

# **TROOP 81 FLAG RETIREMENT** **CEREMONY**

**MC: Title 36, Section 176, of the United States Code states: "No disrespect should be shown to the flag of the United States of America;" Furthermore, Paragraph (K) of this same section says "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 BSA publication "Your Flag" states: "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." Please stand, and join me in retiring our nation's flag in the tradition of Troop 81. Color guard, advance to retire the colors. *When they are close, call "Halt"*.**

**MC: What is your purpose?**

**Color Guard: We present this Flag that has proudly flown over our nation. It is ready for retirement.**

**MC: Has this flag represented this nation with honor and pride, and become worn as the result of its usual service as the Emblem of our Country?**

**Color Guard: Yes.**

**MC: Has this flag become unserviceable while flying over our country in times of peace and war and as our nation's men and women died in defending its honor?**

**Color Guard: Yes.**

**MC: Please present the colors of the United States.**

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

**MC: Will any Veterans who wish to participate please come forward.**

**MC: Scout salute. Please join me as we honor this flag one last time by saying the Pledge of Allegiance. I pledge allegiance to the flag.... Two.**

**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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 this 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 when called upon. You send resources and offer technology to those less fortunate 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 and daughters gather beneath me to offer their lives at home and abroad to preserve the Liberty I represent. That's why I love the American people and why I have flown so proudly. I have led your sons and daughters into battle from Valley Forge to Vietnam. I have been there through the Civil War, Two**

**World Wars, at Gettysburg, Korea, the Gulf War, all of them. I was there with George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Teddy Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, and I am here with you now. 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 and daughters 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.**

**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 your salute. You know that freedom is not free.**

**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. My blue field is never cut as it represents the union of the 50 states, a union that can never be broken.**

***NOTE: DO NOT LAY THE FIELD ON THE FIRE AT THIS TIME!!!***

***MC pauses. Scout salute. Color Guard leader uses scissors to remove blue field.***

**MC: Lay my 13 stripes 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 places the stripes in the fire flat --- not folded.***

**MC: My first state admitted to our Union was Delaware, then Pennsylvania followed by New Jersey, Georgia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Virginia, New York, North Carolina, and Rhode Island.**

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

*Color Guard takes blue field, bring it to their lips, then lays it on the top of the fire. Play Taps. Pause silently until blue field has been consumed. Two.*

**As you cut me apart and watched 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.**

**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.**

*Subsequent flags are brought forward one at a time by at least two scouts in the manner they would to the flagpole. The scouts wait, holding the flag to their chest.*

**MC: Forward march. When they get close to the fire call "Halt".**

**MC: Present the colors.**

*Scouts unfurl the flag behind the campfire.*

**MC: Scout salute. Retire the colors.**

*Scouts place the flag in the fire as flat as possible, stripes first, field last. When flag is completely burned MC calls “Two”.*

*Sing America the Beautiful or My Country ‘Tis of Thee after all flags have been retired.*