

# *Guideline Series*

## *S.T.A.R. Guide Suggestions, Tips & References For Navy Flag Spouses*



## *The History of Naval Services FamilyLine*

Naval Services FamilyLine is a volunteer, non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for every Navy family. Formerly known as the Navy Wifeline Association, the new name was adopted in September 1999 to reflect the changing face of today's sea services.

FamilyLine was established in 1965 by a group of Navy wives who wanted to establish a channel of communication for all Navy spouses. The aim was to provide a welcome and introduction to Navy life and to increase the spouses' understanding of the Navy's mission.

This dedicated group established an office at the Washington Navy Yard and published a quarterly newspaper, providing information and assistance to wives who were moving overseas. These Navy wives had the foresight to see the need for spouse and family support and provided the ground work for what has developed into a world-wide family support network.

With the support of the Chief of Naval Operations and Navy leadership, along with the financial support of the Navy League, Spouses Clubs worldwide, and other Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard organizations, Naval Services FamilyLine has continued to grow and flourish.

Admiral Elmo Zumwalt established the Ombudsman Program in 1970. The Chairman of FamilyLine was appointed Navy-wide Family Ombudsman-at-Large for the Chief of Naval Operations.

In 1988, the first Ombudsman Journal was published and the Navy-wide Ombudsmen Support Network was established.

For more than forty years, FamilyLine volunteers have maintained a worldwide support network for Navy, service members and their families. Today, the spouses of service members work together to continue this fine tradition.

*This publication is paid for by Naval Services FamilyLine and distributed to you free by FamilyLine volunteers under the supervision of the CNO Navy-wide Family Ombudsman-at-Large. FamilyLine is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax-deductible and are used to pay for the printing of this and other FamilyLine publications.*

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# S.T.A.R. GUIDE

## SUGGESTIONS, TIPS, AND REFERENCES FOR NEW FLAG SPOUSES

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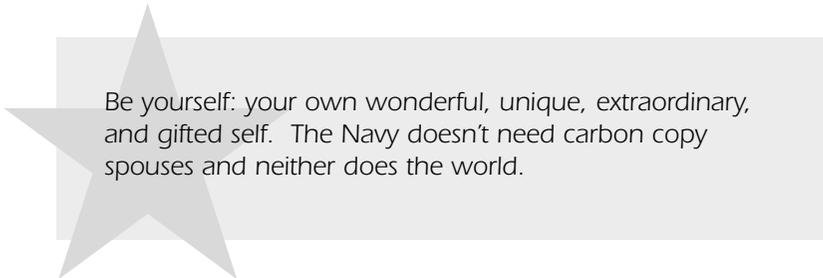
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Be yourself: your own wonderful, unique, extraordinary, and gifted self. The Navy doesn't need carbon copy spouses and neither does the world.

*The information contained in this publication was current as of the date of publication. Certain subjects discussed in the publication involve the interpretation and application of Department of Defense and Department of the Navy regulations, i.e., on expenditure of housing funds, the use of Enlisted Aide staff, gifts, and use of ORF. To ensure compliance, and to avoid possible embarrassment, you are urged to consult with the appropriate Civil Engineer Officer, Staff Judge Advocate, Flag Aide, or Flag staff member to resolve any uncertainty or doubt about application of the regulations in your circumstance.*



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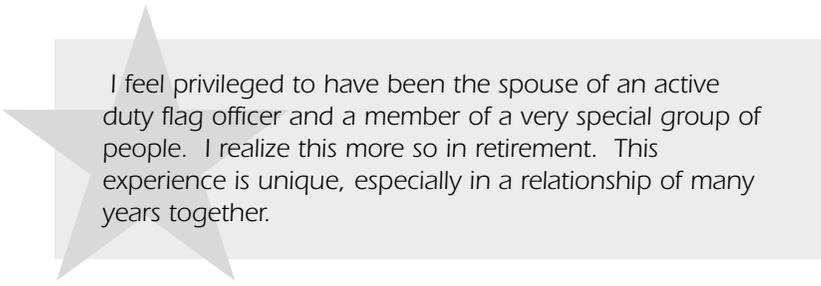


# INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your spouse's selection to flag rank. It is an exciting time in your family's Navy "career" and you may be filled with a wide variety of emotions, anticipation, and lots of questions. STAR Guide was created to provide a forum for current and former flag spouses to share their knowledge and experience with you to help ease any concerns and answer questions you may have about being a flag spouse. A survey was sent to flag spouses asking for tips, insights, and lessons learned during their time as a flag spouse. The response was terrific. Whether their spouses were surface, air, submarine, JAG, supply, reserve, or staff, they all had wonderful tips and information to pass on.

Amongst all the surveys, common threads of advice could be found within all the responses. While they are covered in more detail in the following pages, these are some basic precepts you should keep in mind as you approach your life as a flag spouse:

- Be yourself.
- Put your family first.
- Make the most of your time as the spouse of a flag officer, the time passes all too quickly.



I feel privileged to have been the spouse of an active duty flag officer and a member of a very special group of people. I realize this more so in retirement. This experience is unique, especially in a relationship of many years together.

Please take the time to read, review, and refer to this guidebook. We hope you will find STAR Guide to be an invaluable tool as you set out on your own journey as a Navy flag spouse.





# THE FLAG SPOUSE

You may be an at-home mom or dad. You may have a career as a banker, computer programmer, attorney, accountant, teacher, nurse, executive, interior designer, artist, secretary - you name it. Whatever your career is, you can now add “flag spouse” to your resume.

## YOUR ROLE

While this book will have lots of advice and tips, it won't tell you what you have to do or how to do it. It is up to you to determine your role as a flag spouse. Your experience can vary widely during your spouse's career depending on his/her job, your own education and career interests, volunteer opportunities or needs, and family demands.

You may be interested to know that whatever stage a spouse's career was in, survey respondents embraced their role as a flag spouse to some degree. Even if they didn't move with their spouse or continued with their own career, none failed to support their spouse in some way in his/her various positions and to enjoy and cherish this new aspect of Navy life.

Your level of involvement depends upon what you and your spouse have decided your goals and priorities will be, and what you want to do. Your support and involvement can include attending official functions, attending spouse functions, entertaining the staff, leading spouse activities, chairing a charity event or hosting social events.

- **Be a team.** Being on the same wavelength with your spouse and having a solid understanding of expectations, whatever they may be, is imperative and will set the stage for enjoyment and success of all the things to come.
- **Be yourself.** This becomes even more important in your new, more visible role. If you're comfortable with yourself and being who you are, everybody around you will be comfortable also. Concentrate on your strongest qualities.
- **Enjoy yourself.** Stay flexible and make the most of the opportunities as they arise. This is a wonderful time of life filled with chances to do interesting and unique things. It is difficult to do everything, so learn to say no to some activities in order to say yes to the best ones.
- **Be approachable.** People always respond to friendliness, openness, and honesty. Nobody appreciates those who wear their spouse's rank.
- **Be positive.** Don't grumble or gossip in the presence of others, and don't tolerate it from others - it just breeds discontent. When you speak positively it rubs off on other people and helps create a sense of pride.



Make the most of your time as a Navy flag spouse. It is said that when we retire, we are not truly wealthy, but we are rich in memories and friends.

- **Be appreciative.** On base, in command situations or when traveling with your spouse, stay aware that in many cases, people are going out of their way for you. It may be a tour, a meeting or a luncheon, but they have taken time and effort to make plans for you. Always remember to acknowledge that effort with a thank you note or phone call.
- **Stay humble.** Flag spouses are lucky to enjoy many “perks.” Complaining about how hard all the traveling is, or how difficult it is to have a full-time Enlisted Aide (EA) in the house is not appreciated.

## YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

Your family is your primary concern and must not take a secondary role in your daily life. If you have to leave your command duties to take care of family matters, do not feel guilty. Remember, when the Navy career is over, you still have many years ahead with your spouse, your children, your grandchildren, your parents, and/or other members of your family. When people see you putting family first, they will know you will understand when family matters intervene in their plans.

*While my goal is to be “just me”, I have become aware that people react to me differently now and I stay cognizant of the unintended impact of my words. I am still the same person, only now I realize that I also have a responsibility of understanding other’s reactions to me.*



## YOU AND YOUR SPOUSE

Your positive attitude as the spouse of a flag officer impacts heavily on the choices the flag officer makes. Your support goes a long way in making this an exciting and successful time in your life.

You can be the grounding element for your spouse on this journey by making sure they keep at least one foot on earth and in reality. Encourage your spouse to schedule occasional time off to attend special events or to spend some quality time with the family. Don't forget to talk and keep the lines of communication open. Life can get very busy and you can easily forget to "check in" with each other.

## YOU AND YOUR CAREER

If you have a career you have already been balancing that responsibility with your life as a Navy spouse. Now that you are also a flag spouse it may seem even harder. Everybody approaches the career dilemma in a different way. The following tips are from spouses who have in the past, or are currently, balancing career and Navy obligations.

- **You can work and be supportive at the same time.** Being a flag spouse and having a career can make it difficult to juggle all your responsibilities. Any contribution you make as a flag spouse, whether it's chairing a committee or simply volunteering to make phone calls, will be appreciated and makes a difference. Interacting with other spouses will build friendships and bonds that you will carry with you throughout your spouse's career and even beyond. Don't automatically say "No" when asked to help, but look for ways you can stay engaged.
- **Beware of the combination of influence and personal gain.** Whether you are a real estate agent or cosmetic rep, you should not advertise in the base paper, hold business functions in your home that Navy personnel may attend, or do anything that would appear you are using your spouse's position for monetary gain.
- **Discuss time off with your employer.** Many employers are supportive of the military and will understand if you need to take an occasional day off in support of your spouse's career. It might be beneficial to sit down with your employer and talk about this so that you both know what the expectations are.



