



BATES DINING HALL: Things Change

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As with 'Turning,' no matter how much we inform, discuss or present the facts, some issues never seem to get resolved or brought to closure. Questions and comments about the Bates Dining Hall renovation and cadet mess hall experiences keep recurring, the answers to which involve history, myth, past, present and future cadet life, time and change.

Before the current version of Bates can be better understood, a few fun facts:

- We serve an average of 659,381 meals a year! If each meal weighs 1 pound that is enough food to feed an NFL Team, which eats about 122,460 meals a year, for 5 YEARS.
- We go through 80 pounds of Peanut Butter and Jelly daily! A Dishwasher weighs that much!!
- On Corn Dog Day we have 2100 corn dogs and 15 gallons of ketchup! If you stand each corn dog end to end it will fill the Bottomless Lakes 13 times!
- We go through a combined 350 gallons of regular and chocolate milk weekly! That will fill 7 bathtubs weekly!
- We go through an average of 380 pounds of cereal weekly! More than the average weight of an NFL lineman!
- We produced 2400 rice crispy treats, 2200 cream puffs, and 120 gallons of hot cocoa! for the Superintendent's Christmas Reception.
- We serve in eight lines, including vegetarian, have cereal dispensers, have salad and bread bars, have soft drink and tea dispensers, coffee setups, Almond milk as well as regular milk dispensers, and we accommodate gluten intolerant and lactose intolerant cadets, and more.



With those facts as a prelude, the first thing to address is our history leading to the design and construction. I think most know, or should, that the majority of NMMI buildings are listed on the National Historical and the State Historical Registries. Historical placement requires the Institute to consider renovation when proposing changes to many of our buildings; demolition is not an option. Bates Hall, however, presented a different consideration. The primary structure, built in 1915, would have been covered by both historical registries had not the building been added onto and modified five separate times, nullifying historical registry protections. Thus, while we considered renovation of the facility, we also were able to consider, as an option, the demolition of the old building and raising a new structure. It was quickly understood that a new building option was cost prohibitive, at almost double the cost of renovation. Yet, the most glaring issue associated with building a new facility was the realization that we could not come up with a feasible plan to feed the cadet population during demolition, removal, and construction. We had to maintain the structural integrity of the old building successfully implement a phased plan for feeding that complemented construction. But, at least it was one of the few times we were able to consider demolition and new construction.

NMMI employed the Design, Development, and Review (DDR) process in the renovation of facilities such as Dow Hall, Pearson Auditorium, Lusk Hall, and Marshall Hall. The same DDR process was employed for the Bates dining hall.

The DDR process includes the customer at the very beginning of the design phase of any project. The purpose is to assure that any design and development includes the customer needs and wants as well as to communicate and educate the team about design standards or regulations such as historic preservation, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or fire codes. The key to understanding the DDR process is to recognize all team members work together to find a solution. No single entity determines the ultimate outcome.

NMMI's DDR team consisted of NMMI Cadets, Commandant staff, Facilities Staff, Architect, Engineers and contractors sitting at the table to review what was and what might be. Prior to the first brick or stick of wood being moved, the team assembled to greet and understand each member's needs and desires along with primary design limitations and required code implementations. As the design advanced, drawings were produced, several options discussed, and changes made resulting in a final proposal reviewed and approved by the NMMI Regents as well as administration

officials. The process of funding for the project was reviewed by the New Mexico Higher Education Department Capital Projects Board which includes the State Finance Department, the Energy and Minerals Department and the Legislative Finance Department. Because of the monetary size of the project, New Mexico statute dictates the project must proceed to the State Board of Finance, chaired by the Governor. Only after the Board's review and approval may NMMI begin spending funds on the project.



Additionally, the DDR team faced two difficult logistics matters. First, a typical renovation project takes at least one year to complete. NMMI had to accomplish this renovation while continuing to safely feed over 900 cadets. We accomplished this feat with a robust plan that considered Bates Hall was actually five buildings added to the original 1920s era facility, making the phasing of the project work while continuing to prepare and serve meals especially difficult. Second, a fundamental design requirement was to seat all cadets in the same area utilizing easily moved tables which could be rapidly reconfigured to accommodate various situations, virtually eliminating the original large, heavy wooden tables designed and employed for family-style feeding versus the buffet line style used today.

