

The Dignified Flag Disposal Ceremony -

"United States Federal Law provides that '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.' (36 U.S.C. 176(k))

While this ceremony is carried out by many local Posts of the American Legion and VFW and Boy Scout Troops, this ceremony can also be conducted by Camps of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. In many cases, such events are (or can be or possibly should be) conducted with a combination of members from all groups.

Please note: Be sure to contact your local fire department before conducting such a ceremony and be sure that all proper safety precautions are undertaken before beginning a ceremony.

The Camp assembles in regular or special meeting, out of doors. Camp Members are aligned in parallel rows about twenty feet apart, facing each other. Officers are at their stations as shown in the diagram (see below).

The ceremony begins:

COMMANDER:

"Attention, Camp!" "Parade, rest!"

COLOR BEARER:

"Commander, I wish to present a number of unserviceable flags of our country for inspection and disposal."

COMMANDER:

"Advance with your detail and present the flags for inspection and disposal."

The Color Bearer commands: "**Attention, Detail! Forward, March!**"

Guiding on the Color Bearer, the detail marches two abreast carrying the flags to be inspected down the center of the formation unit opposite the Junior Vice-Commander's station. Turning right, the Color Bearer commands: "**Detail, halt! Right Face!**" The detail halts two paces in front of the Junior Vice-Commander.

The Color Bearer steps one pace forward, salutes and says:

COLOR BEARER:

"Junior Vice-Commander, I present these unserviceable flags for your inspection"

JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER:

"Is the present conditions of these flags the result of their usual service as the emblem of our country?"

COLOR BEARER:

"These flags have become faded and worn over the graves of our departed Brothers and Comrade Fathers, and the soldier, sailor and airmen dead of our Nation's wars." (This reference is to the small headstone flags.)

JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER:

"Present these flags to the Senior Vice-Commander for his inspection."

The Color Bearer salutes, executes an about face, and commands the detail: "**Detail, About Face!**" Crossing behind the detail he takes his post at its left and commands: "**Forward, March**". The detail marches to within two paces of the Senior Vice-Commander where the Color Bearer commands: "**Detail, halt!**" The Color Bearer steps one pace forward, salutes and says:

COLOR BEARER:

"Senior Vice-Commander, I present these flags which have been inspected by the Junior Vice-Commander for your further inspection."

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER:

"Have these flags served any other purpose?"

COLOR BEARER:

"Some of these flags have been displayed in various public places."

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER:

"Present them to the Commander for final inspection and dignified disposal."

The Color Bearer salutes, executes an about face, and commands the detail: "**Detail, About Face!**" Crossing behind the detail he takes his post at its left and commands: "**Forward, March**". The detail marches to the center, turns left where the Color Bearer commands: "**Detail! Left Wheel! Halt!**" and halts within two paces of the Commander. The Color Bearer steps one pace forward, salutes and says:

COLOR BEARER:

"Commander, I the honor to present for final and proper disposal these flags our country."

COMMANDER:

"Have these flags been inspected by the Junior Vice-Commander and the Senior Vice-Commander?"

COLOR BEARER:

"Commander, they have."

COMMANDER:

"Junior Vice-Commander, what does your inspection show and what do you recommend?"

JUNIOR VICE-COMMANDER:

"Commander, since these flags have become unserviceable in a worthy cause, I recommend that they be honorably retired from further service."

COMMANDER:

"Senior Vice-Commander, what does your inspection show and what do you recommend?"

SENIOR VICE-COMMANDER:

"Commander, since these flags have become faded and worn in a tribute of service and love, I also recommend that they be fittingly destroyed."

COMMANDER:

"Brothers, we have presented here these flags of our country which have been inspected and condemned as unserviceable. They have reached their present state in a proper service of tribute, memory and love."

"A flag may be a flimsy bit of printed gauze, or a beautiful banner of finest silk. Its intrinsic value may be trifling or great; but its real value is beyond price, for it is a precious symbol of all that our dear country stands for; a free nation of free men and women, true to the faith of the past, and devoted to the ideals and practice of Justice, Freedom and Democracy. It represents all that our fathers, the Grand Army of the Republic and our nation's defenders in all conflicts lived for, sacrificed for and died for."

"Let these faded flags of our country be retired and destroyed with respectful and honorable rites and their places taken by bright new flags of the same size and kind, and let no grave of our soldier, sailor or airmen dead be unhonored and unmarked."

"Color Bearer, you will destroy these flags with solemn dignity by burning. Officer of the Guard, assemble the Color Guard, escort this detail bearing flags to the vessel of disposal. **Attention, Camp!**"

The Color Guard will form up immediately behind the Color Bearer's detail. The Officer of the Guard will command: "**Attention, Detail! About, Face! Forward, March!**" Preceded by the Color Guard; the detail marches down the center to the fire. The Officer of the Guard will command: "**Detail, Halt!**" The National Colors will cross over and take position on the right of the fire facing the Commander; the Camp Colors will take up position on the left. Once in place the Commander will command:

COMMANDER:

"The Chaplain will invoke the divine blessing." "Uncover!"

CHAPLAIN:

"Almighty God, High and Mighty Ruler of the Universe, be with us at this hour. Bless and consecrate these proceedings as may seem fitting in your sight."

“We now stand before you giving thanks for our Country and its Flag. We thank you for liberty, for which our country stands and which our Flag represents. To clean and purging flame we commit these Flags, worn in worthy service. As they yield their substance to the fire, may your Holy Light spread over us and bring our hearts renewed devotion to God and Country.” “Amen.”

OFFICER OF THE GUARD:

"Present, Arms!"

All render hand salute as the Camp Guard comes to "Present Arms." The Camp Standard is dipped. Members of the Flag Detail begin placing the flags in the burning vessel.

Please note: At this point in the ceremony, if no bugler or firing squad is available, the Commander may order a moment of silence.

OFFICER OF THE GUARD:

"Bugler, Sound Off!" Bugler sounds *"To the Color!"* All remain at "Present Arms."

OFFICER OF THE GUARD: |

At the conclusion of *"To the Colors"*, gives the command: **"Shoulder, Arms"**

COMMANDER:

"Thank you for your assistance in conducting this most solemn ritual. As the old soldier, sailor and airman one day go beyond our world to a better place, so too must the dear old flag under which they so nobly served be retired. And like the old soldier or sailor or airman, the flag too, shall be followed by that which is new, bright of stripe and shining of star amid a field of Union Blue. May the flag ever fly aloft o'er this great land to comfort the dispossessed, defend the weak and warn the tyrant. May it ever flutter in peace, shouting the message of liberty and freedom."

"The Color Guard shall resume its station! The Detail is dismissed."

The Officer of the Guard will command: **"Attention, Detail!" "Forward, March!"** The Color Guard advances down the center to within two paces of the Commander where the Officer of the Guard will command: **"Detail, Halt!" "Post!"** The Color Guard reposts the National Colors and Camp Standard. The Color Bearer will command: **"Attention, Detail!" "Break Ranks, March!"** The Color Bearer and his Detail resume their places among the Camp members. The Commander will then command:

COMMANDER:

"Camp, Dismissed!"

The positions of the Camp and Officers:

