



Flag Retirement Ceremony

[Led by the SPL, the flag bearer holds folded flag in formation at the outside of the fire ring, flanked by two honor guards and trailed by two more. A trailing guard should be prepared with sharp shears. The SPL will narrate the ceremony.]

Please rise for the presentation of the colors. Color guard, advance.

[Color guard advances to a position near the fire. They stand at attention.]

Color guard, present colors.

[Color guard unfolds the flag, held at each corner by a guard, insuring to display the blue field to the left when observed by the audience.]

Our flag is the symbol of our country. Have you ever stopped to think what the flag really means? The Blue field or union is the point of honor, the upper corner of the flag's own right. The symbolism of the right hand goes far back in antiquity when it was the weapon hand. Raising the right arm free of any weapon meant peace. It became a salute, a way of giving praise and honor. The union is blue, representing the night sky with stars forming a new and glorious constellation. There is one star for each state in our union. It is said the point of honor of our flag was made from the blue clock belonging to a captain in the Continental Army. The red and white stripes are symbolic of beams of morning light, and thirteen of them represent each of the original thirteen colonies. The stripes in our flag were inspired by the rattlesnake flag flown on the ships of the Continental Fleet and the striped banner of the Sons of Liberty. Though the pattern has changed, the bars of shining red and gleaming white have remained. The stripes are alternating, seven red and six white. The red standing for courage and the blood of those brave men and women who fought and died to establish and preserve our republic; the white representing the purity and high moral resolve on which our country was founded. Our flag has gone into every battle into which there have been United States citizens, from the American Revolution to the Civil War, WW I, WW II, the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam War and the Gulf Wars. It has also flown over some battles that were never declared, such as in Beirut where the Marine Barracks were destroyed by terrorists, or at the Alfred Murrah Building in Oklahoma City, and more 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. The traditional way is to cut the flag into pieces and burn it in a modest but blazing fire. As we perform this duty, please show your respect and reverence for our nation's most prominent symbol of freedom. We will now cut the 13 strips from the flag, and retire them one by one.

[Taps is played in the background, if available. The trailing guard with the shears is the designated cutter. Color guard cuts each stripe, one at a time, from the flag. The flag shall never be ripped under any circumstances. Each stripe is individually carried to the fire by the cutter and gently placed in the flames. They pause and return to the group.]

The 13 stripes stand for the original 13 colonies which are Massachusetts; Virginia; Pennsylvania; New York; Connecticut; Rhode Island; New Hampshire; Delaware;

Maryland; North Carolina; South Carolina; Georgia; and New Jersey. The blue field is indicative of God's heaven under which we exist. The stars, clustered together, are burned as a whole, unifying 50 States as one for God and Country. Let us retire the Blue Field of Stars.

[The field is carried by four of the color guard and gently laid into the flames. They pause, and then return to a position near the SPL.]

As the fire consumes the worn and tattered material in its purifying flame, let us remember the words of George Washington when our Star Spangled Banner was first flown by the Continental Army: "We take the stars from heaven and the red from our mother country. We separate the red by white stripes, thus showing that we have separated from her, and the white stripes shall go down to posterity representing liberty." Thus the Stars and Stripes became what they are today; born amid the strife of battle, the flag has become the standard around which free people have fought to preserve the greatest nation in the world. This concludes the retirement of this flag. Please be seated.

[Color guard retreats.]