taken if you wish, have something to drink, etc. The bars are no-host (you pay for what you drink). Remember, the drinking age in Pennsylvania is 21. This is a special night so please have a non-drinking designated driver for your car. Also, we ask everyone to observe and respect their own legal limit!

4. PHOTOGRAPHER. There will be a photographer available only during the cocktail hour. He will offer a package for \$6.00. You pay (either cash or check) before he takes the picture.

5. DINNER CALL. When the bugle sounds the dinner call (7:30), go to your seat and remain standing.

6. POSTING THE COLORS. Once you arrive at your seat, the color guard will come in with the colors (flags), and CSM Rightarm will ask LTC Willy B. Good for permission to post the colors. Stand at your seat; you may have your arms at your side or hands clasped in front of you. We do not have to stand at attention like our husbands!

7. INVOCATION. The chaplain will give the invocation. We are still standing at this point!

8. TOASTS. The S1 will ask us to "secure" (pick-up) our glasses. (We're still standing!) There will be cider on the table before you. Once we have our glasses in hand, the men will begin toasting the President, the Army, unit, etc. Then the S1 will say, "Gentlemen, seat your ladies." We sit down, and our husbands remain standing. The men will then toast us -- we do not drink!



9. **COMMANDER'S WELCOME.** LTC Willy B. Good will welcome us and introduce our special guests.

10. **DINNER.** Now we eat! The salad will already be at our places, so we can begin to eat when LTC Willy B. Good concludes his opening remarks. It is customary not to leave the table until the scheduled break at 8:55 - 9:10. The SI will announce the break and tell us to be back at our seats by 9:10 p.m. There is no smoking in the dining room. Also, if you take advantage of the break, please be back in your seat when it is over. It is very embarrassing to walk in when everyone's attention is directed toward the front!

11. **SPEAKER.** LTC Willy B. Good will introduce our speaker, General N. Spiration. He was a former battalion commander of the Blue Zebras who has gone on to greatness. He should be great!

12. **COMMANDER'S CLOSING.** LTC Willy B. Good will thank the speaker, etc. and make a few closing remarks.

13. **RETIRE THE COLORS.** Then, the color guard and CSM Rightarm will come and retire the colors. We will stand at this point. The SI will announce that the formal part of the evening is over and let the dancing begin!

14. **DANCE! DANCE! DANCE!**

AA

**NOTES:**

1. This is a sample letter you could use to share some military etiquette with the members of your unit before a formal unit dining out (dinner dance). If you approach it the right way, it will not offend anyone and can be a learning lesson for all.

2. One way to ensure all unit members see this information is to include it in a special newsletter in which your husband could announce ("advertise") the dance. The rest of the newsletter explains the military etiquette of what to do at a formal dinner dance.

**CONDUCTING A WORKSHOP**

What if you want to share some information with the wives in the battalion? For instance, communication skills, how to set up an FSG, leadership skills, etc. How do you go about it? You have various options: distribute written material, talk about it at an informal gathering, or conduct an organized workshop.

We know the time and energy it takes to do a workshop, so we wanted to share some of our ideas and experiences with you. A well-run workshop doesn't just happen. It takes a lot of thought, preparation, and coordination.

**OBJECTIVE**

1. What is the purpose of the workshop?
  - a. Why do you want to have this workshop?
  - b. What do you want to accomplish?
  - c. Do you have a particular goal in mind?
  - d. What is your end result?
2. Who will you invite to attend?
  - a. Who should participate?
  - b. Who do you want to have this information?
  - c. How large a group do you want?
  - d. Who would benefit the most from this workshop?

**METHOD**

1. What will be your subject areas?
  - a. What topics will help you to accomplish your objective?
  - b. What are the interests of your audience?
  - c. Is a needs assessment required? (survey of interests)
2. How should you present the topics?
  - a. Presentation to large group?
  - b. Small group discussion?
  - c. Round robins?
  - d. Combination?

