

SECTION 3

Manual of Ceremonies

Revised in accordance with the action of the Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Committee and the National Executive Committee—1985

Adopted by The American Legion in 1921

Foreword

The Manual of Ceremonies was adopted at the Third Annual Convention, Kansas City, Missouri, October 31 to November 2, 1921. It was amended at the Fifth Annual Convention, San Francisco, California, October 15 to 19, 1923; at the Seventh Annual Convention, Omaha, Nebraska, October 5 to 9, 1925; at the Ninth Annual Convention, Paris, France, September 19 to 22, 1927; at the Thirteenth Annual Convention, Detroit, Michigan, September 21 to 24, 1931; at the Fifteenth Annual Convention, Chicago, Illinois, October 2 to 5, 1933; at the Sixteenth Annual Convention, Miami, Florida, October 22 to 25, 1934; at the Nineteenth Annual Convention, New York City, September 20 to 23, 1937; at the Twenty-First Annual Convention, Chicago, Illinois, September 25 to 28, 1939; at the National Executive Committee Meeting of November 19 and 20, 1942, by authority of the 1942 Kansas City National Convention; at the Twenty-Fifth Annual Convention, Omaha, Nebraska, September 21 to 23, 1943; at the Twenty-Sixth Annual Convention, Chicago, Illinois, September 18 to 20, 1944; by the National Executive Committee Meeting, June 5 to 7, 1946; at the Twenty-Ninth Annual Convention, New York, New York, August 28 to 31, 1947; by the National Executive Committee Meeting, May 3 to 5, 1948; by the National Executive Committee, May 3 to 5, 1950; by the National Executive Committee, May 2 to 4, 1951; by the National Executive Committee, May 2 to 4, 1954; by the National Executive Committee, May 4 to 6, 1955; by the National Executive Committee, May 2 to 4, 1956; by the National Executive Committee, May 1-3, 1957; by the National Executive Committee, April 29 to May 1, 1959; by the National Executive Committee, May 4-5, 1960; by the National Executive Committee, May 3-4, 1961; by the National Executive Committee, May 2-3, 1962; by the National Executive Committee, May 1-2, 1963; by the National Executive Committee, April 30-May 1, 1964; by the National Executive Committee, May 5-6, 1965; by the National Executive Committee, October 12-13, 1966; by the National Executive Committee, May 3-4, 1967; by the National Executive Committee, May 6-7, 1970; by the National Executive Committee, October 20-21, 1971; by the National Executive Committee, May 1-2, 1974; by the National Executive Committee, October 9-10, 1974; by the National Executive Committee, April 30-May 1, 1975; by the National Executive Committee, May 4-5, 1977; by the National Executive Committee, October 5-6, 1977; by the National Executive Committee, May 4-5, 1994; and by the National Executive Committee, May 2-4, 1995.

Message from the National Adjutant

Lapel tacks and the initiation lamp as required by the initiation ceremony are available through National Emblem Sales. All such orders should be forwarded direct to the Emblem Sales, National Headquarters, The American Legion, P.O. Box 1055, Indianapolis, IN 46206.

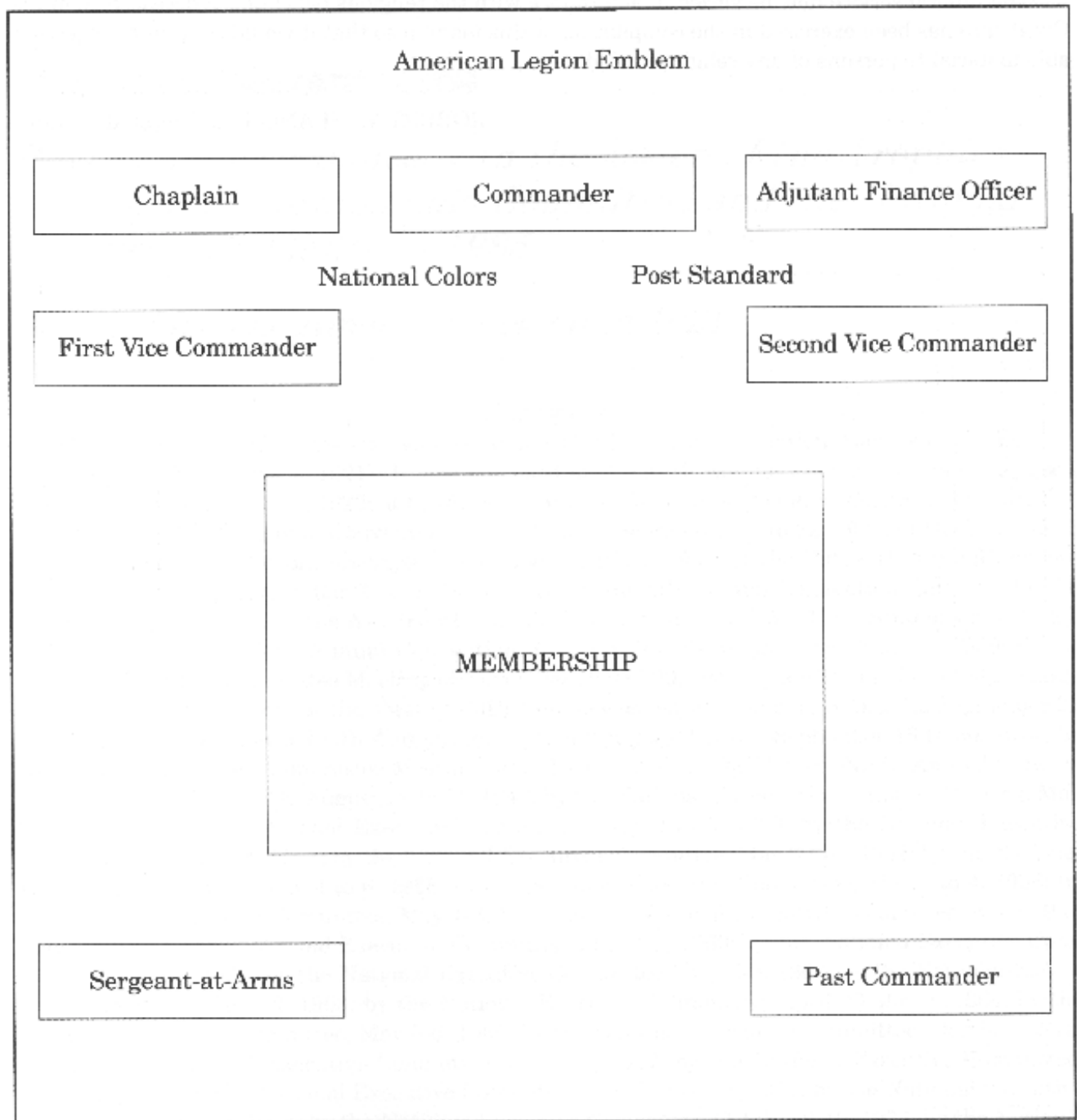
The Poppy is the official flower, and where flowers are required, should be used.

The funeral service may be varied in accordance with the religious belief of the deceased comrade. Great care has been exercised in the compilation of this manual so it would contain no objectionable material to persons of any religious creed.

Much of the information provided in the Manual of Ceremonies is the consequence of long-time tradition and/or usage. For example, under the sub-topic on “American Legion Military Funeral Escorts,” it is suggested that a full contingent for an American Legion Funeral requires twenty-one Legionnaires in uniform. The actual number of persons used will need to be determined by the amount of volunteer resources that can be called upon in one’s community. A full contingent demonstrates/shows more flourish, but sometimes the number of available Legionnaires must be adjusted according to the capacity of service(s) the Post can realistically provide to its members and veterans in general.