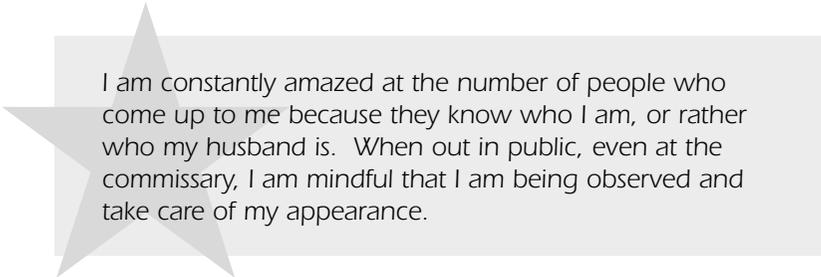
## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Not only are you now a flag spouse, but you are still a wife/husband, mother/father, daughter/son. It is also the time when children may be heading off to college, parents are getting older and may be in poor health, or your own health needs extra attention. It is more important than ever that you take care of yourself. Determine what makes you feel the best, mentally and physically, and surround yourself with those things in your daily routine. Being a flag couple is a very special time. Staying healthy is important and deserves the effort it takes for both of you. Below are some quick tips to keep in mind.

- **Ask for help when you need it.** Sounds like common sense, but we have all been guilty at some point of not asking for help if we need it.
- **Make time to have fun.** Doing something you love to do will keep your mind and body healthy, and pays huge dividends. This can be as simple as going for a run, taking a long walk with the dog, taking a class, reading a book, or even getting away for a weekend. Doing things you enjoy and pursuing the things that interest you will provide you with a balanced life that will stay with you long after your spouse's Navy career ends.
- **Maintain an exercise and diet regimen and get regular checkups.** This is especially important if you are doing a lot of entertaining, traveling, or being entertained. It's easy to get out of the exercise routine during these times or to eat foods served to you that may not be in your normal diet. Take time to get regular health checkups.

*NOTE: If you live in the Washington, D.C. area, you can take advantage of flag and flag spouse physicals at Bethesda. Your spouse's staff can assist you with this information. For other areas, consult with the local military medical facility to schedule a regular physical checkup.*

- **Have a confidante.** Having a good friend or family member you can trust will help when you need someone to talk to.



I am constantly amazed at the number of people who come up to me because they know who I am, or rather who my husband is. When out in public, even at the commissary, I am mindful that I am being observed and take care of my appearance.



## YOU AS ROLE MODEL/MENTOR

Whether you like it or not, perceptions of you will change and you are often looked upon as a role model. The only real choice you have in this matter is what sort of role model you want to be. Being a positive role model is something that evolves by what you do, how you handle yourself, what you say, and how you balance your personal life with your spouse's professional responsibilities.

- **Be aware of what you say.** Being a good listener is usually wiser than being a good talker. Whatever you say, even in jest, can sometimes be interpreted as a criticism or a statement of fact.
- **Be aware of your influence.** Be aware of the influence you may have as the spouse of a flag spouse when expressing thoughts or opinions. You never know who may be listening and may feel the need to take action on something you say!
- **Be an advisor and relate experiences.** Take a back seat to those in the command and be an advisor in the true sense of the word. Letting others learn and gain confidence from your example instead of just doing your bidding brings rewards across the board.
- **Choose to get involved.** How much you choose to get involved depends on the various demands of your spouse's job, your career, and family needs. Don't be afraid to be your spouse's eyes and ears in the Navy and civilian community, especially when it comes to quality of life issues. Bringing to your spouse's attention issues that are affecting family morale (schools, medical care, security problems, etc.) is a valuable service.

Many flag spouses choose to take on a "cause" and get involved in one particular project, whether it serves their Navy community or their civilian community. This is one way to stay in touch with the needs of the area, meet new people, and make a difference in the lives of Sailor and Marine families. In the case of the Navy community, this may mean volunteering at the American Red Cross or Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, attending an Ombudsman course, supporting the local Navy spouse club, or finding ways to improve the quality of life for service members. Whatever choice it may be, those who found a way to get involved enriched their experience as a flag spouse.



## YOU AS A RESERVE FLAG SPOUSE

Although the Navy has been a constant presence in your life as your spouse has pursued his/her Naval Reserve career side by side with their demanding civilian job, most Reserve flags and their families live where there is little or no Navy presence. While your spouse may have spent an entire career in a succession of Navy jobs at various places around the country, you may have had little or no contact with this part of your spouse's life and may not even know that much about the Navy as a whole. The following are thoughts and tips from other Reserve flag spouses:

- **Develop Navy friendships.** While there is great pride in your spouse's accomplishments, it can also be accompanied by times of loneliness. You are not only the spouse of a serviceman or woman who works long days, but you are also the spouse of a Navy flag officer with unique time and travel demands. As you attend Navy functions, try to meet and develop friendships with active duty spouses who will understand your spouse's Navy commitments and provide support in ways your civilian friends may not be able to.



As one Reserve flag spouse put it: Jump in with both feet, hang on tight, and smile: you're in for a great ride.

- **Attend Naval Reserve conferences and events.** Your spouse's time as a reserve flag officer is a special, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Attend the Flag Selectee Spouse conference (NFOTS), if at all possible. You will learn more about the Navy, you'll meet and get to know your active and Reserve counterparts, and you'll have fun with your spouse at a Navy-sponsored event. Also, try to attend the Reserve Flag Conferences. They are an opportunity to see others on a fairly regular basis who are in your position and, as you get to know them, you will develop a very special support group.



With more experience we gain confidence, but the challenges are always changing too so it never becomes easy or automatic.



# LIVING IN QUARTERS AND LIVING ON BASE

*Disclaimer:* Housing rules and regulations change all the time. Quarters issues addressed in this book are based on individual experiences at that particular time. Always stay current on rules and regulations.

## HOUSING OFFICE AND QUARTERS BUDGET

Every set of quarters has a budget. The Navy Public Works staff manages this budget. Budgets outline your responsibilities for maintaining the quarters in your care. Housing budgets include maintenance/repair funds, improvement funds, and furnishing allowances. Federal law and Navy regulations dictate how and when these various funds may be spent.

If you would be more comfortable not getting involved in decisions regarding your quarters, it is perfectly fine for your spouse to handle these matters or for him/her to assign someone from the staff to take care of housing matters; however, keep in mind that you and your spouse are ultimately responsible for any decisions made regarding your quarters.

Below are some tips for making the most of your budget:

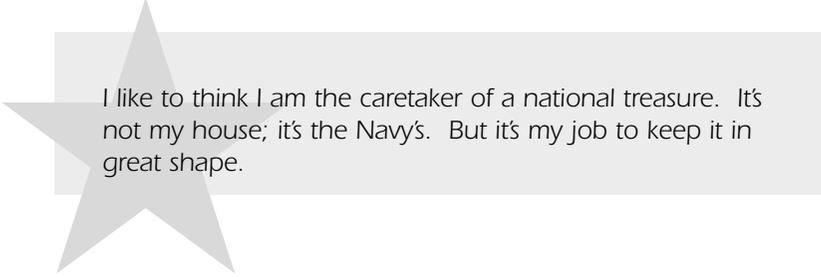
- **Develop a good rapport with the housing office staff.** Housing Offices usually designate a particular person to be the contact for matters relating to flag housing. This individual will be very familiar with the quarters, the budget, and in getting repairs and improvements done in a timely manner. They can help you understand what the different budgets can, and cannot, be used for. After getting settled in your new home, it would be a good idea to meet with the flag housing person. Ask questions about the budget and ask about any maintenance that might already be planned for your quarters. The Housing Office will be very appreciative of this, and will be happy to answer all your questions. In the end, it will make their job easier.
- **Be a good steward.** While it may be inconvenient at times to coordinate with maintenance contractors and repair people, it is important to keep current on needed repairs and maintenance so that you can leave the house in good condition for the next tenants. The Housing Office will work with you to find the best time to schedule repairs, but remember that they have an obligation to maintain flag quarters, so be flexible and patient. Maintenance personnel should not enter the quarters without your permission.



## WORKING WITH HOUSING AND CONTRACTORS

The Housing Office works closely with maintenance contractors when getting repairs and improvements done to the quarters. Therefore, it is important for you to develop not only a good relationship with Housing, but also with the contractors. By creating a positive working relationship between the three of you, you will find it easier to get your projects done.

- **Be Appreciative.** It sounds simple, but a smile, a thank you, and a friendly disposition will do wonders when working with the Housing Office and maintenance personnel.
- **Stay involved.** For maintenance and improvement projects, even though housing takes the lead, stay involved and ask questions. If repair/replacement estimates from the regular contractor seem unusually high, the flag couple can request that housing obtain estimates from additional outside sources. This can sometimes save the Navy money and release more money for further upgrades to the quarters. It's your responsibility to oversee your budget and keep track of how the money is being spent.
- **Expect good work.** Require excellence in the people who maintain your quarters. This includes good workmanship that will last, so it is important to inspect their work carefully.



I like to think I am the caretaker of a national treasure. It's not my house; it's the Navy's. But it's my job to keep it in great shape.

- **Be careful of offhand statements.** When meeting with housing staff or talking with maintenance personnel, be very careful not to make offhand statements such as, "That rug should be thrown out," or "We sure could use new curtains, carpet, etc." Often, these things will be done without regard to cost or propriety because "The admiral's spouse wants it."
- **Ask about your yard maintenance responsibilities.** Be sure to ask who is responsible for yard maintenance. Be clear on who mows the grass, waters the yard, and cares for plants. This can vary from base to base, so do not assume anything.



## ENLISTED AIDES

*(Previously called Personal Quarters Culinary Specialist)*

The reason we have Enlisted Aides (EAs) is to make the flag officer's duties easier. The tasks performed by EAs are limited to those matters officially related to the military member's duties. The ground rules for use of EAs are found in *OPNAV Instruction 1306.3A, Guidance for Utilization of Enlisted Aide* (23 Feb 2006; a revision is pending). EAs assist with the entertainment related demands that come with flag positions, and free the flag officer from the time consuming details of caring for uniforms, managing historic quarters, etc. The flag officer is solely responsible for deciding the appropriate use of an EA. It is also appropriate for you to closely collaborate and work with the EA during the planning and execution of official social functions approved by the flag officer.

