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| Ladies at the Table Banquet | [Pick the date][Year] |
| Formal dinner to honor both the Ladies of the Lodge as well as significantly influential women of history. A series of seven ritualized, choreographed, and synchronized toasts are given in honor of six historical women, and a brief biography is given for each. The seventh and final toast is dedicated to the Ladies of the Lodge. | Event description and ceremony script |



INTRODUCTION

The average Mason spends time away from his wife and family for Masonic functions and dinners. On many occasions the Mason’s Lady is left at home with the children. Some of the more modern Masonic Lodges realize the Masonic Ladies play a very important role in the Masonic way of life. Those Lodges are slowly beginning to provide functions for their Masonic families, more especially the Mason’s Lady. One such event is the “Ladies at the Table” banquet. Please understand, *this is not a masonic function, or ritual of any type, nor is it intended to be*, but it does come under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin. A “Ladies at the Table” banquet serves as a method for a Lodge to honor and give respect to the Mason’s widow, Lady, daughter, mother, sister and to those women who have helped build this nation of ours. Though it can and should be a lavish occasion, it is still only a small gesture compared to the full scope of what our Ladies deserve.

SCOPE

This one night is especially set aside for the Ladies and widows of the Masonic Lodge and provides an excellent opportunity to invite prospective members, community leaders, and their Ladies. The dinner is designed to be informative as well as entertaining.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A Lodge should not use their Eastern Star Chapter to prepare the meal. The majority of these Ladies should be at the dinner with their husbands. Widows of the Lodge should not have any expenses for this evening and should be considered guests of the Lodge.

Non-Masons and their escorts, most especially the individuals in the community most deserving for their contribution to that community (i.e. person to be toasted), may also be invited.

SELECTION OF HONORED LADIES

The selection of those Ladies to be honored with a toast should be taken very seriously. It is strongly recommended that you do not make selections based on political or religious biases. Neither subject matter has a place at this dinner. Selections should be sought from those Ladies who have given of themselves to benefit the community, near or far, on any scale. However, the seventh (7th) toast shall always remain the same: “TO OUR LADIES, THE MOST IMPORTANT WOMEN IN OUR LIVES.”

REMEMBER: The Lodge’s selection of Ladies to be toasted will reflect in your community, the action of not only your Lodge, but the entire Masonic Organization. Choose wisely.

HISTORY

1. To provide interest, understanding, and care for the Lodge widows.
2. To establish a line of communication between the Lodge and the Lodge widows, ensuring them they have not been forgotten.
3. To honor the Masons’ Ladies, daughters, mothers, sisters and the other influential women about the world, nation, state, and community.
4. To give prospective Masons and their Ladies a chance to meet members of the Lodge and their Ladies; to ask questions and receive answers, and thereby gain a better understanding of Freemasonry.
5. To give members of the community and their Ladies the opportunity to understand what the Masonic fraternity does in its community.
6. To provide the occasion to have visitors in your Lodge, to see and inform others of what they have seen.

GUIDELINES FOR THE DINING AREA

The table shall be so arranged as to form a squared letter “U,” with each corner at a ninety (90) degree angle. Seating at the table will be at the outside only. Each chair should be no closer than forty-two (42) inches, center-to-center. Within a clear view of each chair, the National Colors shall be displayed.

The Altar shall have upon it: the Volume of Sacred Law in the center; white candle in holder stationed in the upper left hand corner; and a red rose in a vase stationed in the upper right hand corner. Tables should be covered (white linen preferred). Blue table napkins will be at each table setting. Each setting shall consist of the following: first line - plate, napkin, knife, fork, soupspoon, and teaspoon; second line - cup and saucer, water glass, and wine glass.

REGULATIONS

The regulations for “Ladies at the Table” banquets have been approved by the Grand Lodge Executive Committee and must be adhered to in full, with exception as to the selection of Ladies to which the toasts are dedicated. It is suggested that each Lodge select Ladies from the past or present, who have contributed to the betterment of the town, county, state, nation, or the whole world.

The Lodge banquet room, or social room where the Lodge normally holds such special Lodge functions, shall be utilized for these special ceremonies. In addition, the Masonic Lodge hosting the “Ladies at the Table” banquet must obtain a dispensation. At least one (1) Active Grand Lodge Officer is encouraged to be present at every “Ladies at the Table” banquet.

