



# INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MODERN BUTLERS

Promoting Service Standards through Training  
in Staffed Homes, Luxury Hotels, Resorts and Spas

*The Institute is dedicated to raising service standards in private estates and the hospitality industry by broadly disseminating the mindset and skills of that time-honored quintessential service provider, the British Butler, adapted to the needs of modern employers and guests.*

## THE MODERN BUTLERS' JOURNAL

For Service Professionals Worldwide

Volume 6, Issue 1 – January 2010



*Photo of Athens in the snow (a rare occasion!)  
submitted by Mr. Aristos Chrysanthakopoulos*

***HAPPY NEW YEAR AND BEST WISHES FOR  
2010***

***Executives & Trainers,  
International Institute of Modern Butlers***



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Dear Mr. Ferry,*

Thank you for the information about the swine flu.

Every time I mention this around me I am right away labeled

a "liberal" at best.

The frenzy to vaccinate in France is amazing: the media has created, as in many other countries, a massive momentum of vaccinations. Let us remember that the *Laboratoire Pasteur* has millions of doses it has to get rid of.

I read the plans put together by the French Government, through the *Prefets* to vaccinate the entire French population: it is appalling!

More and more European citizens plainly refuse any kind of vaccination for the swine flu, as there are way too many contradictions and financial interests at stake, let alone the dangerous potential side effects.

Warm regards, and best wishes for the upcoming year!

*F.M.*

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*Dear Editor,*

It is a pleasure to read the newsletter. It keeps me in touch with the real world.

First of all, I just would like to wish you happy holidays this year, although the year has not been the best for many. But like you said, every cloud has a silver lining; some find it sooner, others later. Before my day started I took a quick look at my e-mails and a phrase caught my eye, "even reinventing yourself." It is funny that I saw this today, because this is what I did this year, maybe even starting last year.

As of September 2009, I have become a

teacher in a (local) school teaching not English, but our profession (butling). Isn't that funny? I never thought that this would be possible, but like they say: "never say never."

The course involves teaching students how to lay a table, serving meals, guest relations, handling sticky situations, etiquette and more. I teach 40 teenagers a week.

The first group finished last Friday, then on Monday the second group of 40 started, so we are moving along nicely. After three months and judging by feedback from teachers and students, I can now say that I have done it, and with good results!

Teaching 15-19 year olds is not that easy in the first place and to keep it interesting and alive for them is not always easy at all! But I draw on my past at the American Embassy, the Academy and my time at the Cloister with Mrs. Fiona Williams. That, and of course your words of wisdom and thoughts, have all added to the knowledge that I pass on to these young adults.

*Sincerely, S.H.*

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*Dear Editor,*

Bravo on including David Robinson's etiquette article in the December newsletter. As the proliferation of related articles collated by my daily Google search attests, society is increasingly concerned about its behavior and how it has a direct effect on our daily lives.

Mr. Robinson's ten pointers remind me of the importance of local knowledge and cultural viewpoints (so effectively illustrated by the massive HSBC advertising campaign in major international airports).

For example:

In America, where one-handed eating is the norm, the passive hand remains in the lap. Abroad, both hands rest on the table

and in France this may extend to the elbows as well. Good manners all, location-dependant.

Dress codes in their details also depend on location and custom. Even across America, the sheer size of the country means standards shift. North or south of the Mason-Dixon Line? New York or California? You'd do well to seek local advice before wearing "a button-down with slacks" to a wedding.

Manners evolve and standards change but I cringe to note that Mr. Robinson has apparently capitulated to "caps and hats being worn at restaurant tables." I will concede this: if your meal is being served in a foil wrapper or Styrofoam and cutlery (if any) is plastic, feel free to keep your cap on. Otherwise, unless there is a medical or religious reason for keeping your head covered, gentlemen of all ages remove their hats indoors. Interestingly, it is only in America that, by statute, men must remove their hats for the national anthem.

Ms. Dorothea Johnson, founder and chair of The Protocol School of Washington, was instrumental in focusing my lifelong interest and concern with manners and etiquette and I learned much from the late John Morgan, author of *Debrett's New Guide to Etiquette and Modern Manners*, before his untimely death. I have been actively recruiting foot soldiers for civility since 1999 and invite all to join in!

*John Robertson*

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*Dear Mr. Robinson,*

I'm amazed you advise to give women Chrysanthemums as a gift. In my culture (continental western Europe) Chrysanthemums are only given (planted is a better word) on the graves of men and women. It would be considered extremely rude to give such a flower to a person while he's still alive.