Except for specific assignments that require a lot of entertaining, EAs are only assigned to three and four-star admirals. So if your spouse is a one or two-star admiral, you probably will not have to be concerned about this for a while. While having an EA can help tremendously when it comes to entertaining commitments, you will also find that it requires patience and compromise to make the experience successful for everyone.

As a spouse there may be times when you are allowed the support of the EA for an event you are hosting without the flag officer being present. ***The criteria for this is very specific and you should ALWAYS consult the JAG prior to the event.***

As soon as you know you will have an EA in your quarters, you should ask for two copies of the enlisted aide instruction, and the soon to be published "*EA Handbook*." One is for you, and one is for your EA. The flag officer will receive this document (in CD form) upon becoming a flag, OR you can download the guide through the flag website. The flag officer is given instructions on accessing this website when he/she attends NFOTS. You can also call the website help desk at (800) 420-7302, or email [helpdesk@usn.hq.navy.mil](mailto:helpdesk@usn.hq.navy.mil) for help in accessing the website.

Prior to selecting an EA, the flag couple should read and understand the enlisted aide instruction. They should also, if at all possible, receive a legal brief. The STAR Guide is another source of information. Another resource is flag couples who already have an EA and can offer experience-based suggestions and answer any lingering questions. Finally, the Executive Services Branch is also available to assist you in getting the right EA for your family. They will take your personal desires/needs and provide nominations that best meet your criteria. They are also available to discreetly assist you with any issues or questions you may have concerning your Enlisted Aide. You can reach the Branch Head at (901) 874-2135.



## FINDING AN ENLISTED AIDE

There are several ways to find the EA that is best suited for you and your spouse. Following are some suggestions on how you may go about this.

There may be an EA currently assigned to the quarters who would like to remain. There are advantages and disadvantages to retaining an EA. Issues to consider:

- The EA has knowledge of the quarters – prior repairs, ongoing problems, etc.
- The EA has knowledge of entertaining requirements (if applicable).
- You and your spouse will have the opportunity to discuss the EA with the current couple and learn, from their perspective, his/her strengths and weaknesses.
- Will the EA be able to easily adapt to your routine and family situation?
- Is there a risk of EA burnout? It may be a good time for the EA to do something different to further his/her career.

Another way to identify EA candidates is through their detailer. Ask your spouse to contact the detailer and request resumes of available EAs. There may be EAs from another state that are interested in relocating to your area. The detailer will be able to help you with this.

Lastly, let other flag couples know you are looking for an EA. They may know of someone who would qualify.

*Remember – all EA candidates should be able to provide you with a detailed resume of their education and experience. Don't be afraid to ask for their resume.*

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Once you and your spouse have found several EA candidates that you would like to interview, you should read the enlisted aide instruction. Reading this before the interviews start will help you formulate questions for the interviews. Now is a good time for you and your spouse to discuss what is important to you both with regard to an EA. What are your expectations? Here are some pre-interview questions to ask yourself:

- How do you feel about an EA who smokes? Even if the EA goes outside to smoke, the smell will be on their clothes.
- Does the flag couple have special dietary restrictions? Is it important for the EA to have prior knowledge of cooking with these requirements in mind?
- Who will be the EA's contact within the flag officer's chain of command? The Flag Aide? Protocol Officer? Flag Writer? The Flag Officer?
- What will the work hours be for the EA?



- How do you want to handle privacy issues for the flag family? At what time can the EA enter the personal area of the quarters? Suggestions for handling this will come later.
- Do you and your spouse wish to have a probationary period for the EA and, if so, for how long? One to three months is recommended.
- How formal do you want the relationship to be in the quarters; should the EA call the flag spouse Mrs. (or Mr.) Smith, or use a first name? What do you call the EA?
- Will there be areas in the quarters that you will make “off-limits” to the EA, such as the master bedroom or master bathroom?
- The flag officer, with/without their spouse, should hold occasional meetings with the EA. This is the time to address any concerns of the flag couple, or the EA. It would be the appropriate time to ask them how things are going in the quarters, and whether they are uncomfortable with anything being tasked. At the same time, the flag couple should address anything they would like to see improved upon.
- How do you want to handle money for groceries and other official expenditures? Some options are – cash only, pre-approval for signing your checks or using your credit card at the commissary, or a house bank account in your name and the EA’s name. If you choose the bank account, consider having the EA use a debit card for purchases rather than writing checks.

## THE INTERVIEW

Both the flag officer **AND** the spouse should participate in the interview. The EA will spend the majority of time interacting with the spouse, so it is very important that they have a compatible relationship. Below are some questions to consider asking during the interview:

- Discuss who will be living in the quarters – Pets? Children? Ask how the EA feels about these things. Are they agreeable to animals? Do they have any animal-related allergies? Please note that, per the OPNAVINST, pet care and child care are NOT responsibilities you may delegate to your EA.
- Ask questions about training, education, and past experience. This should include budgeting and entertaining knowledge. Does the EA have an area of expertise?
- Consider asking the EA to create possible dinner menus. If you’d like, you may also ask the EA to cook and serve a meal.
- Ask if the EA has bookkeeping/financial management experience.
- Discuss the hours you expect the EA to work.
- Does the EA have any child care issues that would preclude him/her from working at night?
- Is the EA familiar with maintaining a flag officer’s uniform?
- What does the EA consider to be his/her strengths and weaknesses?



- Discuss the flag family’s cleanliness standards and any specific requirements.
- Has the EA read the enlisted aide instruction? Ask questions to determine the level of understanding of responsibilities and rules covered in the manual.
- Discuss the EA’s expectations. What does he/she perceive the job to entail?
- Discuss privacy. Ask the EA for his/her thoughts on this.
- Does the EA smoke?
- Discuss loyalty and discretion ... *it should be expected that what is said inside the quarters goes no further. Gossip should not be tolerated.*

## GETTING STARTED

There are three inventories that should be done immediately. They are:

- Flag couple’s personal kitchen items.
- All government owned items throughout the quarters, including small kitchen appliances. All furniture should be discreetly labeled, and photos taken. Damage should be noted.
- All Official Representation Funds (ORF) foods and liquor.

Most quarters are equipped with a separate office for the EA. If not, designate an area where they can have a desk. They should have a government owned computer, as well as a government phone line/phone. Make sure that the EA understands the rules for use of government computers. The flag officer’s staff should be able to help with these things. Finally, if at all possible, an EA should have their own bathroom.

## SUGGESTIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED ON ENTERTAINING

- Provide the EA with as much advance notice of an event as possible, even if it’s just tentatively scheduled.
- Work as a team to develop the process and procedures for entertaining. When planning your menu – will it be based on cost? How much per person? Will it be a multi-course dinner, a buffet, potluck, etc.?
- Never assume what you think will happen, will happen. Make sure the EA understands how you want the evening to proceed.
- Establish an entertaining budget – be clear where foods are to be purchased. If something is not available at the commissary, ask the EA to inform you prior to purchasing items on the outside. This gives you the option of changing the menu.
- Do you want pre-dinner glasses removed from the living room so it is ready for after dinner drinks and conversation? Do you want after dinner drinks served, or do you intend for guests to help themselves from a serving cart?
- Decide who is going to order the centerpiece. Some flag spouses prefer to do this themselves.



- Establish how much time will be allotted for pre-dinner cocktails so that food is not put on the table too soon.
- Before your guests arrive take a walk through the house, including the dining room. Make sure the seating arrangements are correct.
- Take a digital photo of your table for future reference.
- If you have printed menus, it is helpful to list the guests and date of the dinner on the back. Have the EA keep these in a file for future reference.
- If trying a new recipe, have the EA prepare it ahead of time for you and your spouse.
- If the event is on a weekend, will the EA be given “comp time?” How will this be handled?
- The quarters should be clean and the dishwasher emptied before the EA leaves after an event.
- Try to sit down with the EA the day after an event and discuss what went well and what could be improved upon.

### **OTHER SUGGESTIONS AND ADVICE FROM FLAG COUPLES**

- “Although our EA likes to come to work very early in order to avoid traffic, I ask that he stay in his office, and out of the main part of the quarters, until 8:00 AM. This allows me time to have the kitchen to myself to make coffee, read the paper and let the dog out. I also ask the EA not to come upstairs to our personal area until he sees me downstairs and dressed.”
- “Decide how, or even if, you want your personal phone answered. You can choose to let an answering machine take all calls when you are not home, or have the EA answer and take messages. If you choose to have the EA answer, a duplicate message pad by the phone is a tremendous help in keeping a record of calls.”
- “Unless it is an emergency, require the EA to notify you when maintenance workers will be in the quarters. Also require the EA stay with anyone working inside the quarters.”
- Pets – pet care is the responsibility of the pet owner and no one else. ***EAs are not responsible for pet care.*** However, common sense should prevail. For example, there may be occasions when a spouse or family member is not home and the EA opens the door to let the pet out and back into the quarters. No one wants the pet to have an accident indoors, so what do you do to compensate an EA for this sort of thing? Such arrangements should be discussed in advance with the EA. See the applicable OPNAVINST for guidance on compensation for voluntary services. Be careful that you never ask, or expect, an EA to care for your pet when you are away from the quarters. You should always look for alternate pet care when traveling or when you are not available to care for your pet.
- “Be cautious discussing personal or information of a sensitive nature in the presence of an EA.”