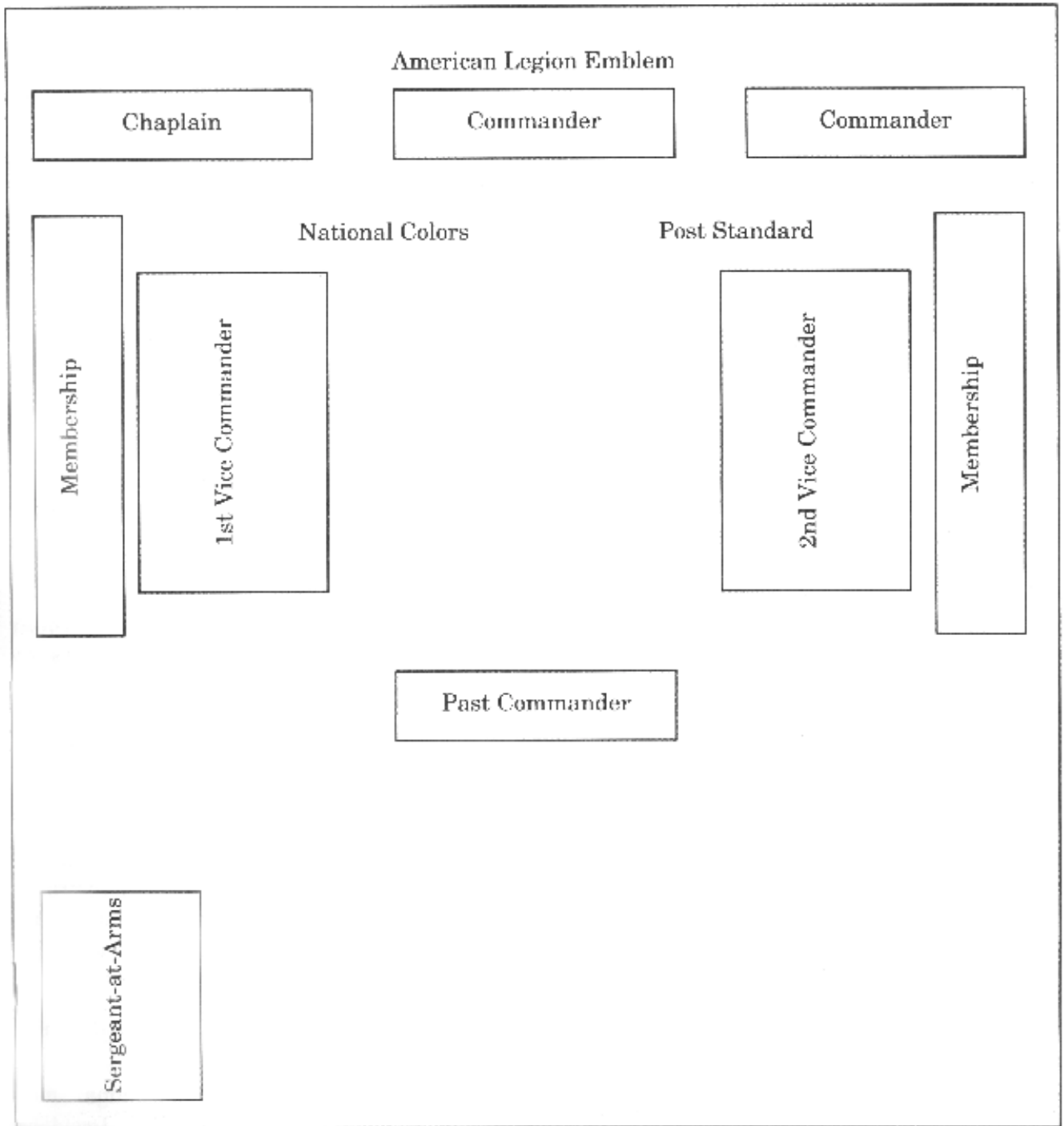
ROBERT W. SPANOGLE, National Adjutant

Plan of Post Meeting Room



This arrangement of a post meeting room is especially functional for the conduct of regular post meetings. This plan permits the post a great amount of flexibility in arrangement to meet the post's particular needs and/or adapt to any physical limitations.

Plan of Post Meeting Room For Special Ceremonies



For the ceremony of initiation or installation of officers, it is suggested that the post meeting room be arranged as shown in the above sketch.

The Emblem should be in colors and about twenty inches in diameter. If made of glass, it should be illuminated from within; or by a light set above it, if made of wood, cardboard, or metal. Emblems may be purchased through National Headquarters, Emblem Sales, Indianapolis, IN. The Emblems should be illuminated at all times during all meetings.

Anything of a light or humorous nature added by the post to this initiation should be kept separate and apart, and the candidates should be informed that it is not a part of the initiation proper.

Other officers or members than those designated may be assigned to parts in the initiation ceremony. It is recommended each Post have a degree team, trained and uniformed for degree work.

General Instructions

1. The ceremonial services of The American Legion must be conducted with the solemnity befitting the dignity of this organization.

2. No one shall be admitted during opening, initiation, or closing ceremonies of an American Legion meeting.

3. Comrades shall be careful never to pass between the Flags and the station of the Commander.

4. A member entering the hall after the meeting has begun shall advance to the center of the room, salute the Colors and be seated.

5. Any member desiring to be excused from the hall while the meeting is in progress, except during a prayer, or the obligation, or during the period of silence, shall advance to the center of the room, salute the Colors, and then leave.

6. All officers are instructed to memorize their parts between the dates of their election and installation. It shall be the duty of each officer to memorize that portion of the Ritual assigned to that particular office and the printed Ritual should not be read during any ceremony.

7. The National Colors and Post Flag, when in position, should be in position at either side and just in advance of the Commander's station; the National Colors on the right of the Commander, the Post Colors on the left when facing the audience, even though the Commander is on a platform and the Flags are posted on the ground level.

8. Each officer shall be equipped with the official overseas cap and with proper official badge of the respective office. Such badges may be purchased in sets by the post or singly by the individual officer through Emblem Sales, National Headquarters.

9. Legionnaires standing in silent tribute in memory of departed comrades during meetings or ceremonies will face the Flag of our country. Legionnaires are advised of the following action by the National Executive Committee (Resolution No. 33): 'RESOLVED' by the National Executive Committee of The American Legion in regular meeting assembled in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 5-6, 1971, "That The American Legion shall, at functions within Legion buildings and at all levels, cease all activities whatsoever for a period of sixty seconds as a tribute to our comrades who have passed on and in honor of those now serving in the Armed Forces and that this minute of silence shall be preceded by an appropriate announcement and message, if desired."

10. In addressing an officer of The American Legion, preface the title with the word "Comrade."

11. This Manual of Ceremonies is designed with the idea of flexibility and may be adapted to conform to requirements covering all divisions of The American Legion. Therefore, whenever necessary, the words "Post," "County," "District," "Division," "Department," or "National" may be inserted to fit a specific occasion.

Wearing The American Legion Cap, Uniform and Regalia

1. The Legion cap, uniform or regalia should be worn by its members only when in attendance at official Legion meetings or ceremonies or as official guests at patriotic or other civil functions or by individuals when officially representing The American Legion on public occasions. For all Ceremonies, the uniforms adopted by a Department are recommended. However, an official American Legion cap, dark blue or black civilian coat, white or dark trousers, white shirt, black four-in-hand tie, black shoes and socks, make a very attractive uniform.

