

Flag Retirement Ceremonies

Flag Ceremony #1

An American Flag retirement ceremony for scout group campfires

Scouts stand in flanking line on one side of fire. MC stands at rear of fire facing audience, asks audience to stand. Color Guard (3 scouts minimum) will approach fire from rear of audience, walk past line of Scouts, then stop at rear of fire facing audience.

Color Guard slowly unfurls flag on far side of campfire so it shows through the flames while MC reads.

MC: "I am your Flag. I appear in many places. I have taken many forms and been called many names. I was authorized by congress in 1818 in the form you see now and have remained unchanged except to add a new star each July 4th after a new state joined the union until I reached my present number of 50."

"I am more than just red, white and blue cloth shaped into a design. I am a silent sentinel of freedom. People of every country in the world know me on sight. Many countries love me as you do. Other countries look at me with contempt because they don't allow the freedom of Democracy that I represent -- but country looks on me with respect. I am strong and the people of America have made me strong. My strength comes from your willingness to give help to those who are in need. You strive for world peace yet stand ready to fight oppression. You send resources and offer technology to less fortunate countries so they may strive to become self-sufficient. You feed starving children. You offer a home to anyone who will pledge allegiance to me."

"Your sons gather beneath me to offer their lives on the battlefields, to preserve the Liberty I represent. That's why I love the American people. That's why I have flown so proudly."

"Scouts and their families are some of my favorite people. I listen to your patriotic songs. I'm there at your flag ceremonies and I appreciate the tender care you give me. I feel the love when you say your pledge. I notice that your hand covers your heart when I am on parade. How smartly you salute as I pass by and I ripple with pleasure when I see it."

"Now I am tired and it's time for me to rest in the Sacred Flames of your campfire. My colors are faded and my cloth is tattered but my spirit remains unbroken. To set my spirit loose, first cut the blue field away from my stripes."

MC: pauses. Color Guard leader uses scissors to remove blue field.

MC: "Tear each of my 13 stripes and lay it on the fire, one at a time. As you do this, think about the 13 original colonies and the pioneers who carved a nation out of a wilderness. They risked everything to fight for the Independence which we enjoy today."

Color Guard leader uses scissors to start each stripe, and then tears it; another Guard hands each stripe to the next Scout waiting in line. Scout takes stripe in both hands, then walks toward fire, places stripe in base of flames, salutes, then walks to form flanking line on opposite side each facing fire.

MC: (continue slowly reading through next section, timing each state to a fresh stripe) "My first state was Virginia, then Massachusetts, then New York, Maryland, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Delaware, North Carolina, South Carolina, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and finally Georgia."

"As you cut and rip me apart and watch me burn, do not be sad or feel sorry for me. I have had the great Honor of being your flag of the United States of America and the Republic for which I stand, one Nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all."

MC: "When my stripes are gone, kiss the blue field and lay it across the fire. Then stand silently as you watch each star twinkle and fade into ashes."

Color Guard leader takes blue field, bring it to his lips, then lays it on the top of the fire. Pause silently until blue field has been consumed.

"Now I am just a memory, but if there is a tear in your eye or a lump in your throat; if you felt a shiver in your spine as you watched me burn, then I will be back the next time you need me and my colors will be fresh and bright and my edges won't be ragged anymore. When I climb to the top of the flagpole, I'll wave at you and remember the love and respect that you have showed me here tonight."

"And now Scouts, families, Citizens - Good night."

Flag Ceremony #2

One Flag - worn, tattered and soiled, one medium fire. Take the flag and cut out the blue field with the stars, then cut the flag up into smaller pieces so that each participant can have a piece to lay on the fire.

NARRATOR - Our flag is the symbol of our country. Have you ever stopped to think what the flag really means?

The Blue in our flag stands for valor, which our ancestors fought and died for in the many battles that have been fought for our country and all for which it stands.

The White stands for the purity in all of our hearts. It also represent the honor that each of us should show in all that we do in our everyday lives.

The Red stands for all of the men and women who have died in the service of our country, both as members of the armed forces and as everyday citizens.

Our flag has gone into every battle into which there have been United States citizens, from the American Revolution to the Civil War, to WW I, to WW II, to the Korean Conflict the Viet Nam War to the Desert Storm.

