



Griffith Club of America

August 1976

Plans for "The Annual" are wrapped up and ready to go! It will be held on Saturday and Sunday, September 11th and 12th at The Lord Cromwell Motor Inn & Restaurant in Cromwell, Connecticut.

Before presenting the details of this meet, I would like to thank the many club members who took the time to drop a line or call and make many helpful suggestions. It seems everyone wanted to make this a suitable replacement for the unpredictable (weather) and unaccommodating (tents, sleeping bags, lack of restaurants and entertainment), but usually great Lime Rock Meet! Most of you probably know that Lime Rock has been the location of "The Annual" for the past three years.

Connecticut was again chosen to host "The Annual" mainly because 71 percent of the club members reside in the Northeastern States. Connecticut serves as a good central location for these members living from Maine to Maryland to upperstate New York and Pennsylvania. It is also easily accessible to members coming from any distance, like Florida, with airports, car rentals, etc. in the immediate area.

When searching for a place to host "The Annual" we were looking for basically five qualities all within one establishment.

(1) Classy rooms (2) Great food

(3) Good entertainment and recreation

(4) Nice but convenient location

(5) Safe parking

We feel The Lord Cromwell is the one! Its rooms are definately high class and the food is great, which makes it a much frequented spot by many area people. The entertainment in the cocktail
lounge is always superb. There is a beautiful indoor swimming pool
under a giant glass dome, a billard room, tennis courts, and for
all you "prospective putters" an indoor putting green. How's that
for class? Its location is easily accessible from all directions
and it's not in the middle of some big city. Safe parking will be
provided by roping off a section of the parking lot and hiring a
security guard to stand watch for the night. At Lime Rock we all
slept next to our cars - just won't fit thru the door!

The basic schedule for the meet will be as follows:

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11TH

12:00 noon - Arrivals-swimming-recreation-etc.

6:00 P.M. - Cocktails and meeting in banquet room

7:00 P.M. - Dinner in banquet room

After Dinner - Party

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH

9:00 A.M. - Breakfast
11:00 A.M. - Check out time
Organize a tour of the countryside
Departure

We have reserved a private banquet room for our meeting, cocktails, and dinner. Every diner will have a choice of either Roast Prime Ribs of Beef or Baked Stuffed Jumbo Shrimp served as follows:

Fresh Fruit Cup with Sherbert
Roast Prime Ribs of Beef or Baked Stuffed Jumbo Shrimp
Baked Potato

Tossed Salad - House Dressing
Ice Cream Nut Roll with Fudge Sauce

The price of dinner is \$10.00 per person to be paid in advance. This includes tax and gratuity. The reason for this, rather than an open menu, is that with a group our size it would be impossible to all be served at once. The waitress would also have a real hassle with individual checks. This way, with the meal paid in advance, we, The Griffith Club, will pay the tab with one big check. Really, it's a necessary evil!

The prices of the rooms are shown on the reservation sheet. All reserved rooms are also to be paid in advance. In this way, The Lord Cromwell Motor Inn will put us all in the same area! Some of you that plan on coming in a group might consider "doubling up" in a room for twice the fun and save some cash at the same time. A group of us have already reserved a balcony suite, which will undoubtedly become the location of an all nighter, hear that Foster, so everyone bring a bottle.

In order to reserve a spot at "The Annual" just fill out the Reservation Sheet and mail it with a check, for the correct amount, made payable to The Griffith Club of America. The deadline for reserving a spot is August 21st. I cannot stress the importance of this deadline. AUGUST 21ST.

I hope to see everyone, including many new faces, in attendance. This should be a good time for all.

June 27th was the date and Tom Luzzi's, Westerly, Rhode Island was the place. Tom hosted a a fantastic meet, featuring great Italian cooking by his wife, plenty of beverage, and a beautiful poolside picnic spot. It was a very hot summer day and many people took an unexpected swim, clothes and all. On the way to Tom's house some of us got stuck in a traffic jam. Believe me, the last place you want to be in a Griffith is a traffic jam on a hot summer day. 110 C. here we come!! The ride home proved far more "moving" featuring a three-way run-off. After that, we all pulled to the roadside to observe some driving techniques from Dean (Doughnut) Pallas. An all around Dyno-mite (that's one for you Foster) time. Thanks Tom.

