

LADIES AND GENTLEMAN, IF YOU'LL DIRECT YOUR ATTENTION TO THE FRONT OF THE ROOM, YOU WILL NOTICE A SMALL TABLE IN A PLACE OF HONOR. IT IS SET FOR ONE . . . IN REMEMBRANCE OF MANY.

THIS TABLE IS OUR WAY OF SYMBOLICALLY GRIPPING HANDS WITH MEMBERS OF OUR CLASS WHO ARE NOW IN THE SHADOWS . . . AND UNABLE TO DINE WITH US THIS EVENING.

THE TABLECLOTH IS WHITE, REFLECTING THE PURITY OF THEIR DEDICATION FROM THEIR EARLY YOUTH . . . TO DUTY . . . TO HONOR . . . TO COUNTRY.

THE WINE GLASS IS INVERTED . . . AS THEY CANNOT SAVOR THE WINE . . . AND SHARE WITH US IN TONIGHT'S CAMARADERIE.

THE TALL WHITE CANDLE SYMBOLIZES THEIR LOFTY RESOLVE TO LIVE ABOVE THE COMMON LEVEL OF LIFE . . . TO BE EVER LOYAL TO ALL THAT IS NOBLE AND WORTHY . . . TO CHOOSE THE HARDER RIGHT INSTEAD OF THE EASIER WRONG . . . AND TO NEVER BE CONTENT WITH A HALF TRUTH WHEN THE WHOLE COULD BE WON.

THE CANDLE'S FLAME BRIGHTLY REFLECTS THE CRUCIBLE OF OUR ALMA MATER WHICH HELPED FORGE THE NOBILITY THEIR CHARACTER , , , AND THE GLIMMERING SELFLESSNESS OF THEIR SERVICE TO THE NATION.

THE SALT ON THE TABLE IS SYMBOLIC OF TEARS SHED IN DEEP AND PROFOUND SADNESS BY FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COMRADES IN REMEMBRANCE OF THEM.

THE SINGLE RED ROSE IN THE VASE, REMINDS US OF THE LOVE COUNTRY . . . THAT INSPIRED THEM TO SERVE.

THIS SMALL TABLE WHERE NO ONE WILL DINE TONIGHT HAS BEEN SET WITH REVERENT CARE TO REMIND US . . . OF OUR OBLIGATION TO KEEP THEM ALIVE IN OUR MEMORIES.

AND SO, WE GATHERED HERE THIS EVENING GIVE PRAYERFUL THANKS THAT WE ARE PRIVILEGED TO HAVE KNOWN THOSE CLASSMATES NOW IN THE SHADOWS . . . AS WE FEEL TO OUR MARROW THE GRIP OF THEIR FAR OFF HOLD.

GENTLEMEN OF THE WEST POINT CLASS OF 1968, WOULD YOU STAND AND RAISE A GLASS WITH ME.

TOAST: I PROPOSE A TOAST . . . TO OUR DEPARTED CLASSMATES.

Response: "OUR DEPARTED CLASSMATES"