- Some flag spouses have found it helpful to be given a weekly menu every Monday for them to approve. This not only saves trips to the commissary, but prevents something being prepared that the flag couple may not care for. Although the EA prepares meals for the flag couple, you may want to prepare some favorite recipes yourself. **Remember ... the EA does not prepare meals when the flag officer is not going to be home.**
- “Don’t hesitate to tell the EA about particular brands of foods that are preferred.”
- “Keep a list of ‘must haves’ taped to the inside of the pantry. Before the EA goes to the commissary, have him/her refer to the list for items that need replenished.”
- “You can choose to let the EA lay out the kitchen as he/she would like, or you can do it yourself. You can always make changes later.”
- “If there are special items you do NOT want the EA to wash or put away, make sure those items are known to the EA. Be specific.”
- “Make sure the flag officer’s aide (or protocol officer if there is one) keeps the EA apprised of the flag’s schedule – especially regarding evenings the flag will not be home for dinner. This also helps with uniform requirements.”
- Uniforms – instead of the standard ‘salt and pepper’ uniform, some flag couples choose to have a special uniform for the EA to wear. This is usually black or khaki slacks and a polo shirt. You may choose to have the shirt embroidered with an emblem, job title, etc. Enlisted personnel receive a yearly uniform allowance that should cover any associated costs. **Whatever you choose, the EA represents the flag officer and he/she should look professional.** Shorts, tee shirts or sloppiness should not be tolerated. Finally, when arriving or departing from the quarters, the EA should be appropriately attired.

## NOT ALWAYS AS GREAT AS IT SEEMS

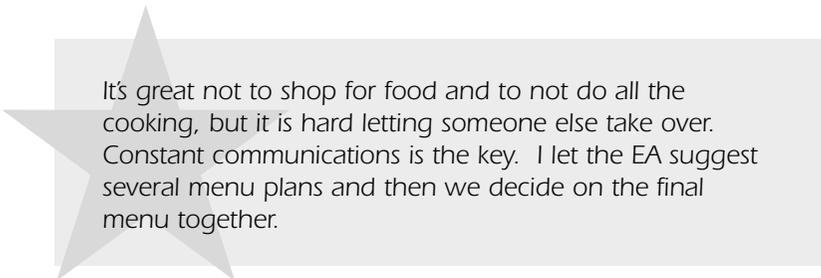
Having an Enlisted Aide in the quarters is a privilege, and can allow you more flexibility to get involved in the things you enjoy. However, there will be times that you will wish you had never heard of Enlisted Aides! We would be remiss if we didn’t mention some of the drawbacks that come with having an EA.

- You may find that it is hard to relinquish control of events in the house.
- Loss of personal privacy – having someone in your home all day takes getting used to. There will be days you wish you had the house all to yourself. There is nothing wrong with encouraging the EA to take a day or so of liberty or leave. Just remember, **you don’t have the authority to approve this – the EA still needs to go through the proper channels to request time off.**
- You may get frustrated that things are not where you want them to be.
- Having occasional feelings of guilt for having help in the house is normal.
- You may find that the EA is not quite as well trained as you thought they were. Don’t despair ... the flag officer has the option of sending an EA TAD for additional training.



## AND FINALLY ...

For the relationship between the flag couple and the EA to be successful, a lot of things must come into play. *These include mutual respect, praise, teamwork, communication, a sense of humor, flexibility, honesty, and loyalty.*



It's great not to shop for food and to not do all the cooking, but it is hard letting someone else take over. Constant communications is the key. I let the EA suggest several menu plans and then we decide on the final menu together.

## RESPONSIBILITIES WHILE LIVING ON BASE

Living on base is like living in any neighborhood, and being a good neighbor should be tantamount anywhere. As a flag spouse, being a good neighbor on a naval station or base can take on new meaning because the neighborhood now takes note of you. How you are seen and perceived becomes important.

- **Be yourself.** This is a simple, but powerful statement. If you like to sit on the porch in the evenings and wave to neighbors, do it. If you like to wear lipstick and mascara when you go for a walk, do it. If you like your privacy and prefer your backyard, enjoy it. If you're busy running your kids around, don't make apologies. Your neighbors are busy doing the same thing. You just need to remember that whatever way you live you are always the "Admiral's spouse," and your activities, comings and goings, will be of interest.
- **Open your house when opportunities arise.** It is a known fact that others will look for any opportunity to see the inside of flag quarters. Opening up your home for anything, from a formal dinner party, a committee meeting or a weekend happy hour is always a good idea, and will make you appear more approachable. You do not have to show any parts of your home that are considered personal; just seeing the living areas will be good enough.



- **Use and enjoy your special parking spot.** There are often special parking spaces at on-base facilities for flag officers, so use them! One time, an admiral's spouse parked in a "regular" spot in the large exchange/commissary complex because it was closer to the shop she was going to. A woman stopped her and told her to move her car to her reserved spot; she was taking up a valuable parking space!
- **Be aware of rules and regulations.** Living on base brings a responsibility to stay within ALL the rules and regulations. You have a visibility now that you may not have had before. Be friendly, respectful, and courteous at all times.

Living in Quarters on base in Hawaii provided the optimal environment for long lasting and wonderful friendships. The time there was like when our husbands were junior officers again, i.e., book clubs, slumber parties, coffee groups, tennis classes and much more.

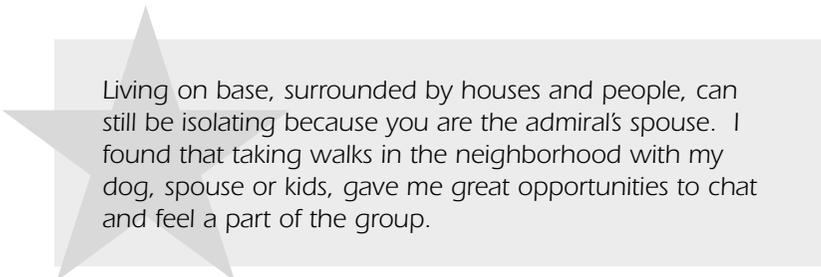




## TURNOVER TIPS

When the time comes for you to move out of flag quarters, a phone call to the next tenants is always appreciated. Providing housing and area information to the incoming family will get them off to a great start in their new assignment and their new home. Ask the flag housing manager if the quarters have been assigned to another flag officer. The chances are you will know the couple and will be comfortable calling them with useful information regarding the quarters. If they are in the area, or traveling there, allow them the courtesy of a visit to see the quarters so they will know what it looks like. Some things to consider sharing would be:

- A printed floor plan, which is available from the housing office. A video is a fantastic way of showing the quarters, but digital photos work just as well. Window sizes and coverings already provided is also helpful information.
- Any maintenance problem areas you have encountered with the quarters, and what has been done to correct them.
- Any upgrades you have made to the quarters and suggestions for future improvements.
- A list of appliances, furniture, and kitchen items that are included with the quarters.
- Neighborhood information ... a list of your neighbors and commissary, exchange and nearby military medical facilities is all good information.
- What utility companies service the quarters and, if more than one choice, what the quarters is already equipped for.



Living on base, surrounded by houses and people, can still be isolating because you are the admiral's spouse. I found that taking walks in the neighborhood with my dog, spouse or kids, gave me great opportunities to chat and feel a part of the group.



# YOUR SPOUSE'S COMMAND

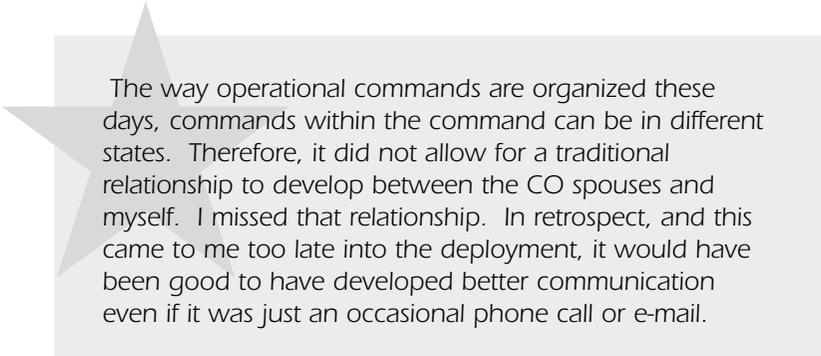
Command at the flag level is, in many ways, no different from commands at any level. However, you will notice some obvious differences, including the size of command (it's usually larger) and the increased diversity of the command (a staff can now consist of aviators, submariners, fleet support, surface, JAG corps, civilians, reserves, etc.). A joint command will, also consist of Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Army personnel.

## COMMUNICATION

- **Welcome new spouses.** Personally call spouses to welcome them when they are new to the command. This will start them off on the “right foot” and make them feel a part of the command.
- **Working with the Ombudsman.** As in past commands, developing a good relationship with the Ombudsman is very important. A positive relationship will develop if you keep the lines of communication open with him/her with regular phone calls and meetings and remember that he/she is a volunteer. In times of crisis, serious illness, or happy occasions, your support is invaluable. Taking the local Ombudsman course is a great way to learn about and understand your community and stay abreast of Navy news and changes.

Many times, the Ombudsman will produce the command family newsletter. You and the command can work with him/her about content and publishing (many are not only mailed, but also e-mailed).

Many commands now have websites where the newsletter can be posted along with other command information.



The way operational commands are organized these days, commands within the command can be in different states. Therefore, it did not allow for a traditional relationship to develop between the CO spouses and myself. I missed that relationship. In retrospect, and this came to me too late into the deployment, it would have been good to have developed better communication even if it was just an occasional phone call or e-mail.



- **Create a “command center.”** Keep your calendar and a notebook with command information near the phone or computer where you do your work. Make sure you have a current command roster that not only includes the immediate staff of the command, but also CO/XO spouses of other commands that fall under your spouse’s command. This will help when there are communication needs such as date changes, event changes, and deployment information. Keep a log to help stay organized. Recording dates, phone calls, meetings, etc. will assist you in remembering and responding to people and events in the command.

## COMMAND SPOUSE PARTICIPATION

Today, Navy families live far apart from each other, spouses have full-time jobs, and family time is precious. How do you get people to participate in spouse activities? Basically, there is not much you can do except, as a positive leader and mentor, keep the spouses informed and keep creating opportunities to get together. With luck, they will participate, make a new friend, and create some new Navy memories. If spouses do not want to participate, or cannot, don’t hold it against them. Continue to make events available and have fun with the people who do attend.