A Legionnaire is considered to be in uniform if wearing an official American Legion cap. Therefore, it is not proper to wear an American Legion cap while eating a meal at an official Legion or civic luncheon or dinner.

2. The cap should be worn in a place of worship only by the Guard of Honor, Color Guard and Commander of same while in marching order or standing guard. When returned to and seated in pews, the cap should be removed.

3. Legion posts marching in formation into a place of worship should uncover, at the door, hold the cap with the right hand over the heart (*) until the arrival in the pews and commanded to take seats, remaining uncovered during the entire service. At the close of the service, upon command, the post shall arise, the members holding the cap with the right hand over the heart (*) will march out of the place of worship and recover after marching through the door.

Note: The hat should be held over the heart as one approaches the casket, and is not at any time worn in a place of worship except by the Guard of Honor, Color Guard or Commander of same while in marching order or standing guard.

4. Legionnaires not in formation will uncover upon entering the place of worship and remain uncovered during the entire service and will re-cover after leaving the place of worship.

5. At the graveside the cap should be held in the right hand over the heart (*) during the entire service. In cold and inclement weather, the cap should not be doffed.

6. In Legion meetings the cap should be worn except during moments of the “Pledge of Allegiance,” prayer, and when standing in silent reverence in memory of departed comrades, when the cap should be held with the right hand over the heart (*). (*See “Saluting” in index)

7. A Legionnaire wearing the cap should behave in proper accordance as to salutes, etc., the same as if the member was wearing the military uniform. If not wearing the Legion cap, the ordinary rules of etiquette for civilian dress should be observed.

8. Female members of The American Legion should wear their caps in the manner prescribed for female personnel of the armed services.

9. Legionnaires wishing to attach decorations and/or other official insignia to their caps are advised of the following excerpts of a National Executive Committee Resolution on this subject:

Official American Legion Caps

The following regulations have been promulgated by National Emblem Sales to standardize the use of lettering, insignia, etc., on the official American Legion cap, as based on Resolution No. 58, adopted by the National Executive Committee, April 30-May 1, 1964.

POST CAPS (members and officers)—All blue, piped in gold and lettered in gold with optional basic lettering (Style 1 or Style 2), additional lettering and restrictions as indicated below:

(a) **Style 1**—Post numerals at right front between piping and front crease. Department name in full on left side beneath emblem. Lettering on emblem side to be in straight line. Example: “20” (at right front)—“Illinois” (on left side beneath emblem).

(b) **Style 2**—Post numerals at right front between piping and front crease. Town name in full and Department abbreviated on left side beneath emblem. Lettering on emblem side to be in straight line. Example: “20” (at right front)—“Minneapolis, Minn.” (on left side beneath emblem).

(c) **Style 2**—Shall not be used when the Post town is not physically located within the recognized geographic and/or postal boundaries of the Department of which the Post is a member. Example: Stuttgart, Germany, a part of the Department of France. Such a Post may place its location and country on the right side of the cap, if desired. Example: “8” (at right front)—“France” (on left side beneath emblem)—if desired, “Munich, Germany” (on right side).

(d) Where any additional lettering is desired, this must be on the right side of cap. This lettering is restricted to name of Post, such as “J.S. Jones,” or officer title, such as “Commander” or “Past Adjutant.” Where present or past officer cap insignia or badges are used in place of embroidered titles, these must be on right side of cap.

(e) Consecutive membership insignia, membership stars, and/or decorations (authorized American Legion or military services) must be attached to the right side of cap. Fraternal or civil organization insignia cannot be used on American Legion caps.

(f) Names or nicknames of individual members cannot be used on caps.

(g) An individual member placing an order direct with National Emblem Sales must provide the member I.D. number.

Restrictions

(a) The left side (emblem side) of any American Legion cap cannot contain other than the official American Legion emblem, and lettering as set forth previously in this resolution for Post, County, District, Department or National Caps.

(b) No member of any organization, such as drum and bugle corps, bands, and so forth, sponsored by any Post or intermediate organizations between the Department and Post levels, or by any Department, shall wear the overseas caps having the color, or combination of colors, authorized for the sale use of County, District, Department or National officers, when the members of uniformed groups are not appearing in the full uniform of their group;...”

Official Badges

Campaign ribbons, medals, and official American Legion Badges shall be worn three inches below the point of the shoulder and above the left breast pocket, centered; provided, however, that medals and ribbons are not to be worn together.

Badges of other fraternal organizations are not to be worn on uniforms except when attending functions of such organizations. No other badges or insignia are to be worn.

Commander: The American Legion Emblem suspended by The American Legion ribbon from a bar on which there shall be the word “Commander.”

Past Commander: The American Legion Emblem suspended by The American Legion ribbon from a bar on which there shall be the words “Past Commander.”

First and Second Vice-Commanders: The American Legion Emblem suspended from a bar on which there shall be the words “Vice-Commander.”

Chaplain: The American Legion Emblem suspended by The American Legion ribbon from a bar on which there shall be the word “Chaplain.”

Adjutant: The American Legion Emblem suspended by The American Legion ribbon from a bar on which there shall be the word “Adjutant.”

Finance Officer: The American Legion Emblem suspended by The American Legion ribbon from a bar on which there shall be the words “Finance Officer.”

Sergeant-At-Arms: The American Legion Emblem suspended by The American Legion ribbon from a bar on which there shall be the words “Sergeant-At-Arms.”

Judge Advocate: The American Legion Emblem suspended by The American Legion ribbon from a bar on which there shall be the words “Judge Advocate.”

Service Officer: The American Legion Emblem suspended by The American Legion ribbon from a bar on which there shall be the words “Service Officer.”

Treasurer or Finance Officer: The American Legion Emblem suspended by The American Legion ribbon from a bar on which there shall be the word “Treasurer.”

Athletic Officer: The American Legion Emblem suspended by The American Legion ribbon from a bar on which there shall be the words “Athletic Officer.”

Historian: The American Legion Emblem suspended by The American Legion ribbon from a bar on which there shall be the word “Historian.”

Executive Committee: The American Legion Emblem suspended by The American Legion ribbon from a bar on which there shall be the words “Executive Committee.”

The metal ornaments for the ribbons should be made with pin back so they can be passed from officer to officer at the time of the new installation.

Each member of each individual Post should be encouraged to possess the Official American Legion Overseas Cap with The American Legion Emblem, the Department, and the number of the Post on same.

How to Organize a Ritual Team

First Step:

The Post Commander appoints a Captain to organize a team. It will be the Captain’s duty to recruit, train and assume complete responsibility for organizing and training of the team. Discretion should be used in selecting team members. They should make the Manual of Ceremonies their American Legion bible.

Second Step:

Permanent parts should be assigned and members instructed to memorize these parts. Six members will be required for the initiation team. In calling a try-out or audition meeting, the best qualified should be selected at that time. Each candidate for the team should read part of the Manual to denote clarity of voice, enunciation, expression and meaning given to the text. Additional candidates should be assigned roles as substitutes or stand-ins for the regular members.

Third Step:

Training the team. Many practice sessions are necessary. Teams should practice entire ceremony at each meeting, including marching into the hall, military movements on the floor, presentation and introduction of the team, and the posting of members to their respective stations. Proper handling of candidates for initiation should also be practiced.

Fourth Step:

Presenting the ceremony. The team’s first appearance should be on home grounds. Actual initiation of new members will tend to give the new team confidence to present their work in other Posts throughout the area. Note well:—Much of the team’s success depends upon selection of competent Captain and Sergeant-at-Arms. The team will look to these officers for leadership. The team Captain and members should be of commanding appearance, plus personality, and able to impress upon candidates and audience the importance and seriousness of the ceremony.