There shall be no more than seven (7) toasts as prescribed by the “Ladies at the Table” banquet script. Wine not more than 14% alcoholic content shall be the only alcoholic beverage served. The size of the glasses used for the toasts shall be no larger than four (4) ounces. However, no more than one (1) ounce of wine shall be served for any one toast. The wine shall be served only when ceremonial toasts are called for by the Master of the dinner. A non-alcoholic beverage, such as a grape juice, ginger ale, etc., must always be available for those not wishing to have wine during a toast.

The containers containing the wine and/or non-alcoholic beverage, shall not be left on the tables at any time, but are to be kept in the custody of the Stewards in a separate area. They are to be brought to the table each time the glasses are to be filled, by order of the Master, and then returned to their proper storage area by the Stewards.

Everyone who attends a “Ladies at the Table” banquet is reminded that their conduct, both at the dinner and afterwards, can reflect upon the image of Freemasonry. It shall be the express duty of the Worshipful Master and his Wardens to maintain the dignity and decorum that the “Ladies at the Table” banquet intends, and they are charged to uphold these regulations.

Special Notes

*Only those called upon by the Master shall rise from their chair to respond and then return to their chair. Should the Lady to whom the toast is given be present, she shall remain seated throughout the toast and drink her wine (or non-alcoholic beverage) at her leisure.*

CEREMONY

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

It is with great pleasure that I welcome one and all to this, our (1st) annual Ladies at the Table banquet. Tonight, all proceeds beyond our expenses are going to (charity name). My name is (WM’s Name), and I am the Worshipful Master of (Lodge Name & №), the Lodge which sponsors tonight’s event. I am fortunate to have the assistance of my worthy brethren, Senior Warden (SW’s Name) and Junior Warden (JW’s Name).

But first, I would ask that we all rise for a brief, non-denominational prayer. Brother Chaplain, please give the opening invocation.

# Worshipful Master: (\*\*\*)

# Chaplain:

Supreme Architect of the Universe, we thank you for letting us be together this evening. We ask that we may receive a greater portion of energy and enthusiasm as a result of this time, and may we find refreshment and joy as we partake in this feast and fellowship. Amen.

# Worshipful Master:

Ladies and gentlemen, friends and family, please join us in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our country. As we do so, let us remember those who are serving in the armed forces, and at this very moment may be in harm’s way, defending on our behalf all that is symbolized by this banner which we hold so dear.

Brother Senior Warden, please lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

# *(SW guides the assembly in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Thank you. Please be seated.

# *(If dignitaries are present)*

It is my honor to introduce the following dignitaries: (list dignitaries).

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Senior Warden, have all been seated on your left?

# Senior Warden:

All have been seated.

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Junior Warden, have all been seated on your right?

# Junior Warden:

All have been seated.

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Deacon, you will set the Altar and display the Lights.

# *(Deacon moves to Altar, opens the Volume of Sacred Law to the* Song of Solomon*, lights the candle in the upper left hand corner of the Altar, and returns to his seat.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Junior and Senior Wardens, you will attend to the Ladies.

# *(Both the JW and SW pick up the roses and move directly down their column to the WM’s chair. The SW offers one rose to each Lady present in his column, and extends his welcome for her being there. The JW first places one red rose on the Altar in the upper right hand corner. Then in his column to the right, he follows the SW’s lead in offering each Lady a rose with his welcome. Both Wardens return to their chairs together and seat themselves at the same time.)*

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, my worthy Brethren.

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Senior Warden, for the edification of all present, please explain the symbolism of the red rose.

# Senior Warden:

The red rose signifies a kind of relationship between two people. A white rose stands for purity, a yellow rose for jealousy, and the red rose is for love. Therefore, it is fitting that on this occasion only the red rose is used.

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Senior Warden.

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Junior Warden, for the edification of all present, please explain the symbolism of the burning white candle.

# Junior Warden:

The white candle burns for those Masons’ Ladies of the past, who have been called to follow their course toward the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns. The flame burns brightly for them to be remembered, especially on this night.

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Junior Warden.

Ladies at the table, you do us a great honor dining with us tonight. This banquet is intended to provide you with pleasure as well as enjoyment. It is also an evening set aside for us to repay in kind some small measure of the debt which we owe to you for your greatly valued support—your friendship, loyalty, patience, and especially your love. Were we not blessed to have you to bolster us, we would never reach our goals. Sincerely, we each thank you all for being at our sides once again.

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Master of Ceremonies, for the edification of all present, please recount for us the history of the Ladies at the Table banquet.

