

**Flag Retirement Ceremony**

Narrator: Whenever a United States flag becomes torn or tattered or faded, it is appropriate to retire it and replace it with a new crisp, bright flag. We have such a flag tonight and we ask you to join us in this flag retirement ceremony. Flag bearers; please present the flag to be retired. (Flag bearers enter holding flag by corners and take position. Field of blue should be to audience's LEFT. At same time, choir members enter and take position).

Narrator: This is the flag of the United States of America. It is ready for retirement. The flag itself is merely cloth and thread, but it symbolizes our great nation. It is flown over buildings, homes, churches, schools, and other locations with pride. It has a place of honor in our hearts. These stars and stripes stand for much more than the mere cloth of which it is made. Listen now as we hear what this flag stands for.

Choir: Begins humming "America, The Beautiful" (or other patriotic song) Humming continues under all readers. After music is established, 1<sup>st</sup> reader begins.

Reader 1: I was born on the fourth of July 1776, and the Declaration of Independence is my birth certificate. The bloodlines of the world run in my veins because I offered freedom to the oppressed. I am the United States of America!

Pause 3 - 5 seconds

Reader 2: I am 250 million living souls and the ghosts of millions who have lived and fought and died for me.

Pause 3 - 5 seconds

Reader 3: I am Nathan Hales and Paul Revere. I stood at Lexington and fired the shot heard around the world. I am Washington, Jefferson, and Patrick Henry. I am John Paul Jones, the Green Mountain Boys, and Davy Crockett. I am Lee, Grant, and Abe Lincoln.

Pause 3 - 5 seconds

Reader 4: I remember the Alamo, the Maine, and Pearl Harbor. When freedom was threatened, I answered the call and stayed until it was over, over there. I left my heroic dead in Flanders Fields, the Rock of Corregidor, on the bleak slopes of Korea, in the steaming jungles of Vietnam, and the desert sands of Kuwait.

Pause 3 - 5 seconds

Reader 5: I am the Brooklyn Bridge, the wheat lands of Kansas, and the granite hills of Vermont. I am the coalfields of the Virginias and Pennsylvania, the fertile lands of the West, the Golden Gate, and the Grand Canyon. I am Independence Hall, the Monitor, the Merrimac, and the Challenger.

Pause 3 - 5 seconds

Reader 6: I am big. I sprawl from the Atlantic to the Pacific – three million square miles of land throbbing with industry, business, and agriculture. I am more than two million farms. I am forest, field, mountains, and desert. I am quiet villages and cities that never sleep.

Pause 3 – 5 seconds

Reader 7: You can look at me and see Ben Franklin walking down the streets of Philadelphia with his loaf of bread under his arm. You can see Betsy Ross with her needle. You can see the lights of Christmas and hear the strains of “Auld Lang Syne” as the calendar turns.

Pause 3 – 5 seconds

Reader 8: I am Babe Ruth and the World Series. I am Vince Lombardi, Mark Spitz, and Eric Hyden. I am Michael Jordan and the NBA Championships. I am Little League Baseball and Youth Soccer. I am Jackie Joiner Kersey, who had the courage and determination to persevere.

Pause 3 – 5 seconds

Reader 9: I am 170,000 schools and colleges and more than 300,00 churches where my people worship God as they choose. I am a ballot dropped into a box, the roar of the crowd in a stadium, the voice of a choir in a Cathedral. I am an editorial in a newspaper and a letter to Congress.

Pause 3 – 5 seconds

Reader 10: I am John Glenn and Neil Armstrong and their fellow astronauts who whirled through space. I am Eli Whitney and Stephen Foster, Tom Edison, and Albert Einstein. I am Horace Greeley, Will Rogers, and the Wright Brothers. I am George Washington Carver, Jonas Salk, and Martin Luther King, Jr. I am Longfellow, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Walt Whitman, and Thomas Paine.

Pause 3 – 5 seconds

Reader 11: Yes, I am the United States of America and these are the things that I am. I was conceived in freedom and, God willing, in freedom shall I spend the rest of my days. May I always possess the integrity, the courage, and the strength to keep myself unshackled, to remain a Citadel of Freedom and a beacon of hope to the World.

Narrator: (Fills in as necessary to allow choir to complete humming the last verse of song. Time words to end as song does.) This flag, this symbol of our Nation, had flown faithfully for several years. It has served to remind us of our heritage – and our future. Its faded and tattered cloth has seen many things. But it is time to retire this flag.

Audience, please stand

Pause

Scout Salute!

Flag Bearers: (Step forward to campfire pit and slowly lower flag, stripe end first, into fire. As fire consumes flag, bearers step back and salute).