Ocops! In the last issue the phone number for Danny's Color Creations contained a typographical error. Their phone number is 203 871-1791. Got it right this time Dan!

This month we also feature a road test on a Griffith 200 supplied to us by Tom Uss of W. Keansburg, New Jersey as well as a reprint from a recent Road & Track which contains some unkind words. That's it. See you at "The Annual".



Sincerely,

Randy Hartigan Director

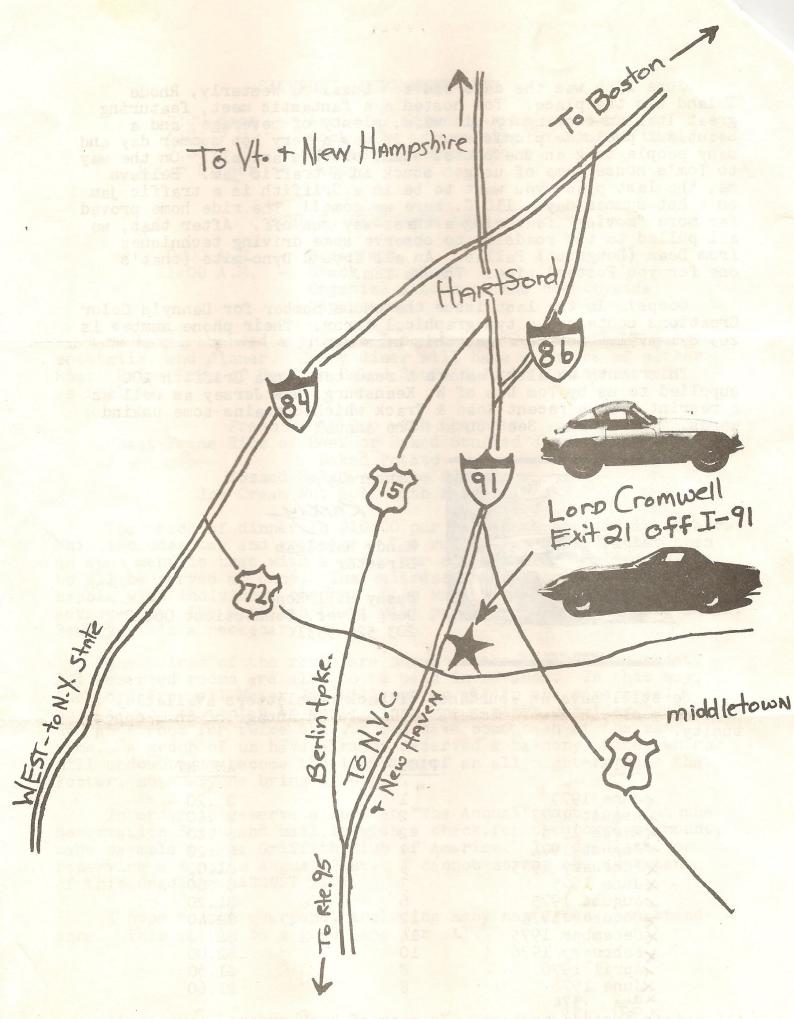
Bushy Hill Road Deep River, Connecticut 06417 203 526-5531

We still have an abundance of back newsletters available. I hope many of you newer members will take advantage of this opportunity.

DATE	PAGES	AMOUNT
AJune 1973 August 1973 March 1974 August 1974 X February 1975 X June 1975 X October 1975 X December 1975 X February 1976 April 1976 X June 1976	1 2 2 1 5 3 6 12 14 10 8 8	\$.20 \$.40 \$.20 \$1.00 \$1.20 \$2.40 \$2.80 \$2.00 \$1.60

All prices include postage. In case of back orders, more copies will be made.

reply



ALL ROADS LEAD TO "THE ANNUAL" !!!!!!!

RICHARD ERNEST DAVIDS

N GRIFFITH

1400 pound car with 271 hp equals—Wowl

It all started last Spring at the auto show. Not needing or even wanting a new automobile of any type I figured it was perfectly safe to wander hither and you to gaze upon the various goodies offered to the public.