- e. Panel?
  - f. Participative exercises?
3. What will be your sequence of events?
    - a. Should the topics complement each other?
    - b. Can the topics stand alone?
    - c. How does one topic apply to the next?
    - d. Does the material flow?
  4. How long should the workshop be?
    - a. What is the total length?
    - b. When should it be? (weekdays vs. weekends)
    - c. What time of the day should it be? (day vs. evening)
    - d. How long should each session (topic) be?
    - e. Remember to include breaks: how many and how often?
  5. How will you evaluate the workshop?
    - a. Printed evaluation form?
    - b. Verbal feedback?
    - c. What format?

## RESOURCES

1. Where do you hold the workshop?
  - a. Where is the best physical location?
  - b. Considerations:
    - neutral/non-threatening
    - proximity to participants
    - parking
    - available space
    - lighting
  - c. How easy will it be to prepare rooms?
  - d. How many separate rooms will you need?
  - e. Is there a place for child care?
2. How will you advertise the workshop?
  - a. Use invitations or flyers?
  - b. How should you word the announcement?
  - c. How many will you need?
  - d. How will you distribute them?  
(mail/distribution/hand carry)
  - e. How soon should they go out?
  - f. How do you want a response? (R.s.v.p.?  
to whom? written response/phone?)

- g. When do you want the R.s.v.p.?
  - h. Do you need reminder calls to participants before the workshop?
3. What personnel should be involved?
- a. Chairperson and committee leaders
  - b. Who are the key players?
  - c. Do you need instructors and presenters for large group?
  - d. Do you need facilitators for small groups?
  - e. What are specific duties and responsibilities for each?
4. What about the logistics?
- a. What will the set-up be for each room?
  - b. Tables and # of chairs
  - c. What about refreshments?
  - d. Will you charge for refreshments? How/when will you collect?
  - e. If it's all day, what about lunch? (brown bag?)
  - f. What materials and supplies will you need? (folders/contents, paper, pencils, markers, tape, handouts, room signs, name tags)
  - g. What equipment will you need? (overhead, transparencies, extension cord, easel, chart paper, markers, TV, VCR, tapes)
5. How many meetings do you need to have prior to the workshop?
- a. Where do you hold them?
  - b. Who needs to come?
  - c. Separate meetings for committee leaders, instructors, facilitators?
  - d. Progress report of activities.
6. How do you prepare your instructors and presenters?
- a. Communicate goals.
  - b. Check their outlines and handouts.
  - c. What materials and equipment do they need?
  - d. Are rehearsals needed? If so, when?
7. How do you prepare your facilitators?
- a. Outline duties and responsibilities.
  - b. What do they want to accomplish in their sessions?
  - c. What techniques could they use?

8. What do you do the day of the workshop?

- a. Arrive early.
- b. Set up tables and chairs in all rooms.
- c. Put up signs to identify rooms.
- d. Start refreshments (coffee).
- e. Set up appropriate equipment.
- f. Have greeters for registration.  
(name tags and folders)
- g. Be on call to take care of problems that may occur.

9. How do you end the workshop?

- a. Do your evaluations.
- b. Clean up.
- c. Rearrange the facility.
- d. Return the equipment.
- e. Prepare an after action report.

## PUBLIC SPEAKING...THINKING ON YOUR FEET

From the informal to the formal you may be expected or asked to speak publicly. Sound scary? How can you improve your communication and public speaking skills and appear as though you are at ease in front of a crowd, large or small?

### DECIDE ON YOUR TOPIC

You may be in the position to choose a topic. What will it be? Ask for some suggestions from others. You may be given a specific topic to address. It may be something in your area of expertise or you may be totally unfamiliar with it. You may need to do some research.

### WRITE YOUR SPEECH

Preparation is crucial. Make out an outline of your key points. Then write out what you want to say and read it a couple of times. Critically evaluate it as if you were part of the audience. How much time do you have? Will you have a podium to keep notes? What is best for you: long scripts or an outline on index cards?

As you are preparing what you will say, make sure you have an opening, a middle, and an ending. Try to be concise and to the point.

