

## **FLAG RETIRING CEREMONY**

### **I AM YOUR FLAG**

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 4TH 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. I AM STRONG AND 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 AND YET STAND READY TO FIGHT OPPRESSION. YOU SEND RESOURCES AND OFFER TECHNOLOGY TO LESS FORTUNATE COUNTRIES SO THEY MAY STRIVE TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT. YOU FEED STARVING CHILDREN. YOUR SONS AND DAUGHTERS GATHER BENEATH ME TO OFFER THEIR LIVES ON THE BATTLEFIELDS TO PRESERVE THE LIBERTY I REPRESENT. THAT'S WHY I LOVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. THAT'S WHY I HAVE FLOWN SO PROUDLY.

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 AND I RIPPLE WITH PLEASURE WHEN I SEE IT.

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. TEAR EACH OF MY 13 STRIPES AND LAY THEM 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 YOU ENJOY.

\*\*\*\*PUT IN RED AND WHITE STRIPES (ONE BY ONE) AS YOU SAY THE FOLLOWING:\*\*\*\*

MY FIRST STATE WAS DELAWARE, NEXT PENNSYLVANIA, THEN NEW JERSEY, GEORGIA, CONNECTICUT, MASSACHUSETTS, MARYLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, VIRGINIA, NEW YORK, NORTH CAROLINA AND FINALLY RHODE ISLAND.

AS YOU CUT AND RIP ME APART AND WATCH ME BURN, DO NOT BE SAD OR FEEL SORRY FOR ME. I HAVE HAD THE GRAND 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.

\*\*\*\*PUT IN BLUE WITH STARS AS YOU SAY THE FOLLOWING:\*\*\*\*

WHEN MY STRIPES ARE GONE, SALUTE THE BLUE FIELD AND LAY IT ACROSS THE FIRE. THEN STAND SILENTLY AS YOU WATCH EACH STAR TWINKLE AND FADE INTO ASHES.

NOW I AM JUST A MEMORY, BUT IF THERE WAS 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 SHOWED ME HERE TODAY.