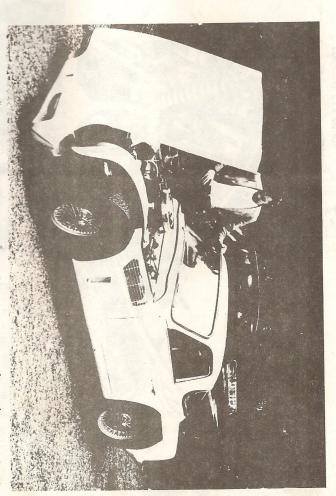
So far so good! The trouble all began when the Editor and I were relaxing (?) over a stiffish drink and decided to figure out, strictly from a no holds barred hairy performance

standpoint, which car offered the most. The only ground rule used was that the vehicle must be somewhat tractable and, therefore, usable as a street machine. Academically, we wondered if the answer would be Ferrari, Aston-Martin, Cobra or what. The "What" won—a new marque called the "Griffith."

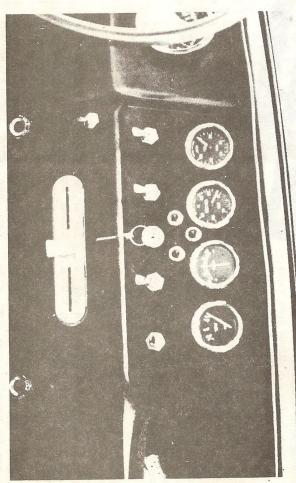
By this time I was sure I couldn't live without one so proceeded accord-



Every bit as mean as it looks, Griffith 200 is strictly for performance with utility secondary.



Like early Austin Healey Sprites, the whole nose lifts up to get at the engine compartment.



British-built body and chassis give Griffith Smith's instruments except Ford "Rotunda" tach.

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thermostatically-controlled electric fans which looking down over right mud skirt shows twin ABOVE: Front of engine compartment taken blow air through radiator at slow car speeds

are for two and only for two. There is no LEFT: Comfortable leatherette covered seats little space for luggage so travel light. place for a child or dog to curl up, and very

handy, but special exhaust manifolds don't easy to reach Other tune-up items are also Distributor of 289 cu. in. Ford engine hotted pound car really gets up and goes. out plugs. Performance level is so fantastic UPPER RIGHT: One problem, now cured by Griffith, was ignition wires too close to exthat even on six or seven cylinders, 1400 haust manifold. Heat cooked wires and shorted

engined Tiger which has milder 260 cu.in. V8 lot handier to work on than Sunbeam's Ford make it easy to reach plugs. All in all, it's a up by Ford to 271 hp is right up front and

> sell one because the car was still in available, and I had the bit in my bugs to be worked out. However, sales as in building a dealer organizaweren't as interested in individual the development stage and they ingly. The factory wasn't too eager to there are all sorts of bug sprays tion. Besides, there were sure to be teeth.

the spark plugs-however, that's ancu. in. Ford V-8 (Degree of HP op-It's a little coupe to which the 289 AC, the Griffith started life as a TVR. fully mated (Exception: getting at tional) powerplant has been beautiother story). As the Cobra started life as

The unit I got was the only car



sold with the Ford Hi-Performance close ratio box. (Options, options!) powerplant coupled to Ford's new typically British understated type of pending upon the source) to use a Spitfire) (Figures vary naturally, deof 138 inches (7 inches less than a than a Cobra) and an overall length weight of 1450 lbs, (about 116 pounds (about that of a Lotus Elan), a curb With a wheelbase of 851/2 inches less than a Sprite or 570 pounds less

phrase, "It goes like Hell." swaybar. Steering is rack and pinion. unequalasm coil/shock setup with wheels). The suspension in front is an mounted on deep 72 spoke wire (the largest SP's made, which are road, Dunlop 185-15 SP tires are fitted thick half shafts are slip-splined. other set of shocks, and the short, trically with shocks connected to the The rear coils are mounted concenlower arm. There is, in addition, an-In order to get this power to the

tively with no fuss or bother-'nuff drums behind do the job most effecto stop, big Girling disks up front and In order to persuade this beastie

as if two or more tigers are having a When you "fires her up" it sounds (Continued on Page 62)



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GOBS OF GO IN GRIFFITH

(Continued from Page 29)

fight in your tank and yet to your surprise, it's not only docile (when driven with a feather-foot) but rides like a sedan. To a guy who is used to having his innards shaken like a blended drink, this is as close to heaven as one he imagine (unless you really try!!).

The performance is so magnificent it's like a heady vintage wine. If you want to pass anything on the road you merely press the right foot down gently and the passee is behind you

KEEP FREEDOM
IN YOUR FUTURE
WITH
U. S. SAVINGS BONDS

whether or not he likes it. And, to make a dogmatic statement, no matter what he is driving. This one really wins the "Scalded Cat" award for the stop-light grand prix.

The interior is leatherette which is, to my way of thinking, best of all because a damp rag keeps the stuff looking like new. Instrumentation is complete as it should be in a machine of this type and is topped off with the regulation "tree" steering wheel. While Mr. Ford's Hi-Performance engine is not what you'd call an economy power plant either in terms of gas or oil, I can't vouch for the regular version. It should, however, be less greedy. The Griffith with the 271 hp version of its 289 cu.in. engine gets about 18 mpg on premium gas. Ouch!

This particular car hasn't yet had a stop watch put to it but the factory quotes 0-60 times varying from an unbelievable 3.2 seconds to a merely sensational 3.8 seconds. Grrrr. With it's fantastic power/weight ratio the top end is dictated by the rev limit (imagine an American engine red-lined at 7200 rpm) and the rear end ratio-in this case 3.9. Incidentally, one of the reasons this car was purchased was the reliability of big, locally made engines. Ironically, the most frustrating part of the de-bugging operation is to get the engine to behave, (electrical problems). Hightension leads cook on exhaust headers, coil lead requires a resistor and other minor problems of this sort crop up now and then. Working directly with the factory, they have been only too willing to help get everything in apple-pie order.

Now that everything is all sorted and the car is being offered for sale, I understand they're selling like hotcakes as well they might. Although it's a highly specialized vehicle and, therefore, not everyone's cup-of-tea by a long shot. For those who like the thought of performance plus, and are familiar with corresponding price tags, with a base price of \$3995 (granted you should pay \$62 more

the ment of value Value of victors and

resumply close copy of John 1st (amous Bristo) special that later 1 are 1 are

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for a heater and can pay \$\$\$ more for engine mods.) it's classified as a real steal. After all, Cobras cost six grand and Ferraris start much higher. And the Griffith will outdo even these in the performance department.

EDTOR'S NOTE: The Sunbeam Tiger is cheaper and much more docile, but then so is the VW. And neither of these cars has anything like the performance of this unique "hot" Griffith.

Yankee Motors and **Foreign Bodies**

□ People have been swapping big engines into little cars for half a century. I mean, look at Louis Zborowski's Chitty-Chitty-Bang-Bang. Over 23,000cc worth of Maybach bomber engine in a chaindrive Mercedes chassis. Now that was an engine swap, I promise you. But like most such conversions, it really didn't work very well. In fact, out of all the thousands of engine/chassis combinations the hot rodders of the world have tried, there are only a handful of cars in which the result truly justified the means.

Significantly enough, all of them used the same formula. Start with a basically well-balanced but underpowered British sportscar, throw out its archaic, overweight boat anchor of an engine and replace with a small-block Ford or Chevy V-8. Simple, logical and foolproof. And eminently rewarding. Because those old British engines were so abysmally bad, you could dramatically improve the cars all 'round with a lightweight, torquey Yankee V-8.

Right off the bat, you have to remember we're talking about factory engine swaps here, not just British sportscars with American engines. Cars like the Allard and Railton and Devin SS had British chassis and American powerplants, but they were designed from scratch for those engines. That's a whole 'nother smoke entirely. What we're talking about are under 2-liter sportscars that found a whole new life repowered by anything from 4 to 7 liters of American V-8.

Actually, the earliest and one of the nicest of all these "Anglo-American hybrids" used a lowly Nash Six for power. But in its day, it was really quite a car. This was the Nash-Healey. Now the Nash-Healey was nothing more than Donald Healey's legendary Silverstone roadster with a new body and a bigger engine. The sturdy chassis, with superdeep frame rails and quirky needle bearing, cast aluminum trailing arm front suspension, was precisely the same. But the old-fashioned 2.4-liter Riley Four of the Silverstone was chucked out in favor of 234 cubic inches of Ambassador Six. And the weird Silverstone body-the one with the retractable windshield and spare tire exposed at the back as a "bumper"-



was replaced with a smooth envelope of aluminum from Panelcraft.

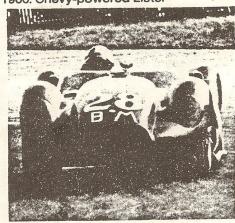
The whole thing worked just fine, thankewverimuch, and Nash-Healeys finished fourth, sixth and third overall at LeMans in 1950, '51 and '52, running against Cunninghams, C-Jaguars and the like. The race cars weren't much different from the street cars, and they were timed at 140 mph down Mulsanne. Which wasn't bad, all things considered, since the Riley-engined cars could barely break 100. Healey built 101 aluminum cars for Nash in 1951, and then George Mason hired Pininfarina to redesign the Nash line, including the Healeys. They stayed in production with Italian bodies, British chassis and American engines until '54, but the later types were only insipid "personal luxury" cars.

A more potent Anglo conversion was the strictly sports/racer Lister, and the Chevy V-8 that capped the list was actually only the last and biggest of an escalating series of engines. Brian Lister built his first car in 1954, and it was an embarrassingly close copy of John Tojiero's famous Bristol special that later became the A.C. Ace. Lister used an MG TD engine and got Archie Scott-Brown to drive. The MG was too slow, so they spliced in a Bristol Six. This was a super racing car, but Colin Chapman's Lotus Mark 8/10 was even better.

So Lister moved into the big bore ranks by the simple expedient of putting a Jaguar XK Six in place of the Bristol.

The Lister-Jags were absolute dynamite, and Lister sold them by the dozen . . . which is virtually mass production in the sports/racer business. In 1957, Carroll Shelby wangled himself the American Lister distributorship, ordered up a boatload of rolling chassis and stuffed small-block Chevy V-8s inside. Most of them were bored and stroked to 324 cubic inches or so, with six Stromberg 97s. With optional Webers, you could channel nearly 400 hp into a frame designed for no more than 80. The Lister-Chevs were just about the fastest machines in production in the late Fifties, running an easy 180 mph with road race gearing. But then the little, mid-engined Cooper Monacos and Lotus 19s showed up to prove there was a substitute for cubic inches. It was called handling.

1960: Chevy-powered Lister



Brian Lister-and big front-engine racing cars disappeared overnight.

Front-engine sportscars stayed around, however. And Carroll Shelby popped up again. Now the Cobra story is much too long and well-known to bother to recite here-hell, every schoolboy in East Texas is required to memorize it in order to get out of third grade—but of all the Big-V-8-in-Little-Sportscar conversions attempted over the years, Shelby's Cobras are the best. In fact, all things considered, you can make a pretty good case for them being the best high-performance sportscars of the '60s. Particularly judged on a dollar basis.

The Cobra 289 was, of course, simply an A.C. Ace with a small-block Ford V-8. And the A.C. Ace was just the production version of a 1952 2-liter Bristol special built by John Tojiero for racer Cliff Davis, with aluminum roadster body copied line for line from the Barchetta body Touring supplied for the Ferrari 166/212 Inter. Before Shelby's Cobra got into production, however, Ford Motor Company spent a small fortune revamping most of the running gear, much of it at the recommendation of Ford engineer Danny Jones. Phil Remington, Ken Miles and Pete Brock

1953: Nash-Healey



were responsible for the race versions, and of course, for nearly ten years, Cobras have been competitive A-production cars running against technically more advanced designs that just don't seem to work as well.

Cobras are comparatively crude, no doubt about it, though the later 427 bigblock cars are far removed from the A.C. Ace. The whole chassis was thoughtfully redesigned for the 500 hp cars, and while they are probably the quickest and fastest street machines that will ever be built, they also go around corners surprisingly well. And the four-wheel disc brakes are beyond belief. To top it all off, you could buy a 427 Cobra for only \$6000 or so in 1967, and while the going rate is \$20,-000+ today, that's still pretty cheap for the performance you get.