Next, come the myths, or more rightly rumors, associated with the design and construction, begun more than 4 years ago and which continue to live today. When we reviewed various conceptual considerations (we certainly reviewed more than one) for the Bates renovation, a review team was formed that included cadet leaders, the Regimental Commander, Regimental XO, Regimental Sergeant Major and the three Squadron Commanders. The Corps of Cadets was fully and actively represented; comments to the contrary should be put to rest.



Cadet involvement and leadership was critical, and greatly appreciated, not only from facility design aspect but also from the meal management aspect. We knew it was not possible to shut down the dining hall during the renovation. So, early on with cadet involvement, we created a Squadron-based, phased meal service plan. The Corps of Cadets was engaged the whole way, active participants in the renovation and in communicating to ensure that all cadets were fed expeditiously without a drop in service. If I remember rightly, the rumor of no cadet involvement, or versions of it, circulated prior to the design being finalized. The follow-on rumor of not enough Dining Hall seating floated before construction began and should have been eliminated on the first day of use by the Corps of Cadets. Sadly, that was not the case. The entire Corps of Cadets, at full strength (965), can be seated in the Dining Hall at the same time.

As a corollary, there is also a continuing thread that I've encountered on visits with alumni groups around the country that the Dining Hall should be reconfigured to a Squad rather than a Squadron seating arrangement, and that the old Squad tables should be reinstalled to facilitate 'communication and leadership.' Since completion of the renovation, in May of each year, as soon as the new Regimental Commander has been selected, I meet with the RC and tell him or her that the RC owns the Dining Hall, and that the RC will determine how meal periods will be conducted, to include the table layout. I tell them we still have the old squad tables and chairs in storage which can be used to reset the dining hall to a squad seating arrangement – if the RC so desires. So far, each Regimental Commander, since construction completion, has told me that they want the Dining Hall to remain in the current Squadron configuration with the tables that seat two squads.

As an addendum to the issue of seating, I recently had another one of those "When I was a cadet..." comments that Squad seating was the centerpiece of leadership training and communication for the Corps. Cadets need to focus their limited time at Bates to proper decorum and nourishment. And, yes the Blue Book still provides rules for proper behaviors in the dining hall. Time spent on leader development is more effective when cadet leaders are teaching tasks, mentoring instruction, and evaluating performance during cadet mentoring sessions, drill, DRI and other inspections, formations, and PT. Leaders still can and do pass some information in Bates, but the time and tools for instruction are not present there. Those tools can be found when cadets are in formation for accountability or inspection, and when they are on the field for drill or PT. Real, effective opportunities to develop leadership exist when cadets conduct training, not when they discuss training around a table, squad or otherwise.

At this point, I should also mention that physical and mental hazing is prohibited at NMMI, even in the mess hall. So, some of the stories I have heard about what might or might not have taken place in the mess hall in the recent and distant past are no longer part of the NMMI experience.

Another element of seating that is often overlooked is sufficient space for traffic flow to and from entrances and exits as well as serving lines. We needed to be cognizant as well that egress routes for emergencies are more defined than decades ago and, frankly, the Dining Hall is THE prime target for an active shooter. The safety and security of cadets including the ability to evacuate and fight back override endearing traditions of squad table happiness.

We constantly remind Corps leaders that formations, PT, and leader training already provide a great deal of opportunity for Corps business and that the Army does not conduct business in its dining facilities. In fact, those at NMMI with extensive military careers say they never conducted business in a mess hall. NMMI Cadre wants the corps leaders to use the barracks, formations, athletics, and PT as opportunities for leadership.



Furthermore, NMMI 6-year cadet leaders, the before and after participants and witnesses to renovation and reorganized seating, do not see squad seating for purposes of conducting business as a need. Given the structure and constraints of the existing Plan of the Day, there is little time for anything in Bates other than eating, especially at the noon meal.