- **Occasionally include civilians in activities, not just military.**
- **Encourage the spouses and staff, but never “demand or dictate.”**
- **In joint commands, encourage spouses to leave their “service hat” out of spouse activities and communications and to try to really be the color purple or “joint.”**
- **In overseas commands, extra attention must sometimes be paid to feelings of homesickness and loneliness.** Regular meetings, newsletters, and area activities can help alleviate these feelings.
- **Plan events that include children.** Today, because people are so busy, they will turn down invitations that take them away from their family during their free time. People will be more likely to attend if the whole family can come.

## ENTERTAINING IN THE COMMAND

- **Hail and farewell parties are usually a total office affair.** A hail and farewell party can be anything from a family picnic to a sit-down or buffet dinner.
- **Entertaining the staff in your home is very special and makes the statement that you care about them and want to show your personal appreciation.** You can entertain with dinners, potlucks, or outdoor lunches in small groups or offer your house as the place to hold the entire staff party. A holiday season party or an outdoor barbecue in the summer are a good time for command functions.



- **You should try to have an office party at least once a year.** This is a personal choice that also depends on the location of the staff, the size, the mission, etc. Whatever works in your spouse's command, you will find these events to be very unifying.
- **All of the entertaining within the staff does not have to fall upon your shoulders.** Some staffs have quarterly get-togethers planned by different operating divisions of the command.





# WORKING WITH YOUR SPOUSE'S PERSONAL STAFF

It is very important to remember that the personal staff works for the flag officer. While the staff will offer their help to you, you should be careful of what offers you accept and what you ask them to do. Always be sure your spouse knows, and approves, of any help you ask of the staff. At the same time, interaction and communication with you is important and you can offer valuable input and advice where your spouse is concerned. There is no one perfect way to work with a staff except to always be kind and courteous. Below are some tips to make coordination between home and office a little smoother.

## THE PERSONAL STAFF

A flag officer's staff can consist of any of the following personnel, depending on the job: chief of staff (or deputy), executive assistant, flag secretary, flag writer, flag lieutenant, (referred to as the aide) protocol officer, culinary specialist (they are called enlisted aides when they work in the quarters), driver, as well as possible civilian personnel.

- **Stay professional.** Work styles differ greatly, ranging from informal to very formal. You and your spouse will need to find the style that works best for you, but you should always strive to maintain a professional atmosphere. When calling the office, you should ask to speak with your spouse by using his/her rank and name. In public, members of the staff should refer to you as Mr./Mrs.; but you can choose to be addressed by your first name in private if that is more comfortable for you.
- **Communicate.** Meet the front office staff and understand everyone's role. Developing a rapport will help with the flow of information coming out of the office. Do not hesitate to inform the flag writer (or whoever does your spouse's scheduling) about upcoming family events that require your spouse's presence. This can be done via phone or email.
- **Say thank you.** Remember to always say thank you and not take anyone for granted. A note, a small gift from a trip, an occasional bouquet of flowers for the office, or a plate of homemade cookies is always appreciated.
- **Note special events.** Acknowledging weddings, births, sickness, hospitalizations, and deaths in the family is appropriate.
- **Gifting.** Remembering the staff around the holidays is a nice gesture. You should not do anything expensive or elaborate; it's the thought that counts. Baking cookies or a favorite bread and presenting it on an inexpensive holiday plate is always a hit.



There are so many people who work with and for my husband that I cannot remember all their names. I find I am introducing myself all the time. However, I try to use good interpersonal relationship and communication skills. I attempt to be polite and give the person my full attention.

## ORGANIZING THE CALENDAR

The weekly and/or monthly calendar is a great way to make sure that everybody is kept aware of all obligations. Commitments can be noted, along with whether or not the spouse is included. Family vacations and activities can also be planned for and blocked. Ask the flag writer (or whoever does the scheduling) to send a calendar home every Friday. This will give you and your spouse the opportunity to discuss any scheduling conflicts so you can decide where the priority lies.

**Official Invitations.** Most invitations for official events will come to your spouse's office and the staff will handle the R.S.V.P. Ask the staff for complete information about any upcoming commitments, especially if they include you. Get as much detail about the event as possible: the dress, other guests, protocol, and any other information that you feel will be helpful. You should also ask to be informed of any invitations that your spouse has regretted, and why, so you will stay informed socially. Occasionally you will receive official invitations at home. The best thing to do is send these to the office for action.

I never lose sight of the fact that each member of the staff works for my spouse, not me. I truly believe my sensitivity to this only enhances the good relationship that we already have.



## TRAVEL

When your spouse travels, ask the staff to provide you with a copy of the travel itinerary with flight and hotel information, as well as contact phone numbers.

Like many other spouses, I was continually frustrated with my spouse for not bringing information home to me. I finally came up with a system that has worked for us, and have used it for several years. The staff has a folder with my name on it and it stays in my husband's briefcase. At the end of the day, the Aide puts anything inside the folder that is pertinent to me. Every Friday the Aide also puts in an updated monthly calendar for the next three months. When my husband gets home I retrieve information from the folder, always careful to return the folder to the briefcase.

## ENTERTAINING WITH THE PERSONAL STAFF

There are many staff-sponsored events throughout the year such as hail and farewells and holiday parties that you will want to attend and support. Entertaining the flag officer's staff is a personal decision and does not have to be done on a grand scale. Showing your appreciation of their hard work is the key.

Entertaining the staff in your home, or holding command functions at your home, is very special and makes the statement that you care and want to show your personal appreciation. You can entertain with dinners, buffets, brunches, barbecues, potlucks, etc. Some ideas are listed below.

- Have a personal pizza night. Each staff member brings a pizza topping. Everyone assembles and cooks their pizza. This gives the spouses a chance to socialize and the staff a chance to do something together out of the office.
- During the holidays, invite the staff and their families to your home for refreshments, music and gifts for the children. Ask each parent to bring an inexpensive, wrapped gift for their own child. Be sure to set a dollar amount for the gift so that each child receives a comparable gift. Have digital photos taken to email later.
- Meet at a local restaurant; keep it informal and Dutch.
- Have the flag officer perform as "Chef" for the staff at a casual barbecue. This can be at your home, or a local park. People love to see the admiral's human side.



# ENTERTAINING

The entertaining responsibilities of a flag spouse will vary greatly depending on your spouse's job and location. This particular aspect of your spouse's job can cause you much concern and worry. It need not! Not all flag spouses are born with Martha Stewart genes! However, most of us do care that what we undertake turns out well. The information that follows is born from experience and will enable you to relax and enjoy your efforts as much as your guests will.

## ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL ENTERTAINING

- **Be yourself and entertain in your own style.** Whether it's formal, casual, china or everyday, you'll be more comfortable and have more fun if you are entertaining in your own style. Your guests will relax and enjoy themselves if you're relaxed too. Most people are just happy for the invitation and appreciate the trouble you have gone to.
- **Preparation is the key.** Whether it is a formal sit-down dinner for six, a casual buffet for twenty, a backyard barbecue, or a stand-up reception for 150, you probably have some definite ideas about how you would like the event to go. The more you can plan ahead, the more relaxed everyone will be, and the less chance for unexpected problems during the event. Using tried-and-true recipes and readily available decorations relieves a lot of pressure.
- **Use a checklist.** A checklist is the only way to stay on top of all that needs to be done before an event. Things to put on the checklist include mailing invitations, planning the menu, shopping, determining linens and tableware, how the table(s) will be arranged, seating chart, the evening timetable, etc. In the next section, "Official Entertaining and Protocol", there are three excellent checklists for event planning.
- **Consider using a theme.** Having a theme can help guide you in planning a social event. Whether it's a Halloween costume party, a fall festival party, a formal dinner, or informal buffet, a theme gives direction to the menu, centerpieces, decorations, candles, etc.
- **Determine the dress for the occasion.** Whether you are entertaining or being entertained, be clear about the dress for the event. Formal and civilian informal are pretty clear, but casual can be a multidimensional word. Depending on the area of the country, it can mean a lot of different things. It could mean as dressy as a sport coat and open collar shirt or as relaxed as shorts, sandals, and sundresses.



- **Mix and mingle.** It is always nice to greet every guest personally as they arrive. Try to talk to everyone at some point during the event. If you have several tables at a sit-down dinner party, consider announcing just before dessert that all the men should gather up their napkins and wine glasses and exchange places with one another. This will encourage renewed conversation and lively exchanges. Also, if you and your spouse sit at different tables and split other couples up, this will also aid in good conversation, Try to bid every guest farewell at the end of the event and thank them for attending.
  
- **Establish good record keeping.** Whatever the event, keeping records can be very helpful for future planning. You can use 3 x 5 cards, a notebook, or keep it all on a computer file. Menus, type of event and the guest list will make planning and executing future dinners, parties, and official functions that much easier. The following are tips on the kinds of information to keep track of to help you stay organized during your flag career:
  - Date
  - Type of party (lunch, dinner, barbecue, reception)
  - Menu (cookbooks used, page numbers, file location)
  - Cost of the event
  - Photos of table settings and decorations
  - Guest list (helps prevent serving the same menu to the same people)
  - Theme (table decorations, flowers, etc.)
  - Guest information (children, ages, grandchildren, marriages, jobs, hobbies, interests, etc.)
  - Event critique (make comments on the preparation, food, timing, etc.)
  - Save old invitations and remind cards (sent and received) to help with future parties.

As the spouse of the CO of the battle group, I often find myself to be the senior spouse present at various ceremonies. In the "old" days, I used to watch the senior spouse for when to stand, etc. All of a sudden, all eyes were on me. I found it quite helpful to make certain, before the event, that I knew the proper protocol.



