

# **TROOP 956 FLAG RETIREMENT CEREMONY**

**Moderator**

**Good evening. Please rise for the presentation of the Colors.**

**Color Guard Advance!**

**Scout Salute!**

**A flag is an honored symbol of a nation's unity, its hopes, achievements, glory and high resolve. The flag of the United States of America is such a symbol---of freedoms bravely fought for and hardily won---of protection under the Constitution of the rights and privileges of all Americans---of promises for fulfillment of all our hopes and principles and ideals. It is also a symbol of the duty of all our citizens to serve in time of need, to speak out for what each considers right, and to help correct, under the law, that which is honestly believed, by them, to be wrong.**

**Color Guard Post the Colors!**

**Too!**

**Please be seated.**

**During the discovery and settlement of what is now the United States, the flags of various European nations were flown over the land as symbols of possession. Later, in the Colonial and Revolutionary War periods, flags representing famous persons, places and events were flown in the American Colonies.**

**Surprisingly, the origin of our national flag, the Stars and Stripes, is somewhat obscure. Americans at one time warmed to the popular story about the young seamstress, Betsy Ross, who supposedly sewed the first flag for George Washington. Although according to historical records she did indeed make flags, no evidence exists to indicate that she was involved in making or designing the first Stars and Stripes. Consequently, the validity of the traditional story is in doubt.**

**The basic flag of the United States is one of the world's oldest national flags. Only the flags of six other nations are older. It was officially adopted on June 4, 1777 when the Continental Congress resolved that "the Flag of the United States be 13 stripes alternate red and white, that the Union be 13 stars white in a blue field representing a new constellation."**

**The original 13 white stars in a field of blue and the original 13 stripes represented the 13 colonies that had declared their independence in 1776. Stars were uncommon in flags in that era, although the American example has since made them popular. The colors red, white and blue were derived from British influence as many English flags had red and white stripes.**

**After Vermont and Kentucky joined the Union in 1791 and 1792 respectively, 2 stars and 2 stripes were added to the flag. Such a 15-star and 15-stripe flag inspired Francis Scott Key to write "The Star Spangled Banner" on September 14, 1814 during the bombardment of Baltimore's Ft. McHenry during the final year of the War of 1812.**

**When the flag turned forty years old in 1816, there were 20 states in the Union. It became apparent that adding one stripe for each new state would destroy the shape of the flag. As a result, Congress, in 1818, restored the original design of 13 stripes and provided that each state was to be represented by one star.**

**Until 1912, no official pattern existed for the arrangement of the stars. Flags of the 19<sup>th</sup> century varied greatly in their star patterns: in the number of points on the stars: in the shades of red and blue: in the width-to-length ratio of the flag: and in other details. The design and colors were first standardized in 1912 by President William H. Taft (of Ohio). He made the first official provision for the arrangement of the stars. He ordered that there be six even rows of eight stars each (48 total).**

**Altogether, the Stars and Stripes have been through 27 versions, the most recent was introduced on July 4, 1960, when Hawaii was admitted to statehood and became our 50<sup>th</sup> state.**

**For over 200 years, the Stars and Stripes have been a banner of hope and freedom for generation after generation of Americans. Born amid the first flames of America's fight for freedom, it is the symbol of a country that has grown from 13 colonies to a united nation of 50 sovereign states. Planted firmly on the high pinnacle of American faith, its gently fluttering folds have proved inspiration to untold millions. Men and women have followed it into battle with unwavering courage. They look to it as a symbol of national unity and purpose. They have prayed that they and their fellow citizens might continue to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness which have been granted to every American as the heritage of a free people. So long as we love liberty more than life itself, so long as we treasure the priceless privileges bought with the blood of those that have paid the ultimate price, so long as the principles of truth, justice and charity for all remain deeply rooted in human hearts, this flag shall continue to be the enduring banner of the United States of America.**

**When a flag is worn beyond repair it must be retired in a dignified manner. The most accepted manner is to cut the blue field of stars from the red and white stripes, thereby rendering it no longer a flag. The resulting two pieces of cloth are then burned in one or two separate fires that are used for nothing else except the retirement ceremony. The pieces of cloth should be thoroughly burned so that nothing is left that is recognizable as a flag. The ashes of the fire are then scattered or buried.**

**It is important to note that this is NOT a flag burning but rather a flag retirement: a solemn ceremony to honor a worn symbol of the United States of America.**

**The Boy Scouts of America is one of a limited number of organizations authorized by Congress to retire unserviceable flags. Tonight we are going to honor these well-worn symbols of our country as we retire them in a special ceremony.**