*Sincerely, E.V.*

*Dear Mr. V.,*

Thank you for the information regarding Chrysanthemums and their role in continental Western Europe. (I learn something new each and every day!) I think this is a classic example of how traditions, manners, and etiquette vary in different areas of the world. For example, I have never met a woman who was offended when given Chrysanthemums (it is my own mother's favorite flower,) and I am yet to see such flowers on a grave. However, in your part of the world (and others, no doubt,) the opposite seems to be true.

So, thank you for letting me know about your part of the world. Should I ever visit, I will know never to offer those particular flowers as a gift!

*David Robinson*

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Wishing you a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year from the whole department, and from me especially. We had a Gap Audit ... and the butlers scored 100% on room orientation and wake-up service and all interactions between the auditor and the butlers were positive, with excellent feedback. I just wanted to share with you these results as our efforts (and yours) led to success. Thanks for everything.

*R.M., Head Butler, Rosewood Corniche*

## **BUTLER MANAGER SOUGHT**

A very large and upscale hotel that is opening very soon in the Far East is looking for someone to head its 60-person butler department. Remuneration is twice the normal range, because a very competent and experienced head butler is required for the position. If qualified and interested, please email your CV or resume to [stevenferry@modernbutlers.com](mailto:stevenferry@modernbutlers.com). The butlers will be trained by the Institute to start things off right.



## HISTORY OF CHAUFFEURING PART XI

By Frank Mitchell

# Minor Accidents

The only safety aid that requires any input from us is the seat belt. People have some strange ideas about wearing seatbelts. When they are in an accident, physics proves these ideas wrong, often with tragic results.



### Strange physics

*I don't need to wear a belt if I sit in the back:* A collision at only 30 mph will throw you into the front seat with a force of around 3.5 tons, the weight of an elephant. The chair will collapse, resulting in your probable death and perhaps that of the front-seat passenger also.

*I can transport children in the cargo area of an SUV or station wagon:* Without restraints they will fly through the windscreen, striking seat backs, heads and dashboards along the way.

*My child can sit on my lap, under my seat belt:* A baby supporting 3.5 tons?

*I can hold onto a little baby:* No one is strong enough to do this. A baby girl in the UK was recently flung 150 ft through a windscreen!

*I don't need to wear a seatbelt if I have an airbag.* Airbags deploy at over 200 mph!

*I don't want to wake my baby; I can strap the carrycot to the back seat using the seat belt.* What's going to keep your child in the cot, that zipper made in China?

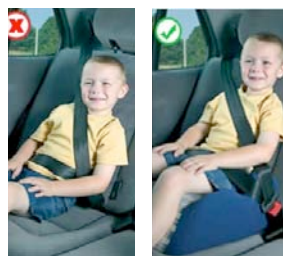
*Two toddlers can share one seatbelt:* This is a very bad idea, unless they happen to be wearing motorcycle helmets...

Now that we know what not to do, let's look at how safety can be optimized:

*Wear the belt across the hips, as low as possible.* This is especially important for pregnant women.

*Do not place a rear-facing child seat on the front passenger seat.* As early as 1997, 31 fatalities in infants were reported, including at least one low-speed accident resulting in decapitation.

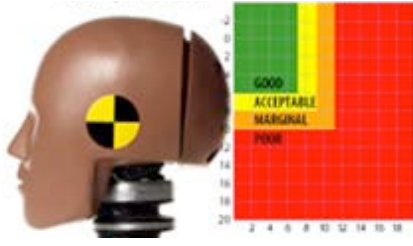
*Upright chair backs help the seat, seat belt, head restraint, and airbag save your life.* Don't reduce the effectiveness of these devices by reclining and driving – you won't be able to check blind spots, monitor your mirrors or see very far ahead down the road.



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*Seat belts should never fall across the neck.* Raise the seat or the backrest. On some cars, the belt anchor point can be moved. Seat children booster pad.

*A head restraint that is too low can increase whiplash injuries.* The thickest part should be just higher than top of the ear and be as close to the head as possible when you are seated normally.



## Fender benders

You are legally obligated to stop, irrespective of how slight the accident was. If possible, do not move any vehicles immediately.

Warn oncoming vehicles or place a triangle in the road, to avoid further collision and injury.

For insurance purposes, record the following details:

- Take down names and addresses, the make, model and registration numbers of the cars involved, and insurance details of the drivers. It is illegal to withhold this information or give false details.
- The positions of vehicles, using chalk or by scratching the tarmac with a screwdriver.
- The condition of the other vehicle(s); are the tyres worn, did the lights work? Cell phone cameras are invaluable for recording this information.
- Weather conditions and visibility.
- Injuries that were sustained: were those injured wearing their seatbelt as required by law?
- Ask witnesses if they are prepared to make a statement and be contacted. Take down their contact details.

Remain aware of oncoming traffic when recording details. Don't get run over.