You can combine professionalism and humor in your speech. It keeps the attention of the audience while keeping your role as a speaker in perspective.

### PRACTICE

You may feel that if you read your speech a few times you've done your homework. This could be true. But you will be more successful if you practice it out loud a few times. Pretend your audience is there in front of you. Use your visual aids (i.e., turning charts or slides). If they are not available, go through the motions anyway as you are rehearsing.

You can practice in front of a mirror. Ask your friends or family to listen to you.

## EFFECTIVE USE OF YOUR BODY

This is important. Effective delivery involves the eyes, voice, facial expressions, posture, hands and feet.

Eye contact is a must. It holds the attention of your audience while giving some feedback to you as to whether or not they are getting your message. It also shows your interest in them.

Try to balance projection, diction, vocabulary and pacing. You don't want to speak too quickly, but you also don't want the audience to take a nap between words. Don't speak in a monotone.

Body language sends a message. Maintain good posture. Stand up straight; never slouch over the podium. Concentrate on what you are doing with your hands.

## APPEARANCE

You should be professional in your dress. It sends the message that you not only take pride in yourself, but you are also a competent individual who knows her business. How you present yourself will make a great first impression on your audience.

## PROPS

It depends on your topic and situation whether you should use props or not. Items to consider: podium, microphone, slides and 35mm projector, transparencies and an overhead projector, and charts. Don't feel intimidated. If they will assist you in delivering your message, use them.

## DELIVERY

It is only natural to feel butterflies before you give a speech. But you can learn the skills that will make the butterflies fly in formation. It takes some practice.

- a. Try to be alone before you take the stage. Take a few breaths of air, close your eyes, and relax your body.
- b. Take care of your creature comforts -- go to the bathroom, drink some water, comb your hair, check your appearance.

- c. After you are introduced, smile at your audience. Remember to maintain eye contact with them.
- d. Adjust your voice projection if necessary. Ensure all can see your visual aids.
- e. Speak slower than usual. Even though you've practiced and know how long you will talk, your nervousness will cause you to rush.
- f. Concentrate on what you are going to say. Forget about your dress or hair. There's nothing you can do about that now. This is not the time to ask yourself whether you picked the right topic or not.
- g. Plan ahead what you will do when your talk is over. You can't just stand there grinning! Know what is expected of you.
- h. Remember to smile. You have done your homework, practiced, and know what you are going to say. So play the part!

#### SPEAKING AT A MEETING

This is different than a prepared speech. But the approach is basically the same. Plan ahead what you will say, speak loud enough to be heard, maintain eye contact, and stick to facts. If someone disagrees with you, explain your position again if necessary or accept their right to disagree. If it's a controversial issue, keep your emotions in check. Be professional.

#### "SAYING A FEW WORDS"

This can be tricky depending on the topic or the situation. You may want to cover several points but only have time for a few. Critically look at your material and choose the most important points to cover.

If you are asked to speak without prior knowledge, mentally prepare what you will say. Try to organize the main points in your mind. Remember, people are not expecting a prepared speech.

#### EMOTIONAL SPEECHES

These are difficult. You may be very close to the person or subject, and it's natural for your emotions to get in the way. Prepare what you want to say. It will help you to get through



this moment. It gets easier each time you do one. But if you do lose your composure, stop for a moment, take a deep breath, then continue when you can. It is better to have a short speech!

#### REMEMBER

We are not born accomplished speakers. It is easier for some than others, but the potential is there for everyone to be a successful public speaker. Through preparation and practice, you can become comfortable with public speaking and thinking on your feet.

APPENDIX S

**AFTER ACTION REPORTS**

We found that it is extremely beneficial to keep detailed records of major unit activities and functions. You then have a solid foundation for any succeeding events. These reports also will be an excellent source of in-depth information for the battalion commander's wife following in your footsteps.