# Master of Ceremonies:

In France, in the mid-18th Century, a group in the French Rite was established known as “Adoptive Lodges,” and functioning parallel to Masonry. The earliest such Lodge documented was established in Paris, in the year 1760, by the Count de Bernouville. Another was instituted at Nijmegen, Holland, in 1774, which was jointly presided over by Friedrich Karl August, Prince of Waldeck and Pyrmont, and Wilhelmina of Prussia, Princess of Orange. There were basically four degrees of Adoptive Masonry: Apprentie (or Female Apprentice); Compagnone (or Craftswoman); Maîtresse (or Mistress) and Parfait Maçon (or Perfect Mason).

The fourth degree, being the apex of the Rite of Adoption, included a “Table Lodge,” or the Ceremony of the Banquet, which immediately followed the closings of the Lodge. The Ceremony of the Banquet added nothing to the instructive character, but much to the social pleasure of the Rite.

As in regular Lodges of the French Rite, the members always used a symbolic language by which they designated the various implements of the table and the different articles of food and drink. For instance, the knives were “swords,” the forks “pickaxes”, the dishes “materials” and bread the “rough ashlar”; the Lodge room was called “Eden,” the doors “barriers,” the minutes a “ladder,” a wine glass was known as a “lamp,” and its contents “oil”—water being “white oil” and wine being “red oil.” To fill your glass is to “trim your lamp,” to drink is to “extinguish your lamp.” In addition to these, the Ceremony of the Banquet employed many other eccentric expressions.

Much taste and magnificence were displayed in the Lodge furnishings of the Rite of Adoption. The apartment was separated by curtains into different divisions, each division representing a continent. The entrance was designated “Europe,” the right side “Africa,” the left side “America,” and the head table was known as “Asia.”

Regrettably, the practice of this special evening of fellowship was eventually retired, probably owing to the encroaching chaos of the French Revolution. Interestingly, it has been confirmed through Masonic records that Brother Benjamin Franklin attended at least one of these dinners during his time in France.

In our present day, the Ladies at the Table banquet is a special evening set aside for all the Ladies of the Lodge. This includes the Mason’s wife, mother, daughters, sisters, and a special invitation is extended to the widows of our brethren who have passed on. The ceremonial toasts are given to a selection of influential women, to whom we owe much gratitude and respect for their service to the community and their contributions to the betterment of the quality of life in the mortal world. They may be from any period of history, recent or ancient; and from any place in the world, near or far. These great women embody all that is best in humanity. They are an inspiration to our band of Masonic brethren, and we are humbled by their examples.

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Master of Ceremonies.

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Senior Warden, for the edification of all present, please demonstrate the movements of the ceremonial toasts.

# *(SW demonstrates and explains.)*

# Senior Warden:

Ladies and gentlemen, the toasts are held in this manner, and in all steps working in unison:

**Touch** – the right hand reaches to the wine glass.

**Grasp** – the right hand holds the glass, but does not lift the glass from the table.

**Rise to Toast** – the glass is lifted to the level of the chin, with the right arm extended forward in a straight line.

**To Cause** – the glass is brought to the lips.

**Taste** – drink approximately one third of the wine from the glass.

**Sip** – drink approximately half of *that* remaining wine from the glass.

**Toast** – drink all the wine that remains in the glass. Do not bring the glass away from the lips.

**Rotate** – the glass is moved away from the lips, extended an arms-length straight out, level with the chin. Then, counting in unison one through four in a steady rhythm:

1. Sweep right arm and glass 45 degrees to the left
2. Return to center and pause
3. Sweep 45 degrees to the right
4. Return to the center and stop

And finally…

**With Honor** – on the count of five, the glass is abruptly hammered onto the table with (preferably) one uniform impact sound of all the glasses hitting the table at once.

The guests have been instructed, sir.

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Senior Warden.

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Senior Steward, you will cause the wine to meet the Line.

# Senior Steward *(in a loud, clear voice)*:

Wine Stewards, fill the wine glasses to the Line.

Those who wish to have wine for this toast, please place your card letters in a raised position next to your wine glass. If you would prefer to opt for a non-alcoholic alternative, please place your card letters in a downward position next to your wine glass and we will happily oblige you with a non-alcoholic beverage.

# *(SS remains standing until all glasses are filled to the line before answering WM.)*

The wine is to the Line, sir.

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Senior Steward.

Ladies and gentlemen, at this time it is my pleasure to dedicate the first toast of the evening.

# *(WM raises all attendees with \* \* \*)*

The first toast is dedicated with gratitude and respect to the honor of a Lady by the name of (First Honoree).