Every American Legion Post should have a good ritual team present at “Initiation Night” program at least once yearly.

Color Guard Procedure

Advancing Colors:

Color Guard consisting of minimum number of four is formed at rear of meeting room in a rank or file, whichever may suit the situation best, formation facing Commander’s station.

In forming a rank, the National Color is to the right of the post Color and the two Guards are on the respective flanks. In forming a file, the National Color is second in file, preceded by Rifle Guard and followed respectively by Post Color and Rifle Guard.

To properly form the Guard, the following sequence of Commands may be used: “Fall In” — “Dress Right Dress” — “Ready Front” — “Right or Left Shoulder Arms” — (Color bearers should assume the position of carry or any other suitable position at this command) “Forward March.” The above mentioned commands put the Guard in a forward motion.

Upon arriving at a position from 2 to 12 feet (depending on available space) in front of the Commander’s station, the following commands should be used: “Guard Halt—Post Colors” (The

National Color bearer steps off in the direction of the Flag receptacle to the right of the Commander's station, halting and facing front upon arriving in front of same). The Post Color bearer follows the same procedure to the Flag receptacle to the left of the Commander's station. During this procedure it is suggested the Rifle Guards assume the position of Port Arms, which is a position of readiness. The next command should be "Place Colors." Colors may be placed by stepping forward with one foot and placing Colors in receptacles, making sure the top ornament on each respective color is facing the assemblage. The Color bearers then return to the position of attention. The next command should then be "Present Arms." Rifle Guards should render the prescribed salute with their pieces and Color bearers should render a right-hand salute. (Post Color bearer should either face the National Color or turn head toward the American Flag while executing the salute).

The next command sequence should be "Right Shoulder Arms" (Color bearers recovering from hand salute on same), "Assemble March" (Color bearers may face the center and step off respectively in the direction from which they came and assume their positions in the formation facing the rear of the meeting room. Rifle Guards may execute an about-face on command and be prepared to move out on next command with Guard intact.

The next command should be "Forward March" and upon arriving at starting point, Guard should be halted with command of "Guard Halt" and then the Guard may be given "Fall Out."

Retiring Colors:

Retrieving the Colors may be executed in nearly the same manner except substituting the command of "Retrieve Colors" for "Post Colors," and giving the command "Present Arms" upon the Color bearers' arrival in front of their respective colors (Color bearers will salute at this time).

The next sequence of commands are "Right Shoulder Arms" (Color bearers will assume position of attention) "Take Colors" (Color bearers putting one foot forward to take Colors and assuming position of attention, after securing same). The next commands should be "Assemble, March" (Color bearers executing same marching as in returning from Posting). Rifle Guards will execute about-face after Colors have arrived in respective positions. The Guard may be retired in the same manner as it was in Posting, with the exception of the last command, which should be "Dismissed." The above commands may be used in either Rank or File formation.

A lot of Color and Ceremony may be added to the Posting and Retiring of the Colors if a Bugler is used in the following places: In posting, "To The Colors," may be sounded immediately after the command of "Present Arms" by the Color Guard Commander. In retrieving, "Retreat," may be sounded immediately after command of "Present Arms."

REGULAR MEETING

Opening

American Legion meetings shall be opened in the following manner:

All officers should be in uniform, each wearing the official American Legion cap and the official badge of office.

The Commander shall announce the meeting is about to open. Officers shall take their stations.

The Commander shall seat those present with one rap of the gavel and the doors of the meeting hall shall be closed by the Sergeant-at-Arms.

The Commander shall then give three raps of the gavel and all who are present shall stand at attention.

Commander: "The Color Bearers will advance the Colors."

(A suggested procedure for Color Guard is found in index)

As the Color Bearers start to advance, the Commander shall give the command:

Commander: “Hand salute.”

*If a trumpeter is available, sound “To the Colors;” immediately after the Colors have been posted, and at its conclusion, the **Commander** shall give the command:*

“Two.”

If no trumpeter is present, the command “Two” is to be given immediately after the Colors have been posted.

The Commander shall call upon the Chaplain to give the opening prayer.

Commander: “The Chaplain will offer prayer.”

Commander: “All members/guests in attendance shall remain standing with their cap removed and placed over the heart from the Opening Prayer, through the Pledge of Allegiance, through the end of the POW/MIA ceremony.”

In place of the following prayer, the Chaplain may deliver one of the same length and general tenor.

Chaplain: “Almighty God, Father of all mankind and Judge over nations, we pray Thee to guide our work in this meeting and in all our days. Send Thy peace to our nation and to all nations. Hasten the fulfillment of Thy promise of peace that shall have no end.

“We pray for those who serve the people and guard the public welfare that by Thy blessing they may be enabled to discharge their duties honestly and well. We pray for our comrades that by Thy help they may observe the strictest Justice, keep alight the fires of Freedom, strive earnestly for the spirit of Democracy; and preserve untarnished our loyalty to our Country and to Thee. Finally, O God of mercy, we ask Thy blessing and comfort for those comrades who are suffering mental and physical disability. Cheer them and bring them the blessings of health and happiness. Amen.”

The Commander (or appropriate official) will lead the Pledge of Allegiance (Legionnaires will remove their caps) and may direct the singing of the Star Spangled Banner.

“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.”

POW/MIA Empty Chair

This ceremony is a suggested outline that can be followed when an American Legion organization wants to call attention to Americans still unaccounted for from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, and other conflicts.

Resolution 288, adopted at the 67th National Convention, encourages all American Legion organizations “to implement the Empty Chair Program at all meetings. As a continual physical symbol of the POW/MIAs and the cause for which we stand, namely their return or full accounting.”

Members should remove their caps during this ceremony.

Commander: “Resolution 288, adopted at the 67th National Convention, calls for designating a POW/MIA Empty Chair at all official meetings of The American Legion as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and other conflicts. Accordingly, at this time the Vice Commanders will place the POW/MIA flag on the Empty Chair—a reminder for all of us to spare no effort to secure the release of any American prisoners from captivity, the repatriation of the remains of those who died bravely in defense of liberty, and a full accounting of those missing. Let us rededicate ourselves for this vital endeavor!”

Commander: “Place the POW/MIA flag on the Empty Chair.”

(The First and Second Vice Commanders, or other designated individuals, approach the Empty Chair carrying a folded POW/MIA flag. Upon reaching the Empty Chair, they reverently unfold the flag and drape it over the Empty Chair with the crest facing the membership.)

(After the meeting is concluded, the POW/MIA flag should be refolded and stored for future use.)

POW/MIA Remembrance Service

(The following is a “suggested” service to be used at American Legion meetings, banquets, luncheons, or memorial gatherings in conjunction with the POW/MIA flag draped over an empty chair...this service can be adopted as is, or modified to whatever is appropriate for your own preferred use.) Members should remove their caps during this service.

“Those who have served, and those currently serving in the uniformed services of the United States, are ever mindful that the sweetness of enduring peace has always been tainted by the bitterness of personal sacrifice. We are compelled to never forget that while we enjoy our daily pleasures, there are others who have endured and may still be enduring the agonies of pain, deprivation and imprisonment.

“Before we begin our activities, we pause to recognize our POWs and MIAs.

“We call your attention to this small table which occupies a place of dignity and honor. It is set for one, symbolizing the fact that members of our armed forces are missing from our ranks. They are referred to as POWs and MIAs.

“We call them comrades. They are unable to be with their loved ones and families, so we join together to pay humble tribute to them, and to bear witness to their continued absence.

“The table is small, symbolizing the frailty of one prisoner, alone against his or her suppressors.