Suggested topics to include:

1. Name of the affair, date, location, time.
2. What were your responsibilities?
3. Who were the members of your committee? How were they selected?
4. Were there other individuals who were helpful to your committee? Make a list of their names, addresses, and phone numbers (if pertinent).
5. How did you prepare to do your job? What resources were necessary?
6. What expenses did you have and for what?
7. List the stumbling blocks and pitfalls you wish you had avoided. What would you advise the next person in your role?
8. Pinpoint your single biggest frustration. How could you have overcome it?
9. What changes would you like to see in the running of your job next time? Others' jobs?
10. What went especially well? Why?
11. If you had it to do over again, would you accept this job? Why or why not?
12. Are there any other comments or additional information you'd like to mention?

APPENDIX T

**CHECKLIST FOR  
BRIEFING THE INCOMING COMMANDER'S WIFE**

One of the most significant final contributions you will make to the unit is the information you pass on to your successor. You can play a critical role in assisting EVERYONE by paving the way for a smooth transition.

We think you can best accomplish this by familiarizing the incoming commander's wife with virtually all aspects of unit life. We encourage you not to overlook or underestimate this important aspect of leaving the battalion. The final decision, of course, regarding what and how much to share is yours.

Possible subjects to discuss or items to make available are:

- Offer to give her any after action reports, notes you've made, historical materials, sample newsletters, meeting minutes, rosters, important names/addresses/phone numbers, or other written miscellaneous which might be helpful.
- Discuss the unit's family support program.
- Talk about social activities of the past two years. This could include what you and/or your husband have arranged, wives' gatherings, unit functions, and any outside obligations (community, higher headquarters, post)
- Tell her how you have interacted with the NCO/enlisted wives' side of the house.
- Describe community involvements or opportunities.
- Explain your relationship and how you worked with anyone from higher headquarters or sister battalions.
- Let her know about your experience when coming in new to the battalion.
- Detail money matters.
- Inform her of major rules or regulations she may find worthwhile.

- Be open about frustrations you faced and how you overcame them.
- Go over everything about your officers' wives' group.
  - Consider and decide what you will or will not say about specific individuals and/or "skeletons in the closet."
  - If you give a completely candid report, she may be sensitive to issues and problems which might otherwise be invisible during her crucial first months that could lead to major mistakes in her approach.
  - She may prefer not to get this type of information. Everyone will begin with a clean slate and she is free to form her own impressions and assessments.
- Cue her on responsibilities or commitments she should be prepared to handle immediately or soon after the change of command.
- Advise her on communication networks within the unit -- how information is dispensed, publicity handled, possible means of establishing contact between herself and others.
- If asked, have recommendations on what you might suggest phasing out or definitely continuing. Why.
- Be willing to make suggestions on dealing with difficult people or situations.
- Give her background on participation, interests, popular events.
- If there has been trauma or crisis in the unit, explain fully.
- Indicate any special roles or projects you took on. Why.
- Specify resources perhaps available within the unit and the community.
- Make her aware of key people who have supported you and the unit.
- Speak with her about any particular personal policies you and/or your husband had in place (Rsvping, dress, how you asked to be addressed, attendance, etc.).

- Be straightforward, if there is interest, about your individual goals or leadership philosophy.
- Ask for her questions. Show a willingness to honestly and frankly respond to her. Allow time, if feasible, for her to reflect and then meet with you again for follow-up.

APPENDIX U

SUGGESTED READINGS

1. A Leading Lady, Silja Allen, 1978.
2. The Commander's Link, RB 22-2, 1982.
3. The Leader's Link, USACGSC Student Text 22-1, 1986.
4. The Once Over Lightly, Bibs Reynard, 1981.
5. Leaders' Wives Speak Out, US Army War College, 1985.
6. The Army Wife Handbook, Ann Crossley, 1990.
7. Military Jargon, P.T. James.
8. Service Etiquette, Oretha D. Swartz, 1988.
9. A Guide to Protocol and Etiquette for Official Entertainment, DA Pam 600-60, 1981.
10. The Officer's Guide, 45th Edition, 1990.
11. The Officer's Family Social Guide, Mary Preston Gross, 1977.