I asked the current Regimental Commander, who is also a six-year Cadet and who experienced Bates prior to the renovation arranged in squad

seating, about the comment and how the current seating arrangement versus the previous 'L' shaped squad arrangement related to leadership training and communication. She responded that the current configuration put the entire Corps right in front of her. She pointed out that the new audio/visual system in Bates Hall is high quality, state-of-the-art and communication from her, or the Regimental Adjutant, takes place without any loss of meaning or understanding. She next pointed out that while she and her staff sit on an elevated platform at the front of the Dining Hall, should the Corps not be able to or have trouble seeing her, or if she wants to provide any type of audio-visual support, she has six Jumbo-Tron screens that she controls enabling all members of the Corps to see. Lastly, she reminded me that with today's technology the Corps is in constant, perpetual communication. The Corps leadership is required to carry a cell phone so that they are online to the Lynx System (NMMI alert and notification system) to respond to any emergencies that require the lockdown of the campus and the Corps. Additionally, she said that through Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, text, and email, the Corps talks to each other 24/7. The thought of sitting at a table to "communicate" is foreign to the Cadet of today. Leadership takes place inside the Corps of Cadets, during formations, on the 'Stoop,' during ROTC and JROTC, during unit level training, and anywhere else on campus that leader and led appear. When she finished, I felt 'schooled' meticulously about her and the Corps' view of leadership training and communication as it relates to the Dining Hall.



Taking the discussion further with the RC, time became the topic as it relates to cadets and the Dining Hall, which also goes to the overall design and accessibility. Today's Cadets do not have enough time in a day to get done what they are required to do. A High School Cadet today is required to take Math, Science, English and History, every year of High School just to graduate. At NMMI, with JROTC as a mandatory class, the cadets now have five mandatory classes a day, before they get to mandatory Physical Fitness. Meal periods, especially the lunch period, are not viewed as a time to communicate and learn lessons in leadership. Cadets today view the meal period as a time to eat quickly and then take care of personal business, drop off or pick up laundry, go to the Infirmary, work on last-minute class assignments, or, if a cadet leader, work on or complete Corps duties. During any weekday lunch period, the Dining Hall is a living, pulsating being with cadets being served through as many as eight hot food lines open, three soup and salad bars, three vegetarian bars, three cereal bars, fresh fruit racks, trays of bread, tubs of peanut butter and jelly, and soft drink, milk, water, tea, coffee dispensers, all accommodating cadets with different health needs and personal likes. An individual Cadet can go to any line, as many times as he or she want and has the time to do. The entire Corps usually eats and begins to leave the Dining Hall in approximately 20 minutes. It is, in fact, a new, modern facility that presents a new, modern 21st century Cadet mess hall experience.

As one Alum put it as follows about the communication and leadership in the mess hall:

"Communication and leadership were left to the barracks, formation, drill, etc. A different time – and that is the point – now is not then, whenever then is for an alum. As an added note...what is being portrayed as "leadership training" was no more than recitation of West Point and NMMI, trivia and history, i.e. "how's the cow, what time is it," asked by cadet officers and first sergeants to impress the old cadets in the adjacent table and company/troop that their new cadets were sharper than those in the other troop."

"Questions were posed to cadets that were sharp enough and capable of memorizing the answers expected, little or no downside was imposed on cadets that were not able to do the extra work. How many bricks in Sally Port, etc., were asked during meals more as entertainment and ego building for the troop staff and to some degree to the new cadet that knew the answers? I did, and the bennies were sitting next to the company commander and getting some recognition that could impact a future leadership position when I turned. Really (the time was for) just getting to know the old cadet leaders."



This letter is addressed to any alumni that is currently asking themselves "what happened to the old mess hall."

My name is Katie Flury and I am the 2018 spring semester Regimental Commander. I also happen to be the last generation of cadets that will have ever known what the old mess hall stood for in our daily lives. I remember the beautiful mural that lined the walls, the massive eight-foot squad tables of solid wood that I spent so much time at, and the L shape of the building that held the hall of culinary atrocities. I too will miss the mess hall that was so prevalent in my daily life. However, for a school as old and pristine as ours we must also adapt to the fast pace world that surrounds us. Bates Mess Hall was a family style dining facility once upon a time as many of you alumni will remember then it shifted to a squad table self-serve dining facility, and it has now transitioned into a troop table dining facility of smaller size.