“The tablecloth is white, symbolic of the purity of their intentions to respond to their Country’s call to arms.

“The single rose in the vase signifies the blood they may have shed in sacrifice to ensure the freedom of our beloved United States of America. This rose also reminds us of the family and friends of our missing comrades who keep faith, while awaiting their return.

“The red ribbon on the vase represents the red ribbons worn on the lapels of the thousands who demand, with unyielding determination, a proper account of our comrades who are not among us.

“A slice of lemon on the plate reminds us of their bitter fate.

“The salt sprinkled on the plate reminds us of the countless fallen tears of families as they wait.

“The glass is inverted, they cannot toast with us at this time.

“The chair is empty. They are NOT here.

“The candle is reminiscent of the light of hope, which lives in our hearts to illuminate their way home, away from their captors, to open arms of a grateful nation.

“The American flag reminds us that many of them may never return—and have paid the supreme sacrifice to insure our freedom.

“Let us pray to the Supreme Commander that all of our comrades will soon be back within our ranks.

“Let us remember—and never forget their sacrifice.

“May God forever watch over them and protect them and their families.”

Regular Meeting Opening Resumes After POW/MIA Service Concludes

Commander: “Everyone will recover.”

The Commander and membership shall recite the preamble of the Constitution of The American Legion slowly and in unison, as follows:

“For God and Country,
We associate ourselves together
For the following purposes:
To uphold and defend
The Constitution of the United States of America;
To maintain law and order;
To foster and perpetuate
A one hundred percent Americanism;
To preserve the memories and incidents
Of our associations in the Great Wars;
To inculcate a sense of individual obligation
To the community, state and nation;
To combat the autocracy
Of both the classes and the masses;
To make right the master of might;
To promote peace and good will on earth;
To safeguard and transmit to posterity
The principles of Justice, Freedom and Democracy;
To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship
By our devotion to mutual helpfulness.”

One rap of the gavel by the Commander will seat the members.

The Commander shall then say: “I now declare Post No.
..... Department of, regularly convened.”

The order of business for Post meetings shall be:

- a. Roll Call to determine if quorum is present.
- b. Reading of minutes of previous meeting.
- c. Introduction of guests and prospective and new members.
- d. Committee reports.
- e. Balloting on applications.
- f. Sick call, relief and employment.
- g. Post Service Officer’s report.
- h. Unfinished business.
- i. Initiation of candidates.
- j. New business (and correspondence).
- k. Memorial to a departed post member (See “Memorials” in index).
- l. The good of The American Legion.

(The membership shall be permitted to make any suggestions of any kind, character or description, save of religion or partisan politics.)

Closing Ceremony

American Legion meetings shall be closed in the following manner:

Commander: “Is there any further business to come before the meeting? If not, the Chaplain will lead us in memorial service.”

The Commander shall give three raps of the gavel, and the membership shall arise, uncover, and stand in silence.

Chaplain: “Our Heavenly Father, we deem this a fitting time to pay our respects to our departed comrades. As we stand with bowed heads in reverence to them, let us remember the good deeds they accomplished. Let us revere them, as good soldiers who fought the good fight in a just cause, let us silently pray for peace, the peace that passes all understanding. And let us in mind and soul consecrate our hearts and lives to the real America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, the America worth fighting for. As we stand in silence to our departed comrades, may we sincerely say, ‘May their souls rest in peace.’ Let us also remember the POWs and the MIAs still unaccounted for from the Wars and Conflicts. Amen.”

Commander: Cover.

The addition of “Taps” sounded on muffled trumpet will add greatly to the solemnity of the ritual.

The first stanza of “America” (“My Country ‘Tis of Thee”), or another patriotic selection may be sung by the audience.

“Till we meet again let us remember our obligation to our Country can be fulfilled only by the faithful performance of all duties of citizenship. Let service to the community, state and nation be ever a main objective of The American Legion and its members. Let us be ever watchful of the honor of our Country, our organization and ourselves, that nothing shall swerve us from the path of Justice, Freedom and Democracy.

The Color Bearers will retire the Flag of our Country.”

As the Color Bearers retrieve the Colors, The Commander shall give the command:

Commander: “Hand salute” (Colors are retired).

As the Color Bearers reach the rear of the meeting hall, the command “Two” is given by the Commander.

Commander: “I now declare this meeting of Post name & No.
The American Legion, Department of adjourned.”

The Commander gives one rap of the gavel.

INITIATION

Regular Form

The initiation of candidates for membership in The American Legion is an important function of each post. The new members need to be shown, officially and formally, that they're indeed a part of the organization. They deserve the courtesy of being introduced to the organization which has accepted their membership application and dues payment. This is the purpose of the initiation ceremony.

Whether performed by the officers of the post or an established ritual team, the initiation ceremony should be conducted at least once a year. Each officer should learn their respective portion of the ceremony in order to be able to deliver it without reference to the printed text. Each initiation officer should wear the regulation American Legion cap and badge of office. (See "Badges" in index)

The Sergeant-at-Arms is responsible for preparation of the hall or meeting room for the initiation, and should see to it the following items, which are presented to the candidates during the ceremony, are on hand in sufficient quantity: American Flags (initiation size), American Legion lapel pins, and Flag Etiquette booklets. All of those items are available through National Emblem Sales (see your current catalog). In addition, the Sergeant-at-Arms, depending on the format your post wished to use for this ceremony, will set up the following items: Poppies (real or imitation) in a neat arrangement in a vase at either the station of the Second Vice Commander or near the podium identifying the station of the Commander; a gavel bell at the station of the Past Commander or near the podium of the Commander; and a miniature stand of colors consisting of the American Flag and the Legion colors at the station of the First Vice Commander or near the podium.

This ceremony is designed to conform with the floor plan of a post meeting room as illustrated (*). Candidates are escorted by the Sergeant-at-Arms to the various officers' stations for instruction. However, the ceremony may be altered to conform with the meeting room layout as illustrated (*) with the candidates standing in the area provided between the stations of the First Vice Commander and the Second Vice Commander. The outline of the ritual may be modified to permit all initiation officers to come to the podium to deliver their respective instructions to the candidates.

*(*See Meeting Room Arrangement)*

The candidates for initiation will assemble at the back of the meeting room or, preferably, in a nearby room immediately prior to the ceremony.

The business of the meeting having been cleared, the *Commander shall call the meeting to order with one rap of the gavel.*

Commander: "We shall now proceed to the initiation of new members. In order that we may impress upon these candidates the serious import and sacred obligations of American Legion membership, all present will conduct themselves in a manner befitting such ceremony.

“The Sergeant-at-Arms will present those ready for initiation.”

Sergeant-at-Arms, standing at designated station and after saluting the Flag:

“Commander, there are (number) veterans who have been accepted for membership in The American Legion and are awaiting the obligation.”

Commander: “As these candidates have been accepted for membership, we shall proceed with the initiation. Sergeant-at-Arms, escort the candidates into the hall and place them properly before the Flag.”

Sergeant-at-Arms, after escorting candidates to appropriate location:

“Commander, I present these candidates for initiation into The American Legion.”

Commander, after giving three raps of the gavel: “The Chaplain will offer prayer.”

The Chaplain steps to the right of the American Flag and faces the candidates.

Chaplain: “Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, grant that we may approach this ceremony with clean hearts. Keep us ever mindful of our obligation to those who have made the supreme sacrifice for our country and her noble purpose. We humbly pray that your love may find its way into all hearts and souls that they shall never again seek occasion of conflict, but live in peace and harmony, laboring for the broader benefits of humankind. You have blessed us with the opportunity to serve our country in her hour of need. We pray that you would grant us continued opportunities to serve in time of peace as we served in time of war. Bless The American Legion and those here who await its obligation, that together we may advance the sacred cause of Justice, Freedom and Democracy; that together we may serve you and our country in undivided loyalty. Amen.”

The Chaplain returns to designated station. The membership is seated by one rap of the gavel and the Post Commander addresses the candidates.

Commander: “The American Legion cherishes four great principles - Justice, Freedom, Democracy and Loyalty. Its pledge is service to veterans, especially the disabled, the distressed, and their widows and orphans. The cause of service to community, state and nation is jealously guarded and opportunity to serve is offered to all members. Before you are asked to assume the responsibility of membership in The American Legion by accepting its obligations, you will hear an explanation of the principles and symbols of our organization.

“Sergeant-at-Arms, conduct the candidates to the Second Vice Commander for instruction in Justice.”

The Sergeant-at-Arms escorts the candidates to the designated position, facing the Second Vice Commander’s station. The Second Vice Commander rises.

Second Vice Commander: “Justice makes no distinction of persons. It favors neither high nor low, neither rich nor poor, neither the classes nor the masses. Justice is the guiding star of life. It transcends all boundaries of race and creed. Justice for our sick and disabled veterans has always been, and must forever be, the first concern of The American Legion. The rehabilitation of those men and women who valiantly offered their all in response to their country’s call, the relief of those who have suffered by that sacrifice, is our hallowed duty. Legionnaires must be ever vigilant that none shall feel the injustice of work undone. The American Legion is ever mindful of its duty to the nation, and the nation’s duty to those who answered its call in time of war.

“This display of poppies, the official flower of The American Legion, serves as a memorial to those who gave their lives so that Justice might prevail. Remember their sacrifice! May your actions forever bring credit upon The American Legion, an organization which is a living memorial to the dead heroes who fought that Justice, the divine right of man, might ever endure.

“Sergeant-at-Arms, conduct the candidates to the Past Commander for instruction in Freedom.”

The Sergeant-at-Arms escorts the candidates to the designated position, facing the Past Commander’s station. The Past Commander rises.

Past Commander: “Freedom is an ideal of surpassing strength; it is the power of self-determination. For Freedom, Americans throughout the years willingly have fought and died.

“In the War of the Revolution, Freedom was won for the people of the United States. In the Wars of the Twentieth Century, the torch of Freedom led and inspired the American forces through the darkness of conflict.

“The American Legion is dedicated to the concept of Freedom from injustice to the children and youth of our Nation. No nation can long endure if it fails to care for its future citizens. The American Legion has achieved recognition as a National leader in behalf of the nation’s children and youth that they may know that Freedom from want, ignorance, and tyranny are God-given rights to be preserved at whatever the cost. The American Legion

staunchly defends the principle of equal opportunity for all in a country where all may enjoy the blessings of Freedom.

“This bell typifies the famous Liberty Bell which in bold and clarion tones rang out the news of Freedom and the birth of a new nation. It is here to remind you that America will remain the land of the free only as long as America is the home of the brave.

“I give you the American Flag, the emblem of Freedom, and a Flag Etiquette booklet.”

The Past Commander hands each candidate a small American Flag and Flag Etiquette booklet.

“Sergeant-at-Arms, conduct the candidates to the First Vice Commander for instruction in Democracy and its meaning to America.”

The Sergeant-at-Arms escorts the candidates to the designated position, facing the First Vice Commander’s station. The First Vice Commander rises.

First Vice Commander: “Democracy is government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Democracy is American in principle and universal in appeal. It offers a voice in government to each citizen. Of its benefits, each citizen may share.

“Democracy finds expression with The American Legion. Within our meeting halls, distinction of rank is unknown. All Legionnaires are equal in a common service. Each Legionnaire is permitted a free voice, but not a voice so free as to transcend the limits of Liberty.

“Democracy can exist only where all do their share, where each citizen knows and accepts the responsibility of service to community, state and nation. Legionnaires must encourage the exercise of franchise among our citizens as a means of preserving and perpetuating our precious heritage. Yes, Democracy to The American Legion is real. It carries a responsibility which each Legionnaire should accept.

(Here the First Vice Commander refers to either a miniature stand of colors consisting of the American Flag and American Legion Colors located at the designated station or the post’s set of colors at the front of the room, depending on the format of Initiation used.)

“These Flags symbolize America, the home of Democracy and The American Legion. The red stripes of our country’s Flag represent the valor, the zeal and the passion of those who defended the noble cause of individual dignity; the white stripes signify hope, purity and integrity. The stars of white on a field of blue proclaim that the heights of pure Democracy reach to the very stars of the heavens. This blue and gold emblem against a

background of blue reminds us constantly of our golden opportunities as Legionnaires to promote and protect the principle of Democracy in a government so dearly won and so valiantly maintained.

“Sergeant-at-Arms, conduct the candidates to the Commander for instruction in Loyalty and its application in The American Legion.”

The Sergeant-at-Arms escorts the candidates to the designated position, facing the Commander’s station. The Commander rises.

Commander: “Loyalty is an attribute of The American Legion as it is the first virtue of the person serving in the uniform of our country. It is as dear as Justice is desirable, as Freedom is glorious, as Democracy is practical. Loyalty will lead us to defend our organization in all that is right, and to do our utmost that we shall be right. Loyalty to our country is the basis of true Americanism. Disloyalty and oppression are foreign to our ideals; nor do we tolerate any form of radicalism or violence seeking to destroy our form of government. The Constitution of the United States of America, the bulwark of our liberties and guarantor of our rights, is sacred to the Legionnaire. Be ever loyal to that which has established your freedoms and defined your responsibilities. Understand The American Legion is in no sense a military organization. Because its membership is drawn from every race, religion, occupational pursuit, and political persuasion, The American Legion is obligated to strict neutrality on all questions concerning religion, politics, and industrial strife. You have received instruction in The American Legion’s four basic attributes—Justice, Freedom, Democracy and Loyalty—and its great principles of service. Are you now ready and willing to obligate yourself as expressed in the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion? If so, you will each answer, ‘I am.’”

Candidates: “I am.” (*All candidates must answer, signifying they are willing to take the obligation.*)

Commander: “All present will stand at attention during the obligation.” (*Three raps of the gavel.*)

The Commander steps to the right and immediately next to the American Flag, raises the right hand, and addresses the candidates.

Commander: “You raise your right hand and repeat after me:

‘I, (*here give your name*),

‘Do solemnly pledge

‘To uphold and defend

‘The Constitution of the United States of America;

‘To maintain law and order;
‘To foster and perpetuate
‘A one hundred percent Americanism;
‘To preserve the memories and incidents
‘Of our associations in the Great Wars;
‘To inculcate a sense of individual obligation
‘To the community, state and nation;
‘To combat the autocracy
‘Of both the classes and the masses;
‘To make right the master of might;
‘To promote peace and good will on Earth;
‘To safeguard and transmit to posterity
‘The principles of Justice, Freedom and Democracy;
‘To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship
‘By our devotion to mutual helpfulness;
‘To all of which I pledge myself
‘For God and Country.
‘I am not a member and do not subscribe
‘To the principles of any group
‘Opposed to our form of government.’
Hands down.”

The Commander resumes station and seats the membership with one rap of the gavel. The Chaplain rises and stands near the Emblem.

Chaplain: “There shines the Emblem of The American Legion. It is your badge of distinction, honor and service. It stands for God and Country, and the highest rights of men and women. Of its several parts, each has a meaning.

“The rays of the sun that form the background stand for the principles of The American Legion—for Loyalty, Justice, Freedom and Democracy will dispel the darkness of violence, strife, and evil.

“The two gold rings around the field of blue, bearing our name, typify two of our four main objectives—rehabilitation of our sick and disabled veterans, and the care for the children and youth of America. Within the rings is placed a wreath for remembrance of those who died that liberty might live. Upon the wreath is set a star reflecting the glory of victory and our promise to the world the perpetuation of the cardinal principles of The American Legion.

“Set upon the star are two bronze rings which represent the other two of our main objectives—a deep and abiding spirit of Americanism, and service to the community, state and nation.

“The inscription demands that the wearer shall ever guard the sanctity of home, of country, of free institutions.”

The Chaplain returns to station. The Commander rises and addresses the candidates.

Commander: “The Emblem of The American Legion is the emblem of Americanism. Americanism is unity of love, singleness of allegiance, practicality of purpose, care of the distressed, the education of children, all directed to the promotion of a common good. It is that spirit of patriotism which shall ever preserve our land from the stagnation which is the death of peoples. As Legionnaires, we preach and teach the spirit of patriotism throughout the Republic. We must be ever mindful of our obligations as citizens, striving constantly to redeem those obligations. In the Emblem of The American Legion there is great prophecy. It is the promise of the defenders of the Republic, pledging the fullest good for the betterment of all.

“I welcome you to The American Legion, and present you with the Emblem of The American Legion, a symbol of service.”

The Commander steps from the station, gives each new Legionnaire an Emblem lapel button, and shakes the hand of each new member.

Short Form Initiation

In order that every new member may receive some form of initiation; where it is not practical to conduct the full initiation ceremonies, the following short form has been authorized so all new members may take the obligation and receive proper introduction to The American Legion.

This ceremony shall be conducted by the Post Commander, or an appointed member, assisted by the Post Chaplain, who shall be seated at the right of the Commander.

Small flags, copies of the Legion pamphlet, Legion emblems, and other appropriate items used in the regular initiation ceremony shall be presented by the officiating officers.

Post Commander: “We will now proceed with the initiation. The Sergeant-at-Arms will escort the following candidates into the meeting hall and place them properly before the Flag.”

(Give names of all those who are waiting).

Sergeant-at-Arms salutes the flag and, turning, proceeds to get the candidates whose names shall be read.

Post Commander: “You were privileged to serve your country during Wartime. Because of this service, you are today privileged to join the great service organization, The American Legion.

“Unlike the armed forces in which you served, there is no distinction of rank among us. We are composed of members of every race, religion, occupation and political conviction. We maintain also, strict neutrality on all questions concerning religion, politics and industrial strife.

“The American Legion cherishes four great principles: Justice, Freedom, Democracy and Loyalty. We are pledged to serve the disabled, the distressed, the widowed and the orphaned. We are devoted to the cause of service to the community, state and the nation.

“Are you now ready and willing to obligate yourself as expressed in the Preamble to the Constitution of The American Legion?”

Candidates: “I am.”

Post Commander: “The members will stand at attention while the candidates are being obligated.” (*Gives three raps of the gavel.*)

The Commander steps to the right immediately next to the American Flag and will raise the right hand and address the candidates.

Commander: “You will raise your right hand and repeat after me:

“I, (*here give your name*)

‘Do solemnly pledge

‘To uphold and defend

‘The Constitution of the United States of America;

‘To maintain law and order;

‘To foster and perpetuate

‘A one hundred percent Americanism;

‘To preserve the memories and incidents

‘Of our associations in the Great Wars;

‘To inculcate a sense of individual obligation

‘To the community, state and nation;

‘To combat the autocracy

‘Of both the classes and the masses;

‘To make right the master of might;

‘To promote peace and good will on Earth;

‘To safeguard and transmit to posterity

‘The principles of Justice, Freedom and Democracy;

‘To consecrate and sanctify our comradeship

‘By our devotion to mutual helpfulness;
‘To all of which I pledge myself
‘For God and Country.
‘I am not a member and do not subscribe
‘To the principles of any group
‘Opposed to our form of government.
‘Hands down.’”

At the conclusion of the obligation, the Commander will resume the designated station and seat the membership with one rap of the gavel. The Chaplain arises and stands at some convenient location close to the emblem and calls the attention of the candidates to the emblem of The American Legion.

Chaplain: “There shines the emblem of The American Legion. It is your badge of distinction, honor and service. It stands for God and Country, and the highest rights of men and women. Of its several parts, each part has a meaning. The rays of the sun that form the background, are emblematic of the principles of The American Legion—for Loyalty, Justice, Freedom and Democracy will dispel the darkness of violence, strife and evil.

“The two gold rings around the field of blue bearing our name, typify two of our four main objectives; rehabilitation of our sick and disabled comrades, and care for the children of America. Within the rings is placed a wreath for remembrance of those who died that liberty might live. Upon the wreath is set a star reflecting the glory of victory and promising to the world perpetuation of those cardinal principles of our organization. Set upon the star are two bronze rings which typify the other two of our main objectives; a better and more loyal Americanism, and service to the community, state and nation.

“The inscription demands the wearer shall ever guard the sanctity of home and country and free institutions.”

The Commander steps down from the designated station and advances to the newly obligated members.

Post Commander: “I welcome you to The American Legion. It is my privilege to present to you the American Flag which is the emblem of freedom; a flag etiquette booklet; and the Emblem of The American Legion, which you may wear as a badge of democracy and a symbol of your devotion to further service.”

The Commander returns to station and introduces each newly obligated member to the membership and requests the Sergeant-at-Arms to seat them with the comrades.

(Attractive Certificates of Initiation suitable for presentation to new members of The American Legion after their initiation, are available from National Emblem Sales. The Trophies, Awards and Ceremonials Committee strongly recommends such evidence of initiation be presented.)

INSTALLATION

All officers (a charge consistent with the duties of office may be given to officers, such as additional Vice-Commanders, Judge Advocate, Executive Committee, etc., other than specified in this ceremony) shall, after their election and at the earliest opportunity thereafter, be installed in the following manner:

The Installing Officer (it is recommended either a department officer or the officer of another Post who shall be a representative of the Department Commander) shall take control of the meeting following the opening ceremony. The Installing Officer is permitted to install alone or with such assistants as may be selected.

The Installing Officer shall then call upon the Sergeant-at-Arms to bring forward the officers to be installed.

Installing Officer: “Sergeant-at-Arms, bring before me the newly elected officers of this Post.”

All the outgoing officers are to be in their respective places as shown in the Manual of Ceremonies, and each officer shall be given a card on which should be copied “charge” to the newly elected officer. The positions of the retiring officers can be filled by other officers at the discretion of the Installing Officer.

The Acting Sergeant-at-Arms brings each newly elected officer to the front, facing the station of the Commander. In order of rank, i.e., Commander, First Vice-Commander, Second Vice-Commander, Adjutant, Finance Officer, Chaplain, Judge Advocate, Historian, Service Officer and Sergeant-at-Arms.

After all are standing in place, with the new Commander to the right of the Installing Officer, the Acting Sergeant-at-Arms salutes and addresses the Commander.

Sergeant-at-Arms: “I present to you the newly elected officers of this Post whose eligibility records for membership in The American Legion have been duly checked and authenticated.”

