

## ***US Flag Retirement Ceremony***

**PURPOSE:** To promote American Heritage and provide a Community service by honorably disposing of worn United States Flags. Worn U.S. Flags may be burned or buried with honor and dignity.

**MATERIAL:** Old U.S. Flags to be retired, New US Flag(s) to display after retirement. Medium size campfire.

**PEOPLE:** Main Speaker, 3 voices (off stage), color guard (3 scouts per flag), flag bearer for each new flag, fire builder/tender.

**PREPARATION:** Prior to the ceremony, say a couple of hours, we put the flag, folded in the tricorn, into a large enough "Zip-Loc" bag with about 2 tablespoons of isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol to soak into the flag. This gives encouragement to the flame and makes a nice blue tinted flame. Let the flag soak approx 2 hours, then remove from bag and attach to a pole prepared with string or hooks, for easy removal.

### ***Opening***

**SPEAKER:** We are drawn here together in the sight of God to pay our last respects to this symbol of our great nation, "America", the land of the free and the home of the brave.

The US Flag Code reads; "The flag, when it is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning."

The Boy Scouts of America recommends; "When the national flag is worn beyond repair, burn it thoroughly and completely on a modest, but blazing fire. This should be done in a simple manner with dignity and respect. Be sure the flag is reduced to ashes unrecognizable as a former flag."

In keeping with the law of our land and the recommendations of our organization, we present to you, this(these) United States Flag(s), the symbol of our great nation, which has served its(their) useful life as a symbol of freedom and our country, for retirement.

*Ask the audience for silence and call for the colors*

**SPEAKER:** "Color Guard... present the Colors"

*The Color Guard, in full uniform, will march forward with the "Old Flag" attached to a Flag Pole, flag bearer in the center with one guard in front, and one guard in back. They are to come up the aisle(s), from the rear of the area. As the flag approaches the view of the first person in the audience, the MC will call out: "Scouts... Hand Salute One." Everyone is to remain saluting until the Color Guard crosses behind the fire (in front of*

*the MC) and lines up behind the flag stand. The MC will then ask the Color Guard to "Post the Colors" at which time the Flag Bearer will insert the flag into the flag stand, and all three will then step back and salute the flag.*

**SPEAKER:** "Two"

**Voice of the Flag:** "I am your Flag. I was born on June 14, 1777. I am more than just a piece of cloth shaped into a colorful design, I am the silent sentinel of freedom for the greatest sovereign nation on earth. I am the inspiration for which America patriots gave their lives and fortunes, I am the emblem of America.

I have led your sons into battle from Valley Forge to Vietnam. I have been there though the Civil War, Two World wars, at Gettysburg, Flanders, Korea, the Gulf War, all of them. I was there with George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and I here with you now.

I have flown through Peace and War. Through strife and Prosperity, and amidst it all, I have always been respected. My red stripes symbolize the blood spilled in defense of this glorious nation. My white stripes, the burning tears shed by Americans who lost their sons in battle. My blue field represents God's Heaven under which I fly, and my stars, clustered together, unify the fifty states as one for God and Country.

I am "Old Glory" and I proudly wave on high. Honor me, respect me, and defend me with your lives. Never let our enemies tear me down from my lofty position, lest I never return. Keep alight the fires of patriotism, strive earnestly for the spirit of democracy, and keep me always as a symbol of freedom, liberty, and peace in our country.

When comes the time when I am old and faded, do not let me fly in disrepair, rather retire me from my duties only to replace me with a new flag so that I may continue to symbolize our country. With this, renew your commitment to what I stand for and pledge your allegiance to me one final time:

**SPEAKER:** "Scouts... Hand Salute One! To the audience: Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance:"

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and Justice for all."

**SPEAKER:** "Two"

**Second Voice:** As you can see, this banner of Freedom before you is worn, tattered, and soiled from use and age. Her broad stripes are no longer a fiery red & pure white, but faded and worn out. The stars and blue background are no longer vivid reminders of our blue skies and great land, of the purity, vigilance, and justice she should represent. She has flown proudly over the years and has done her job well, but now she must be replaced with a new flag to properly represent this great Nation of ours.

## ***Retiring the Colors***

**SPEAKER:** "Color Guard(s), Remove Colors"

*At this time the Color Guard is to step forward and remove the flag from the Flag Stand. They will then step back and fold the flag in the customary manner. They are to then step back and stand at attention with the Flag Bearer holding the flag in front of him, palms up.*

**SPEAKER:** "Color Guard(s), Retire Colors"

*At this time the Color Guard is to march over to the fire, unfold the flag, and present it to the audience in standard display form, one Guard Standing behind and to the right of the flag, and the other two holding each end of the flag for display.*

**Third Voice:** The flag of our Nation should always be a strong, vivid symbol of our land and fly brightly in our minds. Our flag is a symbol of our people, our freedom, and our strength. So it is now that I commit this flag, which no longer can fulfill these duties to the fire so that we may replace it with a new flag to properly symbolize our Nation. May the spirit of this flag be born again in the new flag we will now fly"

**SPEAKER:** Scouts... Hand Salute One"

*At this time the Color Guard will turn the flag sideways and gently drop it into the fire, folding the ends in toward the middle of the flame. The third Guard will use a long stick to then "stir the ashes" so that it will not be possible to recognize the ashes as a flag. They will then step back from the fire and stand at attention, and salute the flag.*

**SPEAKER:** "Two"

**SPEAKER:** Color Guard(s)... Prepare Colors"

*At this time, the Color Guard(s) will march over to where the "new" flag Bearer is. The New Flag Bearer will hand the new flag to the Color Guard Flag Bearer and step back. The Color Guard will then march back to where they were standing behind the flag stand and stand at attention:*

**SPEAKER:** "Color Guard... Present Colors" " Scouts... Hand salute One"

*The Color Guard will then unfold the flag, remove the pole from the stand and attach it to the pole. They will then stand at attention, presenting the colors.*

**SPEAKER:** "Please join me and welcoming this new flag by once again pledging our allegiance to it:"

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic, for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and Justice for all."

**SPEAKER:** "Two... Color Guard, withdraw the colors, audience please withdraw, in silence, to your campsites behind the flag and reflect upon this evening's ceremony and the recent events that have inflicted our country and the people of the world with your scouts.

*Color Guard marches colors, with audience behind, from council ring up path all the way to the main parade area, before breaking ranks and removing flag from pole and folding.*