I, as Regimental Commander, was given the opportunity by General Grizzle and the Commandant Staff to change the mess hall back to squad tables and position the tables any way I saw fit. Since the renovation of the mess hall every Regimental Commander has received the same courtesy and have all chosen not to. Why you ask? The answer is simple, it is logistically possible, but not practical. I can very easily bring back squad tables, however, the 300-pound athlete will most likely not appreciate the tight-fitting tables that would have to be implemented. We also have a process that allows us to get cadets through serving lines in 15 minutes, so they have enough time to eat, however, that time would be more around the 30-minute mark should squad tables be brought back, and cadets would have to enter the serving lines by squad rather than by squadron. Many of you alumni might remember "popping too" as well which is a tradition that was near and dear to my heart in the mess hall. It is a tradition that is no longer implemented in the mess hall due to our time constraints for lunch. We have formation and are in the mess hall by 12:05 and need to be in class by 12:30 leaving us 25 minutes to feed 730 cadets. From my perspective, we either cut out popping to, or face having cadets go hungry.

There are many ways I have tried to keep tradition and promote change where the Bates facility is concerned, however this is the solution that benefits current cadets even if that means disappointing former cadets. Therefore, to all of you alumni, I understand and to a degree agree with your grievances. I do urge you to remember the life lessons you got from Bates Mess Hall because it was not the building that you are remembering, it was the comradery of your peers, teammates, and cadre. So, I leave all of you alumni with one observation. You all are waking up to alarms instead of reveille, going to work in slacks and polos instead of Class C, and eating dinner when you get home instead of waiting until 1815, and going to bed after your episode of NCIS rather than TAPs. Does this make you any less former cadets of NMMI? No. Therefore, the change of Bates mess hall does not destroy the comradery and respect cadets at NMMI have for each other but is rather just a physical change in the school's architecture.

Respectfully,

Katie Flury

Six Year Cadet, 2018 Regimental Commander



“No real leadership training took place when I was a new cadet nor when I was an old cadet troop commander and battalion/squadron adjutant at meal time. Meals were stressful and not looked forward to until you got to know the old cadets. Leadership was observed when the old cadets were at formations and drill. You observed both good and bad examples and sought to emulate the better cadets that were not yelling and getting few positive results. The comments being made by the few alumni that continue to harp on “things have to be as they remember,” are not remembering what actually took place, or are incapable of understanding what leadership really is.”

The cause of most rumor and myth remains change. Change for most people, including current and former cadets, is difficult to deal with much less accept. Thus, the misunderstanding and misinformation turn into rumor and myth about Bates Dining Hall, from cadet seating to eating, which began before demolition of the old and constructing the new. And, the root cause was change. To put change into perspective for everyone, my children at 37 and 34 do not wear a wristwatch. They rely on their cell phone. I cannot imagine not wearing a wristwatch, and they can't imagine wearing one. But that's not all. The Cadets today have a difficulty telling time the old-fashioned way. For example, The NMMI Post Office posted a sign with an old-fashioned clock face that said the office would reopen at the time reflected by the hands on the face of the clock. Because the clock was paper and not digital, some Cadets could not tell what time the Post Office would reopen. Unfortunately, it is a true story. My wife had to tell the Cadets the time that the clock face said the clerk would return. So, we have to be alert to posting times for events, activities, even class periods, things devoted to starting and ending times, to accommodate today – not 20, 30 or 40 years ago or more. We are all products of our history, but we don't have to be a hostage to it. Change is a major part of life at NMMI today – and today is the operative word.



At the end of the day, Bates Dining Facility has changed, this time in 2014, as have the cadets who use the facility today and who will use it tomorrow. Each of them is making his or her own NMMI experience everywhere on campus and beyond. Does the current version of Bates Hall in the cadet view meet their needs and expectations? That's up to them and we will continue to try to meet their current and future needs in so far as we can.

Muhammad Ali made a striking observation about dealing with change, at NMMI or anywhere, that speaks volumes: “A man who views the world the same at fifty as he did at twenty has wasted thirty years of his life.”