It has flown over some battles that were never declared, such as Beirut where the Marine Barracks was blown up by terrorists' at the Alfred Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, and most recently by the rescuers at the World Trade Center.

In all of these, we the American people have stayed true to the values that the Flag represents. We should always value the sacrifices that have been made for our flag and the country that it represents.

We have an old friend here who has fulfilled his duty to our country. He has become worn and tattered and we are here tonight to retire him with honor.

We shouldn't be sad about the retirement of our friend. We are not burning him in anger, we are only releasing his spirit so that he can continue to serve us in our thoughts.

Now I would invite each of you to take a piece of cloth from the box being passed around and each of you in turn place it on the fire. You can pause for a moment to reflect upon what the flag means to each of us.

Flag Ceremony #3

Troop Attention:

"No disrespect should be shown to the flag of the United State of America; 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."

Color Guard enters in silence, displaying unfurled flag to the troop. (The flags colors are being separated during the reading.)

I AM YOUR FLAG

I was born on June 14, 1777

I am more than cloth shaped into a design.

I am the refuge of the world's oppressed people.

I am the silent sentinel of Freedom.

I am the emblem of the greatest sovereign nation on earth.

I am the inspiration for which American Patriots gave their lives and fortunes.

I have led your sons in to battle from Valley Forge to the blistering desert of the Arabian Peninsula.

I walked in silence with each of your honored dead to their final resting place beneath the silent white crosses, row upon row.

I have flown through peace and war, strife and prosperity, and amidst it all I have been respected.

"Old Glory"

Is my nickname; proudly I wave on high. Honor me. Respect me; defend me with your lives and fortunes. Never let my 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. Worship Eternal God and keep his commandments, and I shall remain the bulwark of peace of freedom for all people.

FOR I AM YOUR FLAG!

*(Stop here until the colors are completely separated. Then continue:)

My red stripes symbolize the blood spilled in defense of the glorious nation.
Let us retire the Red Stripes--Salute!

(Burn the ~~RED~~ stripes)

Two.

My white stripes signify the burning tears shed by Americans who lost their sons.

Let us retire the White Stripes --Salute.

(Burn the stripes) - Two.

My blue field is indicative of God's heaven under which we fly. My stars, clustered together, unify 50 States as one for God and Country.
Let us retire the Blue Field with Stars.--Salute.

(Burn the BLUE Field with Stars) - Two

Color Guard files out in silence.

Flag Ceremony #4

1. Display the old flag, give its history, if known,
2. Pledge of Allegiance Respect paid to the old flag -- read aloud "I AM OLD GLORY" I am old glory; for more than 9 score years I have been the banner of hope and freedom for generation after generation of Americans. Born amid the first flames of America's fight for freedom, I am the symbol of a country that has grown from a little group of 13 colonies to a united nation of 50 sovereign states. Planted firmly on the high pinnacle of American Faith, my gently fluttering folds have proved an inspiration to untold millions. Men have followed me into battle with unwavering courage. They have looked upon me as a symbol of national unity. They have prayed that they and their fellow citizens might continue to enjoy the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, which have been granted to every American as the heritage of free men. So long as men love liberty more than life itself, so long as they treasure the priceless privileges bought with the blood of our forefathers; so long as the principles of truth, justice and charity for all remain deeply rooted in human hearts, I shall continue to be the enduring banner of the United States of America.
3. Explain to the ensemble what will happen next, and a little word or two about it. Taps are hummed slowly while the flag is cut up. ABSOLUTE SILENCE.
4. Color Guard cuts the field of blue stars out of the flag in silence. The field of blue is put onto the fire first. The stripes are laid into the fire when the stars are almost fully consumed.
5. There is absolute silence until the entire flag is completely consumed by the flames.
6. Then the color guard, with meaning, says, 'OUR FLAG REST IN PEACE.'

Author Unknown

Resources for Campfire Activities and Ceremonies:

<http://www.macscouter.com/>

<http://www.scoutingbear.com/USA/flagret.htm>

<http://www.scoutmaster.org/>

<http://www.rogerknapp.com/knap/scout1.htm>

The Gospel of the Redman