## OFFICIAL ENTERTAINING AND PROTOCOL

Tradition is a huge part of the Navy experience and protocol is a part of that tradition. The definition of protocol is:

**“A code prescribing strict adherence to correct etiquette and precedence as in diplomatic exchange and the military services.”**

While you may shy away from words and phrases such as “strict adherence” in regard to protocol, some things never change. If you know what the protocol and etiquette rules are for certain traditions, ceremonies, and entertaining events, then you will be comfortable in any situation. As well, you can be sure that your spouse and other military members will be following protocol.

- **Follow the book.** The protocol “rules” can be very complicated. Although your spouse’s flag writer, aide, and/or protocol officer should be able to answer any questions you have, it is a good idea for you to have a reference book. A few of the better ones are:
  - [OPNAVINST 1710.7A Social Usage and Protocol Handbook](#)
  - [Service Etiquette, by Oretha D. Swartz](#)
  - [Protocol: The Complete Handbook of Diplomatic, Official and Social Usage, by Mary Jane McCaffree and Paula Innis](#)
- **Invitations.** The proper format for an invitation is covered in the above references. The flag writer typically produces official invitations. The office staff will do most of the addressing and mailings, but the flag couple generates the guest list. However, a few thoughts are in order.
  - Many people use the official flag invitations for most events - it is easy and civilians enjoy receiving flag correspondence. Historic homes can also be featured on invitations and/or dinner menus.
  - Invitations should be properly addressed with particular attention paid to spelling the name correctly. If your spouse’s staff does them, ensure you have had a chance to look at the draft invitation and make sure someone you trust is proofreading them before they are mailed out.
  - The body of the invitation should be specific in regards to place, time, occasion, dress, and directions for response.



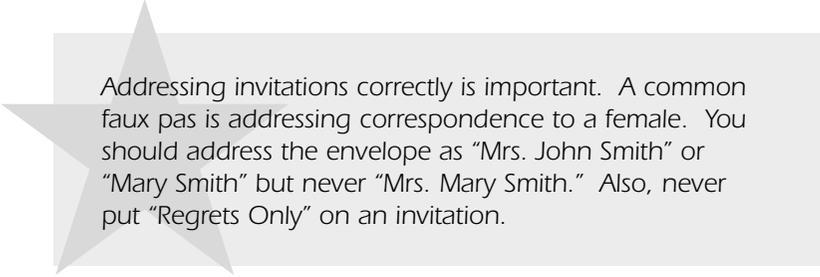
- **Use of Enlisted Aides/Culinary Specialists.** If you have an EA, then you are probably familiar with his/her responsibilities. If you do not have an EA, then you may want to consider hiring one (or more) for your event. Your spouse may have culinary specialists for hire, or you can check with the base Mess for CSs who may be interested. Ask your spouse's JAG to determine the local wage rate. It is best to pay them at the end of the party. It is not uncommon for EAs to volunteer to help other EAs, expecting the favor to be returned when they need extra help. Many of them enjoy this because it is excellent training and gives them the opportunity to learn how other flag houses operate.

If you are using supplemental help, make sure they arrive at least one hour prior to the event. This allows time for them to become familiar with your quarters and your plans for the evening.

- **Table seating charts.** The protocol references provide the rules for seating people based on seniority, and that is how your staff will normally prepare the seating chart. Review the draft of the seating chart ahead of time, especially if you know most of the guests. You may have details on personalities that the staff doesn't, and may wish to bend the rules a little to make the evening more enjoyable for everyone.
- **Place cards.** If the quarters do not have place cards for your use, the staff can provide them. Always put the first name on the other side of the card so that people across the table can address those that they don't know or have forgotten their name.
- **Serving protocol.** At a seated dinner table, servers deliver food from the left, servers remove plates from the right. After the main course or salad is served, remove the salt and pepper from the table before dessert and coffee are served. Tip: Just remember, "right remove."
- **Sample place setting.** If you have a specific way you want the table set, set one place the way you want it done and then let the EA use that as an example.
- **Determine music to be played.** If you would like to have music at your event, whether it's a trio, a string quartet, jazz, or other ensemble, contact the local Navy band office for information. If it is for an official function you do not pay. However, you are certainly free to hire the musicians for any personal entertaining.
- **Food for the staff, musicians, and drivers.** EAs, the protocol officer, and the band should eat before or after the event, not during. Usually, the cost of the dinner will determine if you want the staff to eat the meal being served, or whether they will have pizza or other similar take-out dinner. In general, drivers will not leave their cars, although it is courteous to ask if they would like something to eat or if they want to come in from the cold or heat.



- **Calling cards.** The rules for using calling cards are also provided in the various protocol references. These days, calling cards are more of a way to give someone your contact information. You may find that it is a good idea to have calling cards made with your phone number, email address and mailing address printed on them. If you will be stationed overseas, you might consider printing the card information in the language of the country you are living in on the back of the card.



Addressing invitations correctly is important. A common faux pas is addressing correspondence to a female. You should address the envelope as “Mrs. John Smith” or “Mary Smith” but never “Mrs. Mary Smith.” Also, never put “Regrets Only” on an invitation.

## ENTERTAINING IN THE CIVILIAN COMMUNITY

- **Be aware of the community in which you are living.** Read your local papers in order to familiarize yourself with the schools, churches, and political climate surrounding you. It will not only benefit you to know “who’s who” but it will also enable you to converse on a wide variety of topics with a diverse group of individuals.
- **Mix it up.** Your spouse’s office may be able to suggest groups of people to invite: politicians, business leaders, educators, arts leaders, media, etc. Sometimes you will want to focus on a group, other times it may be just as fun to mix it up. Always invite a few military people and their spouses - it is good exposure for them and the civilians. The reserve flag officers in your community are also a tremendous resource and should be included in events as well.
- **Use your quarters.** If possible, use your flag quarters for entertaining. If your quarters are historic, the civilian community will enjoy the honor of being entertained in your home. Some groups may be interested in an event to take place in your spouse’s command facility such as ships, hangers, submarines, etc. The generous offer of the things we take for granted will go a long way.



## ENTERTAINING FOREIGN DIGNITARIES

This is an area that can be done on many scales depending on the occasion and the dignitary. As with all entertaining, you will be more relaxed if you entertain in your style and have a good plan. These events should be fun for everyone!

- **Do your homework.** The office staff, or protocol officer if you have one, can gather pertinent information regarding dietary restrictions, customs, country of origin, and proper spelling and pronunciation of all guests' names traveling with the foreign party. They will also have an agenda of scheduled events. Ask the office staff for a copy, along with a copy of their biographies. Find out if the principals speak conversational English or if they will have an interpreter with them. You should familiarize yourself with all the information you are given. It will make your guests (and yourself) feel more comfortable if you have taken some time to learn their names, something interesting about their country and culture, the position the foreign guest holds, and some conversation topics that would help to engage the guests in universally interesting conversation.
- **Plan the menu.** Check for any unusual customs and dietary restrictions. The visiting party will have an aide and your spouse's staff can easily check with that person if the information isn't readily available. When living in a foreign country and entertaining, try serving American cuisine. American themes used for your parties are usually welcomed and fun for your guests. Remember you are the Navy's ambassador representing the United States and they are eager to learn about our culture in your home.
- **Work the guest list.** If you have the option to add a few more guests to the party, choose carefully. Whenever possible, include some Navy couples who are excellent conversationalists and who would be good representatives of the USA as well as the Navy. This will keep the conversation flowing and ensure that everyone has an enjoyable evening.
- **The spouse program.** Often you will be expected to entertain the foreign spouse while the military members have meetings and tours. This is an opportunity to show the spouse something interesting in your community, perhaps a museum, art gallery or botanical garden. Ask the staff to determine if the spouse has any particular interests. A Protocol Officer will usually accompany you on these excursions to ensure everything goes smoothly. You should also be allowed the use of a government vehicle and driver for foreign visitors. Ask the staff to check with the JAG regarding this.



## PAYING FOR OFFICIAL ENTERTAINING

By now you must be wondering how much all of this entertaining is going to cost. This is one area in which planning ahead can save you some headaches later. Allow ample time to adjust your preparations accordingly.

- **Official Representation Funds (ORF).** Some flag billets will receive an annual allocation of funds to be used for official entertainment and gifts. This money is normally referred to as ORF. There are very strict rules for using ORF. The staff (protocol officer and/or JAG) will be able to give you a breakdown on the ORF budget and whether your event qualifies for these funds. Work with your spouse's staff when applying for ORF to ensure it is done correctly. You want to be sure to get full reimbursement for all your expenses. Once the forms are turned in, they cannot be changed. EAs should be trained in the use of ORF, and how to manage food and liquor that is purchased with this money.
- **Conference Fee/Event Fee.** If you are hosting a large group for a reception as part of an official conference or event, chances are that they will pay a conference fee. Prior to the event, you and your staff should sit down and figure out how much you plan to spend per person for the reception. Assuming certain rules/requirements are met, this amount can then be added into the fee and you will be reimbursed for the cost from the "fee" account. These events are normally repetitive, so the staff can give you a good idea of how much they have cost in the past.
- **Out of pocket.** When your event does not fall into one of the above categories, you will have to pay for it out of your own pocket. This may affect many of your decisions, from the guest list to the menu. If you have an idea of how much you would like to spend per person, plan accordingly or share it with the EA so they can price the menu in advance. One word of advice - make sure you know what wine is being served and the price per bottle. This is an area in which costs can add up quickly.

## ENTERTAINING STORIES

- We live in an historic house with six fireplaces. I enjoy decorating them and creating ambiance. I had old pine boughs left from Christmas in the dining room fireplace. At a party, I decided to add different sizes of pillar candles to the greens in the fireplace. Fortunately, we have glass doors on our fireplaces. When we lit the candles, the greens were so dry that they exploded into flames and melted my beautiful candles from the outside!! In no time at all, we had a raging fire in the fireplace. We called 911 and had them on the phone when my husband and one of our guests put the fire out with the fire extinguisher --provided in all Navy housing. Fortunately, it worked!! Now we had a huge cloud of black smoke billowing out of the fireplace. We quickly shut the doors on the fireplace, opened the doors to the house and within five minutes, the house was clear of smoke. I had all my male guests on their hands and knees mopping up hot wax that was flowing out of the



fireplace all over my hardwood floors, the women were busy rinsing the residue from the fire extinguisher from the plates. We sat down to eat at 8:00 to one of the tastiest dinners I've ever fixed!!!

