

The Etiquette of the Festive Board

P.L. Harris

Introduction

A previous paper 'The Etiquette of Toasting' did not, in my opinion, conform with current practice at our Festive Board. We tend now to be far more informal than the procedures described in that paper. However, the points of etiquette are appropriate and I have extracted these for this paper.

The Etiquette of Seating.

In our Order, Brethren and Companions take refreshment at the 'Festive Board'. The term 'The South' is not used but reserved for the 'Craft'.

Where there is a top or prime table it is the prerogative of the First Principal to decide who sits at that table and where they are seated. However, it is the convention that the Grand Master or the Grand Master's Representative sits at the Masters right hand. A Grand Director of Ceremonies, if present is usually seated at the right hand end of the top table while the Chapter's Director of Ceremonies is seated at the left hand end.

The Companions and their guests should take their place at the table and remain Standing until the Third Principal or Chaplain has said Grace. This should be prior to the partaking of any food or drink.

Reserving seats at the festive board is an impolite practice and should be discouraged. On no account should chairs be tilted against the table as this is a dangerous practice and liable to cause injury to legs. Ladies at the Festive Board should always be seated with their partner who should arrange for their seating.

Other Matters of Etiquette

It is the duty of the Stewards to tend to our guests and companions at the festive board. We should discourage our, ever helpful, Ladies from undertaking the role of Stewards and enjoy being waited on.

There must be No Smoking at the Festive Board.

At the discretion of the First Principal, Honours may be given in the presence of Ladies or others who are not masons. However, when this is done, certain limitations are entailed - specifically the exclusion of honours involving Masonic Symbolism.

Toasts and Speeches

It is the Director of Ceremonies who, at the appropriate time, calls on a Companion to propose a toast. He should be brief, just announcing the rank and name of the proposer and the toast to be proposed

The Companion speaking should first address the Excellent First Principal (An exception to this is when the toast is to the First Principal when the speaker addresses the Companions first.). Then the First Grand Principal and Grand Master or his Representative, then Companions.

During speeches at the Festive Board, the titles and prefixes to be used should always be those appropriate to Royal Arch, irrespective of the Degree which the Chapter has worked at the meeting just concluded.

The first toast must always be the Loyal Toast and may simply be "The Queen", or "The Queen and the People of Australia" or "The Queen of Australia", the last two toasts being those approved, by the Queen, for use in Australia and recommended by the Prime-ministers Department. There should be no additional comments, such as "God bless her" or "Long may she reign" and no form of honours. The Loyal Toast should not be given until at least five minutes after Grace has been said. All Companions and guests rise to the loyal toast but guests take no part in subsequent toasts.

When the First Grand Principal and Grand Master is present or is represented by a Grand Officer the second toast must always be the toast to "The Most Excellent First Grand Principal and Grand Master" This toast is always given by the First Principal. When the First Grand Principal is present all Companions, including Grand Officers, Present and Past, rise to drink the toast. When the First Grand Principal rises to reply to the toast, Present and Past Grand Officers do not rise.

When the First Grand Principal is represented by a Grand Officer, the Present and Past Grand Officers remain seated for the toast and when the Representative rises to respond all Present and Past Grand Officers rise at the same time, and remain standing until the Representative has thanked the Companions for honouring the toast.

Toasts to the First Grand Principal and Grand Master are honoured with "Feint One; Twenty-One"

At an Installation, the third toast should always be to the newly Installed First Principal and his Officers.

The Grand Director of Ceremonies should conduct the honours accompanying this toast. He should call on the Officers, other than the First Principal, to rise, after which he announces that, "The First Principal will now respond"

Toast to Candidates at the Festive Board. The terminology to be used for toasting candidates as they progress through the various Degrees.

A candidate is:

Advanced	to a Mark Master Mason
Received	as an Excellent Master
Exalted	to the Holy Royal Arch
Received and Acknowledged	as a Most Excellent Master
Honoured	as a Royal Master
Chosen	as a Select Master
Greeted	as a Super Excellent Master
Created	a Knight of the Red Cross

Elevated as a Royal Ark Mariner

At the conclusion of the proposition of a toast the speaker proposing the toast invites the Companions to join him in drinking to the toast.

Honours: Toasts at the Festive Board: should be honoured with "Apron, Heart and Hand" given four times, the last accompanied with the "Foot" if customary in the Chapter. With Ladies present, 'Chapter Honours' are permitted with all toasts, but the Ladies should not participate. When Brethren and Companions only are present the toast may be received with such Masonic Honours as have been customary in the Chapter.

Toast to Ladies at the Festive Board: The toast to the Ladies, when given, shall always be received with "acclamation" only. A response is not necessary.

The Companion receiving the toast, should remain seated until called upon to respond to the toast. In responding to a toast, the speaker in reply should thank the Proposer and the Companions for receiving it.

Each Companion speaking, is entitled to be listened to silence, and not interrupted by Companions talking, or by the noise of cutlery clattering on plates. The Director of Ceremonies should ensure that the speaker is not interrupted.