The Sunbeam Tiger was conceived as a cut-rate Cobra. The first two prototypes were bolted together by Ken Miles 1967: Sunbeam Tiger



and Carroll Shelby in 1962, at the behest of West Coast Rootes importer Ian Garrard. Sunbeam sold its little Alpine for only \$2495, and while it was nice enough as anemic British roadsters go, it couldn't get out of its own way. With a 260 cubic inch, or later a 289, Ford V-8, however, the whole car came together. And for only \$3499 between 1963 and '67, you could buy a poor man's Cobra that would blow the doors off a lot of highclass cars. The Tiger had a super-tall 2.88 rear end so it wouldn't win any drags, but it did have an honest 120 mph top speed, roll-up windows, a real heater and a neat removable hardtop. None of which you could get on the Spartan Cobras.

All the car magazines loved them, and Rootes was selling them faster than they could be bolted together. And overachiever Shelby was putting the 306 hp version of the 289 V-8 from the GT-350 into a handful of Tigers for those who had to go really fast. Unfortunately, just about the time the Tiger got started, Chrysler bought a controlling interest in Rootes. The small-block Plymouth 318 wouldn't fit in the Sunbeam without unconscionable cutting and chopping, and so Chrysler U.K. phased out the Tiger rather than sell Ford engines. C'est la vie.

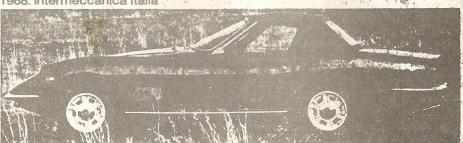
Finally, there's the black sheep of the Anglo-American hot rods, the TVR/ Griffith. Said David E. Davis, "Jack Griffith substituted his own surname for the TVR badge, and a great, chuffing 289 Ford V-8 for the MG part, thus changing it from a passive little car that did nothing wrong to a manic little car that did tiny British specialty builder, and the car was originally designed by Trevor Wilkinson way back in 1954. It's used a succession of MG, Triumph and British Ford engines over the years, in addition to the 289 Ford V-8. With 210 hp, the 85inch wheelbase, 1400-lb. Griffith was an absolute rolling death trap, and after building 200, even irrepressible Jack Griffith-a Long Island Ford dealerdecided to do things right. Which was his undoing. In trying to come up with a better mousetrap, he spent all his money. The revamped Griffith eventually became the Omega, then the Intermeccanica Italia, which evolved into the roadster Torino and later the Opel-sponsored Indra powered by a 327 Chevy. Which is still in production, by the way.

nothing right." TVR was-and still is-a

There are others too, of course. A.C. still makes a Cobra-based coupe with Ford's cooking 428 V-8, Bristol has used Chrysler's big 383/440 in place of its own 2-liter since 1961, and Jensen made the same switch around the same time. In neither case, however, were the cars improved. In fact, Chrysler's big Wedge drastically upset the delicate balance of what had been light, lithe small-bore Grand Tourers. Which just goes to prove that unless your name is Carroll Shelby, if you're going to splice an American V-8 into a little sportscar, you'd better do as the Scarab folks did and use either the small-block Chevy or similar Ford V-8, along with a chassis that's right to begin with. Anything else is just wasting your

-Rich Taylor

1968: Intermeccanica Italia



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PARTS WANTED

Radiator shroud and complete cooling fan setup. Allan Wolfe, 19 Prospect Ridge, Ridgefield, Conn. 06877 (203) 438-8723. The classified section is open to all Griffith Club members. All ads will run for two issues, whereupon it will automatically terminate unless it is resubmitted. If you want to sell or purchase any item, send your ad to Griffith Club of America, Bushy Hill Road, Deep River, Connecticut 06417. Please notify us if car or part is either sold or located.

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DATE PURCHASED:		
MILEAGE:		
PREVIOUS OWNERS (if any):		

INTERESTING HISTORY:

COMMENTS:

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Double (2	double beds)		
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cots	\$ 4.00		
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(If ordering more than one the appropriate amount.)	of the same dinner please fill in		
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