- I found great pleasure in teaching my Japanese friends how to cook American foods. I would have all the ingredients, and let them measure, mix and cook the dish as I was teaching. We would then sit and enjoy together our lunch which they had cooked. When they were leaving, I had prepared a "Gift Bag" with American measuring spoons, cups, recipe and ingredients enabling them to return home and practice!
- We had the opportunity to host the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and worked in advance to have "The Perfect Menu" and thought the EAs understood the serving technique. We had even practiced. We gave the staff a little pep talk of encouragement, and lots of "you can do this." We were all seated, everything was beautiful, and all was going well with only six more plates to go. One of the EAs put a plate down and started to the next person; realizing he had served the wrong person in order, he blurts out "Oh s--t" and goes back, picks up the plate and continued on. Needless to say, we were red-faced and everyone else was laughing. The Chairman, being the perfect gentlemen, simply stood up and said "It's time for a joke" and "Let's let these fine young men continue with their serving - They are doing a super job, none of us know how hard it is until we try it ourselves." What a guy! We all relaxed and the rest of the meal went perfectly!

I keep a computer file for menus, events, guest lists, timing, you name it. On the day of the event, I list what to do hour by hour. If I had a scanner, I would include even more in this file. To some, this may sound like a battle strategy, but it enables me to limit my anxiety when I am having guests.



## TIMELINE FOR AN EVENT

### One Week Prior

- Send “To Reminds” including the card, a map and a copy of the guest list
- Request any EA or equipment support
- Confirm band and photographer
- Ask flag writer to send home a proposed seating chart
- Determine requirements for centerpiece/flowers
- Finalize menu and wine

### One Day Prior

- Fax guest list to security (if required)
- Prepare nametags and place cards (first names on back)
- Ask flag writer to send home menu cards, if they are being used
- Verify seating chart
- Make up coat hanger nametags if it is a large party
- Confirm EA support

### Day of Dinner

- Verify security guard has guest list/passes if required
- Inspect quarters’ front walkway/porch
- Verify lights are on and flags are out
- If raining, place umbrella pot on porch
- Determine location of music/band people
- Check bathrooms for sufficient toilet paper, hand towels, soap, and lotion. If using a candle, light it about 5 minutes before guests arrive.
- Make up a “thank the EAs and Band card” for the Host and give to him/her.
- Verify sufficient hangers in closet. If a large party, use coat hanger nametags.
- Check the table against the menu: ensure there is enough silver to eat the entire meal. Ensure place cards are in the correct place and menu cards are out.
- Ensure seating chart is in silver frame and on display.
- Place guest book on table, ensure pen works.
- Verify there is a container for used toothpicks for appetizers.
- Light candles; turn on all lights
- Fill water and first course wine prior to guests being seated.
- Light dinner-table candles 5 minutes prior to dinner. Ensure tea is available with coffee.



## ENTERTAINING SUPPLIES CHECKLIST

- Cover plates
- Soup plates
- Soup bowls
- Salad plates
- Main course plates
- Small plates (sorbet)
- Champagne glass (sorbet)
- Small doilies (sorbet)
- Dessert plates
- Demitasse cups
- Demitasse saucers
- Coffee cups
- Coffee saucers

- Knives
- Salad forks
- Main course forks
- Soup spoons
- Teaspoons
- Dessert spoon/forks
- Demitasse spoons

### Table Glassware

- Water goblet
- Red wine glass
- White wine glass
- Champagne glass

### Cocktail Glassware

- Water goblet
- Red wine glass
- White wine glass
- Champagne glass
- Hi ball glass
- Lo ball glass
- Shot glass w/stem
- Brandy glass

### Accessories (silver or other)

- Round trays
- Coffee server
- Sugar bowl
- Cream pitcher
- Sugar prongs/spoon
- Water pitchers
- Serving trays w/ears
- Ice Bucket
- Ice tongs
- Ceramic plate/bowl
- Chafing dish
- Sterno
- Salt/pepper shakers
- Pepper mill
- Toothpicks
- Cork Screw
- Coffee maker w/filters
- Coffee (decaf)
- Teapot and tea bags

- Paper plates (small)
- Paper plates (large)
- Paper napkins
- Paper cups

- Plastic cups
- Plastic knives
- Plastic forks
- Plastic spoons

- Tablecloth (white)
- Tablecloth (print)
- Cloth napkins (white/print)
- Cocktail napkins (paper)
- Cocktail napkins (cloth)
- Place mats
- Candles
- Centerpiece/flowers
- Tape (for doilies)
- Baskets



## SUGGESTED BAR CHECKLIST

- |                                                       |                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jack Daniels                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Courvoisier vs cognac       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bacardi rum                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Bottled spring water        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smirnoff vodka               | <input type="checkbox"/> Tonic water                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dewar's scotch               | <input type="checkbox"/> Club soda                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beefeaters gin               | <input type="checkbox"/> Orange juice                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Martini & Rossi dry vermouth | <input type="checkbox"/> Ginger ale                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sweet vermouth               | <input type="checkbox"/> Sprite                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Campari                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Diet Coke                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> E&J brandy                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Coke                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bailey's Irish Cream         | <input type="checkbox"/> Beer (premium, bottles)     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tia Maria                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Beer (lite, bottles)        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kahlua                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Red wine (before dinner)    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cointreau                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Red wine (serve w/dinner)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drambuie                     | <input type="checkbox"/> White wine (before dinner)  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> B&B                          | <input type="checkbox"/> White wine (serve w/dinner) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Romana Sambuca               | <input type="checkbox"/> Champagne (serve w/dinner)  |

Just go with what feels natural to you and draw on what you have done in the past. Ideas can come from all areas. Do not be afraid to ask for advice from the staff, friends, or other flag spouses, retired or active.



# TRAVELING WITH YOUR SPOUSE

The rules for spouse travel are very strict. The flag officer and his JAG will determine if you are eligible to accompany your spouse on official travel. If you aren't eligible for official travel, and your spouse is flying on a military plane, you may have the option to pay the amount equal to a commercial ticket in order to travel on the plane with your spouse. For official travel the below information will be useful.

## TRAVEL TIPS

Traveling, per se, is probably not a new experience for you. However, traveling with your spouse in an official capacity may be new. There are more issues you will need to consider and discuss before you leave for the trip. This includes attire for each day's events, attire for evening events (formal/informal), weather, gifts, transportation, knowledge of the community and/or the country you are visiting, and knowing something about the people you will be meeting.

- **Invitational Travel Orders.** Once the JAG and the flag officer have determined you are eligible to travel at the government's expense you will be issued a set of Invitational Travel Orders. You should keep these with you when you travel. Do not put them in checked baggage, as you may need to show them at the ticket counter if flying commercially.
- **Planning the itinerary and logistics.** Your spouse's staff will work out the details of the itinerary and the logistics of any trip; even more so for an overseas trip. They will work to balance the desires of your spouse, yourself, and the host command or country. Normally, the aide will put together an itinerary and you and your spouse will have an opportunity to review it several weeks in advance.
- **The Spouse Program and official duties.** Conferences and host countries will plan a spouse program while the military members are busy with work commitments. Before you commit to the spouse program, make sure it contains things you are interested in doing and learning about. In the case of another military facility, you may want to visit housing, child care and health care facilities, schools, and family support centers.

If you are asked what you would like to do, be honest. If you need to rest, if you want time to exercise, if you want to venture out on your own, say so.

*NOTE: If you are traveling in a van with other spouses, the most senior spouse gets in the van last. That way, when you arrive at your destination, he/she is the first one out to greet your hosts.*



- **Research where you are going.** This will help you suggest ideas for the spouse program, as the host country may ask what you would like to do or see.

*NOTE: An excellent book to help with customs and gift-giving is Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands: How to Do Business in 60 Countries by Tern Morrison, Wayne A. Conaway, George A. Borden with a preface by Hans Koehler.*

- **You as ambassador.** Whether you are traveling at the government’s expense, or your own, it is important to remember that you are an “ambassador at-large” for the U.S. Navy and our country.
- **Keep a travel log.** Bring a notebook with pockets to keep notes on people you meet, interesting things you’ve seen, gifts given or received, etc. Some things to keep in the notebook/log include:
  - Thank you notes so you can keep up between stops.
  - Travel itinerary with hotel phone numbers as well as those of the consul general or military contact.
  - Gift record (given and received)
  - A schedule from home to remind you to call back for important events such as birthdays, school activities, etc.
  - Bring books, magazines, or needlepoint projects for long flights, car rides, and delays.
- **E-mail.** Most hotels provide internet connectivity for laptops. High end hotels usually have a business center where you can pay a nominal fee for the use of a computer.
- **Official car.** When you are traveling with your spouse in an official car, your seat in the car is behind the driver. That way, when the car pulls up to the curb, the active-duty spouse can get out and greet his/her hosts or officials.
- **Personal time.** Monitor you agenda in order to allow time for rest before an evening event. This is especially important if you are fighting jet lag.
- **Copy your passport.** Make a copy of your passport and carry an extra set of two passport pictures. Keep them separate from your passport. If it’s lost or stolen, an embassy can issue a new one right away since they have the information and photos necessary.
- **Exchanging money.** Changing foreign currency is very easy abroad. Probably the best rate of exchange is the ATMs at U.S. bases. It’s a good idea to always carry a small amount of foreign currency, although most places you go will accept credit cards.



## YOUR TRAVEL WARDROBE

- **Packing.** When you pack your clothes, layer them with plastic bags or tissue paper in between. This will help keep them wrinkle-free. If you will be attending a formal event, pack your formal wear in a special travel bag to keep it safe.
- **Build a travel wardrobe.** Think “efficiency” when it comes to packing. Remember to pack light and coordinate clothes. For example, choose the shoe color first, packing a pair of walking shoes, flats, and heels in that color. Then choose the clothes in varying degrees of formality from casual to black-tie that would go with the shoe color. It cuts down on what you have to take. Don’t forget your bathing suit or workout clothes in case the opportunity for healthy activities presents itself. Accessories are a light and convenient way to change a look and an outfit to get more wear from it. Always be prepared for all levels of formal functions.
- **Makeup and toiletries.** Some spouses have a duplicate of their toiletries (in travel size) always packed and ready to go. Find out what the power sources are in the countries you will be visiting and consider buying a power converter and adapters for hair dryers, curlers, etc. Add static free spray, razors, extra toothbrush, nail polish remover, finger nail file, touch-up nail polish. Also, consider including a sewing kit, spot remover, shoe polish wipes, and over-the-counter medication.
- **Baggage.** If traveling on a government plane, you may have more room for your garment bags and they don’t have to be quite as “baggage system-proof.” You will also have the flight crew to help with the movement of the luggage. On a commercial flight you will normally be limited to the commercial carriers’ rules and will have to move some of your own things.

*NOTE: Carry some toiletries and an extra outfit on the plane just in case your luggage is lost or delayed.*

- **Miscellaneous.** Depending on the weather, don’t forget gloves, raincoat/umbrella, and sunglasses. You also may want a camera.

*NOTE: If you have an Enlisted Aide that will be traveling with you, ask what they have in their “EA Kit.” Usually, they have just about everything, including an iron, and then you won’t need to duplicate items in your luggage.*

## GIFTS: GIVING AND RECEIVING

Giving and receiving gifts sounds like a simple, gracious way to acknowledge another person or occasion. Unfortunately, when you become a flag couple this simple gesture becomes a lot more complicated. There are very specific rules for what you can spend on a gift, depending on the occasion, to whom you are giving the gift, and whether the



gift is being exchanged in the United States or overseas. There are also very specific rules for accepting a gift based on dollar value. Your spouse's JAG will be able to advise you of current rules, so be sure to ask for their guidance.

If traveling internationally, review the travel itinerary to see if there will be a gift exchange between spouse counterparts. The rules for gifts received and given to foreign principals and spouses are more relaxed but, again, the JAG is your best source for current regulations.

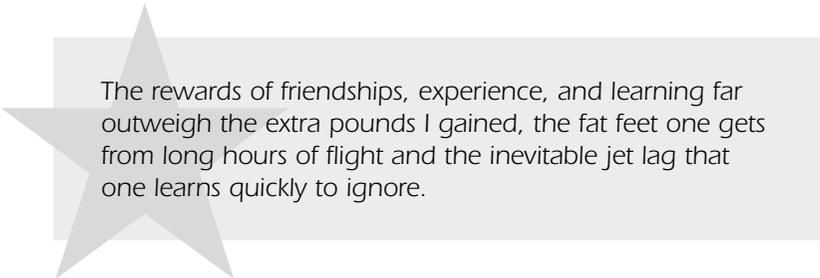
If you receive a gift that is outside the appropriate dollar value, accept the gift graciously. At a discreet time, turn the gift over to your spouse's JAG for review. After that, one of the following will happen:

1. The JAG will determine the gift meets the value criteria and you will be allowed to keep the gift
2. The gift will exceed the maximum value allowed and you will be given a choice of: paying the fair market price of the gift in order to keep it, or turning the gift over to the US Government

Whenever and wherever you travel, it's always a good idea to pack a few extra small gifts. Be sure to keep accurate records of your gift-giving (what and to whom) as well as your gift-receiving (what and from whom), and remember to write those thank you notes! Bring gift bags and tissue separately and assemble the gifts when you arrive in each place. That way they won't tear or get wrinkled. For gifts that are wrapped ahead of time, put sticky notes on the bottom reminding you what the gift is.

**Official Gifts:** These are gifts the flag officer normally gives that are paid for with ORF funds.

**Spouse Gifts:** Under current regulations, spouse gifts can not be paid for with ORF, so you may want to set a budget for what you want to spend on gifts. If you are traveling to a foreign country, gifts representing the United States, or a particular area of the United States, are always appreciated. You may also want to bring a few small gifts for drivers, aides, and the protocol staff who have spent time assisting you during your visit. This is a nice thing to do, but is not expected or mandatory. For additional help, the book, Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands, (under the chapter *Research Where You Are Going*) is an excellent resource for gift-giving customs around the world.



The rewards of friendships, experience, and learning far outweigh the extra pounds I gained, the fat feet one gets from long hours of flight and the inevitable jet lag that one learns quickly to ignore.



# NAVY SPOUSE CLUB ADVISOR

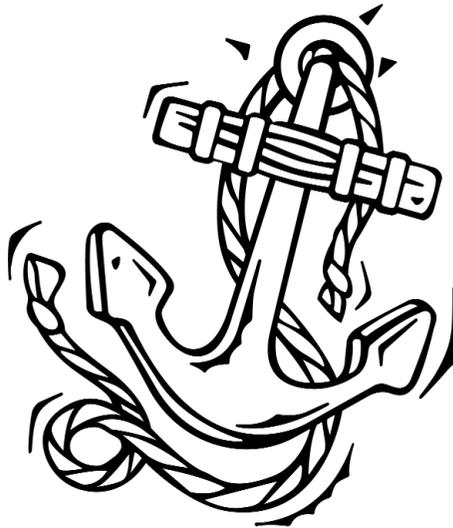
It is likely, due to your spouse's longevity in the Navy and your amount of experience, that you will be asked to be an advisor to certain clubs or organizations.

- **To be an advisor or not to be an advisor.** Accept the offer to be an advisor only if you are willing to participate, advise, and take responsibility. If you are unable to do this (for whatever reason) find a replacement. This is perfectly acceptable. Regardless of your level of participation, you should join the spouse club and pay dues.
- **Be informed.** Take the time to read the bylaws and understand the mission of the club or committee.
- **Attend the meetings.** Plan to attend club meetings on a regular basis. If you cannot attend, let the president know not to expect you. Your presence at the meetings is appreciated and enables members to have access to you as a peer - an equal.
- **Listen.** Take the time to listen to others' ideas, needs, and direction. Remember that you have had your time to lead, and now it is your time to advise. By merely listening, you can avoid being dragged into personal discussions and personality conflicts that may occur.
- **When to speak up.** While your primary role is to listen and gently advise when asked, there are some situations where you will need to intervene for the well being of the command or the individuals involved. This includes when the honor of the club is in jeopardy by poor planning or if there are questions about an issue that needs to be checked with Legal. You can also be the reality check when a club is making plans or discussing issues.
- **Other ways to stay involved with a spouse club.** If you decline a role as the advisor, you can still offer your support by attending award ceremonies and hosting an event in your quarters (such as a volunteer appreciation luncheon). You could also encourage your spouse to attend award and appreciation functions.
- **Honorary Chair of other organizations.** At some point during your time as "the spouse of," it is possible you will be asked to become the Honorary Chairman of Volunteers for the Navy/Marine Corps Relief Society, the Red Cross, or other volunteer organization. While it is nice to have the admiral's spouse in that position, it is not necessary that you accept the job if it's not something you want to do. The job should have someone in it who is interested and who can assist. If you accept the job, you can do a lot of good just endorsing the activity and supporting their



volunteers. A person who accepts the honorary position and then is unable or unwilling to attend the meetings can cause a lot of bad feelings. It's preferable that the spouse say no if the position is not something they have an interest in, or if time constraints would not allow them to give the job the time it deserves.

The purpose of a spouse club is to fill a need in the life of the spouses of a certain command, locality or circumstance. Don't try to put your will on the board. You're only an advisor.





# WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

Most likely, you will not have much contact with the media during your spouse's career unless there is an emergency or disaster that affects your spouse's command or the community. Even so, you and your spouse should agree on how you should, or should not, respond in the event of an emergency and subsequent media attention. Remember, you are under no obligation to speak with the media.

- **Get to know the local Public Affairs Officer (PAO).** Find out the name of the base PAO so if the need arises, you'll know who to call. *It is highly recommended that you not speak to the media without a PAO present.* This is to protect you, and is good advice.
- **Getting press for projects.** The PAO is specifically trained in working with the local media. If you have a special event you want publicized, get in touch with the PAO to help you develop a press release, call media contacts, etc.
- **Be positive.** If you do speak with the media, try to speak slowly and keep your statements positive in nature. You shouldn't say anything that might provide information about operations, command actions and developments, or Navy business - it might be interpreted as you speaking officially for your spouse or the command.
- **Be prepared.** The camera can be an intimidating sight and one spouse admitted that when the red light went on, she forgot her name. You can overcome nervousness by having a positive statement or two in mind before the interview begins that might be able to be used for a sound bite. Remember, the media's cameras will roll so long as you are talking and gesturing, so be sure that you are confident about the points you want to make.
- **Give the media interview rules.** Most members of the media are earnest and hard-working, but there are some who hope you will say anything for a story which could lead to misquotes and misrepresentation. Be up front with the media prior to agreeing to an interview and set parameters with them. For example, you can tell them you will answer questions concerning family or Navy community issues, but that you will not respond to political questions or questions about your spouse's military decisions, etc. You must be firm about your requests.
- **Don't speak if you don't want to.** If you do not want to speak to the media, get their name, number, and employer and feel free to refer them to the local Public Affairs Office who are trained and prepared to handle their questions.

## *Acknowledgement*

Naval Services FamilyLine would like to acknowledge the contributions to the STAR Guide by flag spouses from around the world who took the time to share their experiences, advice, helpful hints and lessons learned.

The STAR Guide was edited by volunteers of Naval Services FamilyLine.



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