Anyone assisting by directing traffic or vehicles should wear a bright reflective band from your car kit or carry a flashlight in order to be more visible to oncoming motorists.

DO NOT get involved in an argument and NEVER admit that you were at fault. You may be upset or confused and have forgotten something pertinent. If you admit liability in front of witnesses, you will likely lose any subsequent litigation.

Think carefully before driving a car that appears lightly damaged. Unless you are sure it is safe to do so, it is probably better to call an AAA approved service to tow it.

In most countries you are required to report any accident to the police within 24 hours. Insurance claims should also be reported within 24 hours (Some countries allow 30 days, but it is better to check.)

*In the next issue, we take a look at what you can do if you are involved in, or come upon, a more serious accident.*

*Frank Mitchell is a professional butler and butler trainer for the IIMB. He lives near Cape Town in South Africa and can be reached via email at [frankmitchell@modernbutlers.com](mailto:frankmitchell@modernbutlers.com)*

## DANGEROUS AND DESTRUCTIVE CHEMICAL DIPS

*by Jeff Herman*

As a silver restoration and conservation specialist, I have many years of knowledge about chemical dips. I routinely receive objects for refinishing due to damage from these horribly destructive products.

Chemical dips, such as Tarn-X, work by dissolving the tarnish on an object at an accelerated rate. Dips are used by silver restorers when heavy black tarnish cannot be removed with liquid or paste polishes. Chemical dips are wiped over the object with a cellulose sponge or cotton ball, as submerging the piece for long periods will

remove factory-applied patinas and cause pitting of the object's surface. These surface defects will act like a sponge and more readily absorb tarnish-producing gases and moisture. The object may then require professional polishing to restore the original finish.

Chemical dips are made up of an acid and a complexing agent. Acids are corrosive and will damage niello, bronze, stainless steel knife blades, and organic materials such as wood and ivory. The ingredients can also be harmful to the user, which is why silver restorers wear nitrile gloves and work in a well-ventilated area.

Chemical dips should never be used on objects that have sealed components, such as candlesticks and trophies with hollow feet, or teapots with hollow handles. Once the dip leaks into the cavity through small holes or imperfections in the joints, it becomes virtually impossible to wash the chemical out. If you're working on a baby cup with this type of rim, do you really want an infant drinking from it after using Tarn-X?

The following is from the Tarn-X company's own Materials Safety Data Sheet: *Potential Health Effects...*

*Routes of Exposure: Eyes, Skin, Inhalation and Ingestion.*

*Target Organs: Blood, liver, bone marrow, thyroid, and reproductive system.*

*Probable carcinogen and mutagen: Thiourea causes cancer in rats. Wash hands thoroughly after use.*

*Eye Contact: Can cause blurred vision, redness, pain, severe tissue pain, and eye damage. Effects may vary depending on length of exposure, solution concentration, and first aid measures.*

*Skin Contact: Causes skin irritation.*

*Inhalation: May cause mucous membranes and upper respiratory tract irritation. Symptoms may include burning sensation, coughing, wheezing, laryngitis, shortness of breath, headache, nausea, and vomiting.*

*Ingestion: Harmful if swallowed. May cause gastrointestinal irritation with nausea, vomiting*

*and diarrhea. May cause burns to the digestive tract.*

*Chronic Effects: Prolonged or repeated exposure may cause reproductive and fetal effects. Laboratory experiments have resulted in mutagenic effects.*

For all the above reasons, this cleaning technique should only be used by individuals with training in its proper use.

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Photograph of Mr. Herman by Bill Hicks

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The following poem was submitted by Mr. Clever Zulu, a hotel butler who currently lives and works in Zanzibar. According to him, he created it: *"While I was staring at Mount Kilimanjaro from the plane on my way to Tanzania."*



## THE SUMMIT 2

The Unfoldment of each day  
Gives light and understanding  
To the soul of the man that seeks peace  
And with peace comes abundance

With confidence, conviction and presence  
We reach forward and embrace  
The new day  
With a definite purpose and  
Well thought out plans the issues  
Of life become alive.

In divine purposes and  
Our zest for life, we thrive  
With profound gratitude  
And great humility  
In awe we behold  
As we tread the wine press.

Every step of the way is a miracle  
And the Summit is in close proximity  
Indeed like wisdom whose bidding  
Is to all Sons and daughters  
Of Man

**The Institute is the only organization teaching butler skills with a focus on the mindset and superior communication skills of the traditional butler as applied to the modern world's service needs. Contact us for all your training needs via email at [enquiries@modernbutlers.com](mailto:enquiries@modernbutlers.com) or via telephone: USA 1-813- 354-2734. We invite you to also visit our website, <http://www.modernbutlers.com> for more information.**

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