

FEMMES PROTOCOL FOR VISITATIONS

Our La Presidente Nationale and other National Officers have already begun their travels around the country. Therefore, many of you will be involved with protocol, as it applies to La Societe de Femme during the visits of your national guests.

While most Dames are polite and knowledgeable about etiquette, there have been examples rude of inattentive behavior and/or lack of appropriate protocol during the past visits by National dignitaries. While such faux pas can be the result of many things, they are more than likely the result of poor planning, a lack of communication or a lack of knowledge about customary procedures involving Nationale officers' visits. Exercising "visitor courtesy" effectively requires that we are at least familiar with the basic aspects of protocol.

First and foremost is communications. Your guest(s) have accepted your invitation. Please complete the enclosed information sheet. Be specific and complete in the information you provide. When describing attire use definite descriptions, such as: evening gown, cocktail dress, pantsuit, and for the spouse, business suit, sport coat, tuxedo shirt, black dinner-jacket, etc.

A complete description of the event (s) is imperative. Advise what normal weather situations may be. Make sure the guest(s) have telephone numbers, cell phone numbers, and email addresses of their local contacts. Include complete information about the Hotel/Motel (name, address, phone numbers etc). Lastly, confirm their travel plans, as you understand them, method of arrival (car or plane) confirm flight numbers and arrival/departure times. Above all, don't assume anything!

Next: meet your guest(s) properly and punctually. When meeting your guest (s) at the airport, make sure you both know where you will meet. While your guests will be comfortable with any Dame or Voyageur, someone who they know, a person who is familiar with details of the event, the local femmes and 40/8 activities will add greatly to the enjoyment of the trip. Don't forget that your guest(s) may have been traveling for hours before you met them and if the car trip is lengthy; be sure to include an adequate comfort stop on the route. If your guests(s) won't recognize your face, they will certainly know the chapeau, a large Forty et Eight emblem, or a sign. Nothing is more distressing or embarrassing to the traveler than to arrive for a function and find no one at the meeting place. There is no excuse for this. The plane was early/ late, the weather was bad, the traffic was congested, etc; these things can be determined ahead of time and changes and allowances made.

If your guest is driving to your city, he/she should be met at the hotel (motel). Be sure to be there waiting for them. You should plan to be at the hotel before their estimated time of arrival, in case they should get there early. Registrations and room assignment should be done before they arrive and the room should be the best available. Always provide two keys (if signatures are required, they can be obtained later). The room should reflect comfort, hospitality and careful planning. A modest arrangement of flowers as a token of appreciation is certainly in order. Fruit and/or snacks, especially if your meal function is much later, may also be provided. Other suggestions include the local newspaper, copy of the program of events, etc. As soon as possible after arrival, give your visitors a chance to rest. Let them determine the amount of time they require... to ignore them for several hours because nothing was planned, would be rude. Set a definite time for someone to call for them, so they will be ready for scheduled events.

Next, the main event itself and the challenge of seating places the two most important persons (the chairman and the principal guest) at the center of the dais, with the guest at the right of the chairman.

If a podium is used, it should be set between the two, with the rest of the seating delegated according to the importance of the assignment. If there is insufficient room at the head table to honor everyone you wish, then a lower table or group of tables in front could solve the problem. Place cards should be used and any tickets required should be provided for your guest (s) long before the waitress requests them.

Now you have everyone seated and you are ready for the meal. You may find it difficult to offer deluxe food service at your function, due to the prohibitive costs, and occasionally paper or plastic-ware is used... that's O.K., so long as whatever the menu, serve your guests the same food in the

same manner as everyone else. However, should your guest have a dietary restriction or a religious conviction, which requires a special diet, it is essential you provide for that situation. While it is the guest who has the responsibility to make such restrictions known, it is the welcome committee who has the responsibility to act on that information and provide for special food ahead of time. Never wait until the program is underway to make such arrangements.

Now you are ready to introduce your guest, an honor that is often given to the highest ranking member in attendance and not necessarily the chairman or master of ceremonies. The reason for giving him/her this task is that it is a means of giving them an honor involving him/her in the program. Forty and Eight functions usually include some type of fundraising activity such as a raffle and/or fines. While the head table is considered fair game, you should not approach your special guest directly. If they so desire to participate, they will make this fact known.

When it comes time to show your appreciation to your guests, remember that the very best way is to simply thank him/ her. Many Voitures give gifts and when this is done, the emphasis should be more as a memento or a token of appreciation rather than an item of major monetary value. If your guest is flying, you should avoid bulky items that could make travel difficult or offer to ship it home for him/her at no cost to the guest.

If possible, some local sightseeing should be planned. After all, the visit may be the only time your guest will be in your area of the country. What may be an everyday attraction for you, may well be a "once in a lifetime" opportunity for your visitors. The guest's spouse may have even more time to take in the sights, but give them both an opportunity to express their wishes.

Never wait until the event is over before informing your guests of your departure plans for them, and don't embarrass your guests by obtaining transportation or discussing your arrangements in their presence. Inform them when they should be ready, and don't plan on too tight a schedule. Always assume there will be heavy traffic. Checking out of the hotel should be accomplished without incident. Forty and Eight policy dictates that the host is responsible for accommodations for the guests at official functions, but if everyone involved, including the hotel is not aware of this, there could be problems at the time of checkout. No matter how heavy the traffic, or how difficult the parking, it is rude to drop your guests at the airport and drive on. You should arrange to have a small delegation stay with them until departure time or until it is time to proceed to the gate. This period before departure could also be used to go over the event, and it is an opportunity for the guests to get names and addresses of those they may want to thank by note. It could also be an opportunity for a light breakfast or snack.

Whatever you do, remember that your goodbye should be just as gracious as your welcome. Also, remember that the courtesy shown to your principal guest should be given to your other visitors. Whether they plan an active role in your event or simply grace your tables, with their presence, they deserve the respect of their position and an appreciation of their interest in your event.

Last but not to be forgotten, is saying, "Thanks". Thank you notes are simply good manners. Your guests will send you and your committee expressions of their appreciation, but they also deserve a message of thanks from you. Be sure to include in your correspondence any photos that were taken. This communication is the last stop in the process of protocol and being nice. It is the proper conclusion to your event and ties a ribbon on the whole package.