# *(SW leads toast: Touch, Grasp, Rise to Toast, To Cause, Taste, Sip, Toast, Rotate, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;MC should be ready with the first biography.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Master of Ceremonies, for the edification of all present, would you please recount a brief history of (First Honoree).

# *(MC recites the first biography; insert relevant page from Honorees document here.)*

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Master of Ceremonies.

# *(WM may choose to lead a round of applause here.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Senior Steward, you will cause the wine to meet the Line.

# Senior Steward *(in a loud, clear voice)*:

Wine Stewards, fill the wine glasses to the Line.

# *(SS remains standing until all glasses are filled to the line before answering WM.)*

The wine is to the Line, sir.

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Senior Steward.

Ladies and gentlemen, at this time it is my humble honor to introduce (WM’s Lady’s Name), who will dedicate the second toast of the evening.

# *(WM raises all attendees with \* \* \*)*

# Master’s Lady:

The second toast is dedicated with gratitude and respect to the honor of a Lady by the name of (Second Honoree).

# *(SW leads toast: Touch, Grasp, Rise to Toast, To Cause, Taste, Sip, Toast, Rotate, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;MC should be ready with the second biography.)*

# Worshipful Master:

Serve the first course, please!

# *(Special Note: Near the end of the first course, the Senior Warden should be ready to dedicate the third toast.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Master of Ceremonies, for the edification of all present, would you please recount a brief history of (Second Honoree).

# *(MC recites the second biography; insert relevant page from Honorees document here.)*

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Master of Ceremonies.

# *(WM may choose to lead a round of applause here.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Senior Steward, you will cause the wine to meet the Line.

# Senior Steward *(in a loud, clear voice)*:

Wine Stewards, fill the wine glasses to the Line.

# *(SS remains standing until all glasses are filled to the line before answering WM.)*

The wine is to the Line, sir.

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Senior Steward.

Ladies and gentlemen, at this time it is my pleasure to present Brother Senior Warden (SW’s Name), who will dedicate the third toast of the evening.

# *(WM raises all attendees with \* \* \*)*

# Senior Warden:

The third toast is dedicated with gratitude and respect to the honor of a Lady by the name of (Third Honoree).

# *(SW leads toast: Touch, Grasp, Rise to Toast, To Cause, Taste, Sip, Toast, Rotate, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;MC should be ready with the third biography.)*

# Worshipful Master:

Serve the second course, please!

# *(Special Note: Near the end of the second course, the Senior Warden’s Lady should be ready to dedicate the fourth toast.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Master of Ceremonies, for the edification of all present, would you please recount a brief history of (Third Honoree).

# *(MC recites the third biography; insert relevant page from Honorees document here.)*

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Master of Ceremonies.

# *(WM may choose to lead a round of applause here.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Senior Steward, you will cause the wine to meet the Line.

# Senior Steward *(in a loud, clear voice)*:

Wine Stewards, fill the wine glasses to the Line.

# *(SS remains standing until all glasses are filled to the line before answering WM.)*

The wine is to the Line, sir.

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Senior Steward.

Ladies and gentlemen, at this time it is my humble honor to introduce (SW’s Lady’s Name), who will dedicate the fourth toast of the evening.

# *(WM raises all attendees with \* \* \*)*

# Senior Warden’s Lady:

The fourth toast is dedicated with gratitude and respect to the honor of a Lady by the name of (Fourth Honoree).

# *(SW leads toast: Touch, Grasp, Rise to Toast, To Cause, Taste, Sip, Toast, Rotate, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;MC should be ready with the fourth biography.)*

# Worshipful Master:

Serve the main course, please!

# *(Special Note: Near the end of the main course, the Junior Warden should be ready to dedicate the fifth toast.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Master of Ceremonies, for the edification of all present, would you please recount a brief history of (Fourth Honoree).

# *(MC recites the fourth biography; insert relevant page from Honorees document here.)*

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Master of Ceremonies.

# *(WM may choose to lead a round of applause here.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Senior Steward, you will cause the wine to meet the Line.

# Senior Steward *(in a loud, clear voice)*:

Wine Stewards, fill the wine glasses to the Line.

# *(SS remains standing until all glasses are filled to the line before answering WM.)*

The wine is to the Line, sir.

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Senior Steward.

Ladies and gentlemen, at this time it is my pleasure to present Brother Junior Warden (JW’s Name), who will dedicate the fifth toast of the evening.

# *(WM raises all attendees with \* \* \*)*

# Junior Warden:

The fifth toast is dedicated with gratitude and respect to the honor of a Lady by the name of (Fifth Honoree).

# *(SW leads toast: Touch, Grasp, Rise to Toast, To Cause, Taste, Sip, Toast, Rotate, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;MC should be ready with the fifth biography.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Master of Ceremonies, for the edification of all present, would you please recount a brief history of (Fifth Honoree).

# *(MC recites the fifth biography; insert relevant page from Honorees document here.)*

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Master of Ceremonies.

# *(WM may choose to lead a round of applause here.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Senior Steward, you will cause the wine to meet the Line.

# Senior Steward *(in a loud, clear voice)*:

Wine Stewards, fill the wine glasses to the Line.

# *(SS remains standing until all glasses are filled to the line before answering WM.)*

The wine is to the Line, sir.

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Senior Steward.

Ladies and gentlemen, at this time it is my humble honor to introduce JW’s Lady’s Name, who will dedicate the sixth toast of the evening.

# *(WM raises all attendees with \* \* \*)*

# Junior Warden’s Lady:

The sixth toast is dedicated with gratitude and respect to the honor of a Lady by the name of (Sixth Honoree).

# *(SW leads toast: Touch, Grasp, Rise to Toast, To Cause, Taste, Sip, Toast, Rotate, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5;MC should be ready with the sixth biography.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Master of Ceremonies, for the edification of all present, would you please recount a brief history of (Sixth Honoree).

# *(MC recites the sixth biography; insert relevant page from Honorees document here.)*

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Master of Ceremonies.

# *(WM may choose to lead a round of applause here.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Junior Warden, would you please give us a few words in honor of our mothers?

# Junior Warden:

Ladies and gentlemen, the poem *A Wonderful Mother* by Pat O’Reilly:

*God made a wonderful mother,*

*A mother who never grows old;*

*He made her smile of the sunshine,*

*And He molded her heart of pure gold;*

*In her eyes, He placed bright shining stars,*

*In her cheeks, fair roses you see;*

*God made a wonderful mother,*

*And He gave that dear mother to me.*

# Worshipful Master:

Serve the dessert course, please!

# *(Brief pause.)*

Ladies and gentlemen, the floor is open to anyone who wishes to speak.

# *(Special Note: WM should move to the inside of the tables and extend his personal welcome to each of the guests, especially the widows of the Lodge. Near the end of the dessert course, WM gives the final toast.)*

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Senior Steward, you will once more cause the wine to meet the Line.

# Senior Steward *(in a loud, clear voice)*:

Wine Stewards, fill the wine glasses to the Line.

# *(SS remains standing until all glasses are filled to the line before answering WM.)*

The wine is to the Line, sir.

# Worshipful Master:

Thank you, Brother Senior Steward.

Ladies and gentlemen, at this time it is my pleasure to dedicate the seventh and final toast of the evening.

# *(WM raises all attendees with \* \* \*)*

The seventh and final toast is dedicated with gratitude, respect, and above all, love to the honor of the most important women in our lives: our Ladies.

God has blessed us beyond measure with your love and support. It is chiefly thanks to you that our cups runneth over.

To our Ladies.

# *(WM may choose to lead a round of applause here.SW leads toast: Touch, Grasp, Rise to Toast, To Cause, Taste, Sip, Toast, Rotate, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.)*

# Worshipful Master:

The hour grows late and our evening must come to an end.

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Senior Warden, have all been seated on your left?

# Senior Warden:

All have been seated.

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Junior Warden, have all been seated on your right?

# Junior Warden:

All have been seated.

# Worshipful Master: (\*)

Brother Deacon, you will set the Altar and secure the Lights.

# *(Deacon moves to Altar, closes the Volume of Sacred Law, snuffs out candle, returns to his seat.)*

In closing, I wish you all safe travels. Let us pray also for the safe travels of every soldier deployed somewhere on Earth, and that peace may be established in the hope that they too might soon be returned home to the warm and welcoming embrace of their families.

To my worthy Brethren, attend well to your Ladies. Remember always that the most important setting in which we should live and work in the noble manner of a Mason is near to those who love and support us.

Brother Chaplain, please give the closing benediction.

# *(WM raises all attendees with \* \* \*)*

# Chaplain:

Supreme Architect of the Universe, as we part company, be with us in spirit and in purpose. Grant us and our families the strength, wisdom, and courage to continue our efforts in Freemasonry with enthusiasm and creativity. Help us to always emulate Your divine compassion and Love in our thoughts and actions, now and throughout our lives. Amen.

# Worshipful Master:

As Master of this banquet, I declare the (1st) annual Ladies at the Table banquet be now closed. (\*) Thank you and good night.