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## In Our Midst

### Classmate Magazine; Fellows, Jerry

Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School

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# In Our

Does the thought of serving a candlelit dinner for twelve or fourteen leave you with a prickly scalp and thoughts of flight to the nearest catering service?

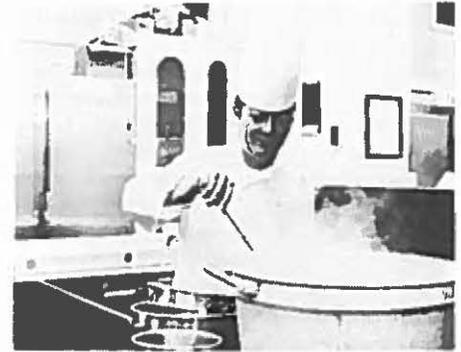
Consider a crab AND prime rib dinner with suptuous array of accompaniments for four hundred...four-fifty...even five hundred famished guests. This is the unenviable task of Jerry Fellows and his competent staff in the Commissioned Officers Open Mess who, on an average Friday, also perform the simultaneous magic of cocktail parties, a Happy Hour buffet, a banquet in the Barbara McNitt Ballroom, a wedding reception in La Novia Terrace and a "wetting down" for the proverbial Cmdr. Neversail.

A graduate of the Hotel and Restaurant Management School at Michigan State, Mr. Fellows came to the NPS Officer's Club initially as assistant manager and subsequently became manager. Leaving the position to supervise a condominium association in Carmel Valley, he began gathering a wealth of experience in the food service business before his return to our club several years later. After a stint as Club Manager of the Okasuka (Naval) Officers' Club in Japan, Mr. Fellows became Food and Beverage Director for the Sheraton Maui on Maui, Hawaii.

Upon his return to the continental U.S. he established the food and beverage services at Rancho Canada Golf Club in Carmel Valley and served as catering manager there until his return to the NPS Open Mess as Manager in August of 1971.

Signs of progress that mark the course of the Club in the past year are numerous and include the addition of the "Champagne Dinner for Two", the expansion of the package store, the transfer of payroll and accounts receivable transactions to a computerized process, and the addition of a computerized charge system for Club patrons with service for Bank Americard, Master Charge, and American Express.

The man behind these innovations maintains an interesting business philosophy, as I discovered in a recent interview. A career in the hotel and restaurant industry, as Jerry Fellows explained, requires a unique combination of personal traits. The aggressive tendencies needed to compete with other establishments, for example, must be subtly blended with the diplomacy necessary for dealing with the public.



Chef Manas Auasaki.

The unfortunate stigma of subservience often attached to members of the profession whether they are waitresses, bartenders, or chefs, is usually matched by an aloofness necessary to keep the public lives of these people separate from their personal lives. One MUST enjoy serving people to be successful in the hotel and restaurant industry, Mr. Fellows emphasized, and the opportunities for observing human behavior in social settings are immensely rewarding.

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# Midst

Though the goal of the Open Mess, satisfied customers, is much the same as any food service establishment, it must achieve this through vastly different means.

First, the sheer volume of a Friday night dinner crowd creates a myriad of logistics problems for the timeworn and traditional Del Monte Hotel kitchen. Unlike a six day per week operation where customer ordering trends can be followed, and a varied menu presented, the Club is maintained through the early part of the week by bar sales and occasional private functions, building up and peaking on Friday night with a flurry of social activity in nearly every available space.

Also unlike a private business, the profits of the Open Mess are maintained at a modest level. This revenue is then used for the necessary cleaning, refurbishing and renovation of the facilities.

Perhaps the major difference, however, exists because of clientele demands. A large resort hotel, for example, deals with a fantastic volume, serving perhaps two thousand people daily in various facilities; food and bar sales may gross as much as a quarter-million dollars monthly. A private club, on the other hand, with a relatively constant clientele, must be geared to a repeat business, serving established customers over several years and providing better than average prices for these services.

The operation of a professional kitchen, whether in a resort hotel, a famous restaurant, or a private club, is a sight to behold, I discovered recently on a tour "behind-the-scenes" at a Friday night Crab and Prime Rib Dinner. Little does the diner realize, entering the serene atmosphere of flickering candlelight and rich red linnens, the amount of work progressing simultaneously in the kitchen of the Open Mess.

As one enters the kitchen, the volume of food service here begins to become apparent. Tray upon tray of melted butter in crystal dishes fill an overhead rack while directly ahead two men with cleavers diligently hack away at frozen Alaskan crab legs and claws, some five hundred pounds of which will be served this evening, steaming and juicy. A quick peek into the purring refrigerators nearby reveals desserts galore, row after row garnished with whipped cream or rum sauce, cherries or chocolate. The chef is surveying the prime ribs, fresh from the oven, each weighing twenty to twenty-five pounds. He inspects each for doneness, preparing for the carving task ahead when he will use twenty to thirty of the roasts, perhaps as many as fifty.

While the kitchen staff gives the Potatoes au Gratin their final garnish and readies the



Open Mess Manager Jerry Fellows and Agnes Bomarito survey a catering schedule. (Photos by The Section Photographer.)

salad buffet, the hors d'oeuvre chefs are preparing trays of assorted canapes for three simultaneous cocktail parties. At the same time, in another area, the final filet mignons are wrapped in bacon for their trip upstairs to a banquet in the BarbarMcNitt Ballroom.

Returning once again to my role of diner, I sensed a deeper appreciation of the skills

needed to coordinate an operation of this magnitude and complexity. With the experienced eye of Jerry Fellows to oversee the services of the Open Mess, its continued success is certain.

Angela Holm

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