

USAFA Cadets undergo obstacles in formal dining with Executive Social Presentation

By John Diedrich
*The Gazette Tele-
graph*

Somewhere between the steak and cheesecake, Air Force Academy cadet Adam Goodpasture was faced with an etiquette dilemma.

Do formal dining rules allow him to spit out or chew up an ice cube that slipped from a glass into his mouth?

“Neither,” manners expert Katherine Mason said. “The rule says no matter how big, the ice chunk must be sucked until it melts...and if it’s that big, you probably shouldn’t have let it in your mouth in the first place.”

So it went on a recent night as about 70 sophomore cadets learned the finer points of formal dining from *ESP Executive Social Presentation* a Denver-based company that teaches social education classes at the academy.

ESP Directors Katherine Mason, Annabel Day and Shelley Sutton instruct all sophomore cadets - over 1,000 a year



Social etiquette expert Julienne Golnik directs cadets in table etiquette

in a crash course about how to make a positive first impression, a proper introduction, and handle a dinner party, from invitation, to napkin placement, to fork angle.

The goal is to prepare these future officers for the socializing and fine dining occasions they will likely face during their Military careers. As Ms. Golnik states:

“In essence, your behavior reflects the United States of America. As representatives, you want to make a good impression!”

Etiquette and other social training have been a part of the Academy’s program since it opened in 1955, first taught by Jon and Vivian Williams of *Jon D. Williams Cotillions, Inc.* (the parent company of *ESP*) and

later by a resident cadet wing hostess, a sort of full-time Miss Manners.

The Williams’ company returned in 1992 after the wing hostess position was eliminated.

Jon D. Williams Cotillions also teaches social education and ballroom dancing to another 8,000 students on a national basis.

On this night, the trial dining affair starts with cadets moving down a daunting reception line, firmly clasping the hands of academy officers and their spouses, trying to maintain eye contact and a slight smile.

Dressed in civilian clothes, the cadets mingled around a spread of appetizers and made small talk.

For cadet Goodpasture, the formal routine is nothing new.

He attended several dinners with Florida lawmakers while trying to land his academy appointment.

“A lot of this is common sense,” said the 20-year-old Port Charlotte, Florida, native as he



Annabel L. Day



Katherine A. Mason



Shelley C. Sutton

stepped into a dining room with white linen-covered tables.

The first step was to undress the cadets' dress. For the most part, Ms. Day, Ms. Mason and Ms. Sutton complimented their attire. Then there was the sock check.

"You look fabulous," Ms. Mason told one cadet. "But pull up your pant leg... no socks!

Socks are probably appropriate."

Goodpasture wore a double breasted gray suit with a faint pinstripe and a little extra room in it.

"This is a buddy's suit," he said, "I can't afford these kinds of clothes right now."

In fact, three of the five cadets at Goodpasture's table were wearing someone else's clothes.

Trolling the room with a microphone, Ms. Mason directed

the cadets on how to take their seats, pass the salt and pepper, hold a fork European-style, and eat bread, piece by piece.

Soon all the learning went into practice on a dinner of steak, peas, baked potato, and vegetables on a skewer.

It was no coincidence, the cadets agreed, that peas were served.

Many plates headed back to the kitchen covered with the pesky green pebbles.

The cadets said the feast was a mile better than their everyday fare, served one floor above in Mitchell Hall's gigantic dining hall.

Still, it was difficult to enjoy the meal with so much on their minds. "What I hate about formal dining is it takes so long to eat" Goodpasture said, "I'm hungry again by the time I'm done."

The *ESP* program at the Air Force Academy has been well received by all. As USAFA Lieutenant Colonel Williams G. Schmidt stated:

"Seldom have I seen anyone deliver a presentation with as much enthusiasm, humor, and panache. You teach a very important subject and one which will be important to the future of the young men and women you taught."

The *ESP* program is available to colleges and universities, businesses and corporations, groups, clubs and affiliations throughout the United States.

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