**The Pledge of Allegiance is our nation's oath to our treasured national symbol. Before we recite the Pledge of Allegiance to these flags one last time let's reflect on what the "Pledge of Allegiance" truly means.**

**I --**

**I means Me, an individual, a committee of one.**

**Pledge--**

**To pledge means to dedicate all of my worldly goods; to give freely without expectation of reward, without complaint and without self-pity**

**Allegiance --**

**"Allegiance" in the context of this oath means love and devotion**

**To the Flag --**

**The Flag is our standard, our treasured national symbol.**

- It is a symbol of freedom and respect earned through the loyalty, devotion and sacrifice of patriots, who have given this symbol a dignity that shouts: "Freedom is everyone's responsibility"**

**Of the United --**

**United means that we have all come together and will always stay together.**

**States of America --**

**Each State is composed of individual communities that have united to form fifty independent states, each with pride, dignity and purpose. Though divided with imaginary boundaries, each State is United with all others through a common purpose: love of country.**

**And to the Republic --** A Republic is a form of government in which sovereign power to govern is invested in representatives chosen by the people. The right to govern the Republic is derived from the people.

**For which it Stands --** In pledging allegiance to the Flag, we are, in fact, are pledging allegiance to the Republic, for which the Flag is the most visible symbol.

**One Nation --** “One Nation” refers to the 50 individual states united by a common purpose: love of country.

**Under God --** “Under God” refers to our national belief in supreme being; a power higher than our own;

**Indivisible --** “Indivisible” means that the union of our 50 states is incapable of being divided.

**With Liberty --** “Liberty” is Freedom, the right to live one’s own life without threat or fear of retaliation.

**And Justice --** “Justice” is the principle of dealing fairly and equally with all citizens

**For All --** “For All” refers to all citizens and guests of our nation;

**Please stand, remove your hats and place your right hand over your heart. Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance. Scout Salute!**

**“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”.**

**“Too!” Please be seated.**

**WHILE THE SCOUT HONOR GUARDS DISMANTLE EACH FLAG THE MODERATOR READS THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE:**

**Our flag is the symbol of our country.**

**The blue of the star field stands for the valor with which our children, our parents, our grandparents and all our ancestors have fought and died.**

**The white stands for the purity in our hearts and the honor each citizen shows in their daily lives.**

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

**Our flag has been carried into every war fought by United States citizens; from the American Revolution to the War Between the States; to World War I and II; to the Korean Conflict; from Vietnam to Desert Storm; from Enduring Freedom to Iraqi Freedom.**

**It has flown over battles in Beirut, Lebanon where our Marine Corps barracks were destroyed, in New York City, Washington D.C. and in a Pennsylvania farm field where American values and resolve were attacked by terrorists determined to destroy our way of life.**

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

**We have old friends here who have fulfilled their duty to our country. They have become worn and tattered and we are here today to retire them with honor. We should not be sad about this retirement. We are not retiring them in anger, our friends will continue to serve in our thoughts as we reflect on this ceremony.**

**Please rise. Would all veterans in the audience please come forward and form a line behind the flags to be retired.**

**Scout Salute!**

**I now call upon the holders of the stripes to place them upon the fire.**

**Before placing a stripe on the fire, the Scout reads a note card containing the name of a relative or relatives (living or dead) who have served in the United States military to whom he is dedicating this piece of the flag. He places the note card on the fire with the flag remnant after reading it.**

**I now call upon the holders of the star fields to place them upon the fire.**

**Before placing a star field on the fire, the Scout reads a note card containing the name of a relative or relatives (living or dead) who have served in the United States military to whom he is dedicating this piece of the flag. He places the note card on the fire with the flag remnant after reading it.**

**As the last star field is placed upon the fire, TAPS is played from a distance**

**Too!**

**Veterans, we thank you for your service to our Country and for joining us in our final salute to these faithful servants. You may return to your seats.**

**Color Guard, prepare to retire the Colors!**

**Scout Salute!**

**Color Guard, retire the Colors.**

**Too!**

**This concludes our flag retirement ceremony. Please feel free to stay, enjoy the fire and to reflect upon the ceremony we have just witnessed. Please remember that this fire is now sanctified by the flags we have honored here tonight and by the sacrifices of our men and women in the military that these flags represent. Please refrain from adding any material to or removing any material from the fire. Please keep all conversation moderate and respectful both in tone and in content as a sign of respect for the sacrifices of those who have given their time and lives in the defense of our country.**

**Good night and may God bless.**