Installing Officer: “My comrades, you have been chosen by your comrades to fill the various offices of (Post Name and #). You will, I know, vindicate the trust that has been reposed in you, and fulfill in every way the obligations which that trust entails. You shall at once familiarize yourselves with the duties of your particular offices, and you shall proceed upon those duties in the same spirit of devotion and endeavor which characterized that service out of which arose The American Legion. You must know the welfare and success of this Post depends largely on you; and you must also

know upon your shoulders equally rests the burden of preserving the integrity of The American Legion. You must protect its good name before the people of the United States. You must exalt it in their eyes. You must make them know as we know its purposes and its policy. Ever remember the tolerant spirit that animates its members. There is no rank among us, for each serves as an equal; and all strive toward the same goal, which is the realization in the life of the Republic of the ideals of Justice, Freedom, Democracy and Loyalty. Ever remember the cardinal purposes of The American Legion are the rehabilitation of our disabled comrades; the care of the dependents of those who have answered the final call, and of those who are now suffering the ravages of wounds, disease and want; rightful education of the children of our Country, and devoted service to the community, state and nation.

“You will raise your right hands and repeat after me, giving your names: ‘I,, do solemnly pledge myself to perform faithfully and impartially the duties of the office in The American Legion I am about to assume, and I further pledge I am not a member of, and do not subscribed to the principles of any groups opposed to our form of government.’”

After the obligation of the new officers, the Installing Officer shall address the Sergeant-at-Arms.

Installing Officer: “Sergeant-at-Arms, conduct the new officers to their respective stations.”

The Acting or Retiring Sergeant-at-Arms escorts each officer-elect to the respective station, starting with the elected Sergeant-at-Arms and ending with the commander. The Sergeant-at-Arms will conduct the Sergeant-at-Arms-elect to the station of the Sergeant-at-Arms and when arrived at that station, will address the elected Sergeant-at-Arms as follows:

Acting Sergeant-at-Arms: “You are the sentinel or tiler, the outer guard of this Post. You will guard especially against the loss of one of The American Legion’s greatest possessions—our deep and abiding spirit of comradeship. You will learn the identity of, and introduce to the Commander, all visiting comrades and guests of the Post. You are responsible that no one shall remain a stranger in our midst. Be ready at all times to assist your Commander. Into your hands is given charge of the stand of colors which you will properly display at all Post meetings and on ceremonial occasions.”

The acting or retiring Sergeant-at-Arms then escorts the Service Officer to the proper station. The acting Service Officer then charges the new Service Officer.

Acting Service Officer: “You have been singly honored by this Post by your election to perform fundamental, unselfish work, not only for the benefit of the members of this Post, but for those War veterans particularly in need of your service. Yours is the choice responsibility of looking out for the welfare of all concerned. The duties of a Service Officer are highly important and exacting, and while your accomplishment will be deeply appreciated by those immediately concerned, the work itself will not be sufficiently conspicuous to catch the headlines in the newspapers. Depending upon satisfactory performance of duty, there will come to you the heartfelt gratitude of each and every member of this Post. I congratulate you upon the opportunity to serve so constructively and so unselfishly.”

The Sergeant-at-Arms next conducts the Historian to the proper station.

The Acting Historian then charges the new Historian.

Acting Historian: “Your office is an important one. To you is given the responsibility of preserving and compiling the records of this Post. The future can only be judged by the past. Be mindful the lamp of recorded experience may do much in guiding the footsteps of those who follow. Ever remember that without the recorded history of this Post, its policies and accomplishments will be a blank to the ones who come after we are gone.”

The Sergeant-at-Arms next conducts the Judge Advocate to the position of the Acting or Retiring Judge Advocate who gives the following charge.

Acting Judge Advocate: “To you, my comrade, is assigned a most important duty for which your legal training and/or past Legion experience so aptly prepare you. You are the interpreter of the Constitution and By-Laws of your Post, and may at any time be called upon by the Commander and other officers and members of the Post to rule upon the legality of their actions and decisions insofar as they affect the good of The American Legion. You are also charged with protecting the integrity of our organization and keeping alight the torch of truth and fidelity that symbolizes the high and ennobling ideals under which our great American Legion was founded. Protect wisely that heritage.”

The Sergeant-at-Arms then escorts the Chaplain to the right of the Commander.

The Acting Chaplain then charges the new Chaplain.

Acting Chaplain: “To you is given the spiritual leadership of this Post. You will, I know, lend dignity and respect to your office. You should be in close confidence with the Commander and the other officers of this Post, and should attend all meetings of the Post. You should be ready upon occasion to take your part in the initiation of new members, the dedication of halls,

monuments or colors, and the funeral services for a comrade. All such ceremonies are made more commemorative by the use of our Ritual. Into your keeping we place the spirit of comradeship of this Post. May harmony and unity prevail.”

Sergeant-at-Arms next conducts the Finance Officer to the Adjutant’s desk where the Acting Finance Officer gives the following charge:

Acting Finance Officer: “You are the keeper of the moneys and in you is reposed the financial policy of the Post. To you is given charge of the year’s budget and to you is given the duty of the payment of all obligations when proper authorization has been given for such payment. Your position is an important one, demanding integrity and honesty. Your election to this office signifies your comrades have implicit trust in you. Guard well that trust.”

Sergeant-at-Arms next conducts the Adjutant to the respective station and the Acting Adjutant gives the following charge:

Acting Adjutant: “My comrade, you have been chosen to assist in the wise and effective administration of the Commander’s office and to serve not only your fellow Legionnaires, but also those whose relationship to our organization has led them to look to us for guidance and relief. You will find your duties many, varied and, at times, taxing of your crowded hours and resources. The successful accomplishment of our program depends, to a great extent, upon you and your performance of the duties of your office.”

The Sergeant-at-Arms next conducts the Second Vice-Commander to the respective desk where the Acting Second Vice-Commander gives the following charge:

Acting Second Vice-Commander: “Into your helpful hands are placed the important responsibilities of assisting the Commander’s office in all duties. Particularly should you be interested in patriotic observances of all kinds, in developing Post activities, and in the entertainment features which mark all meetings. Help to observe strict tolerance among your members on all political, religious and civic matters. The application of Justice will be your particular concern.”

Sergeant-at-Arms next conducts the First Vice-Commander to the proper position where the First Vice-Commander will be charged by the Acting First Vice-Commander as follows:

Acting First Vice-Commander: “To you is given the responsibility of an active cooperation between yourself and the Commander. Particularly should you interest yourself in the membership of the Post. You should be assisted by the most active and devoted members. No single factor has so important an influence on the Post’s success as membership. You will be the

exponent of means of safeguarding the honor of the Flag of our Country. To you are committed these endeavors with the expectation you shall fulfill each and every one of them. You are the teacher of ‘Democracy.’”

Installing Officer (to retiring Commander):

“My comrade, You have just completed a year of impressive service to The American Legion and to The record of your Post indicates a quality of that service.

“Through your earnest performance of the duties of leadership, you have truly justified the great trust which your comrades reposed in you.

“Although the mantle of leadership is now being passed to another, a great responsibility remains with you. You possess a great wealth of knowledge gained through your leadership experience. Place this wisdom at the disposal of your successors in order that your comrades may benefit therefrom. Through your station maintain the principle of ‘Freedom’ within this Post.

“On behalf of the, I thank you for the splendid service you have rendered The American Legion.

“Sergeant-at-Arms, conduct Past Commander to the station of the Immediate Past Commander.”

Sergeant-at-Arms then conducts the new Commander to the Installing Officer, who in turn brings the entire Post to its feet by three raps of the gavel, then charges the new Commander as follows:

Installing Officer: To you, comrade, is entrusted a very important duty of teaching and protecting the cardinal principles of The American Legion throughout your entire Post. To you is entrusted supervision of the duties of all other officers of this Post. To you may come the needy and the distressed, and it is your duty to see no worthy comrade is turned away without full justice. It is your duty to see Freedom is ever the watchword of those with whom you may come in contact. Loyalty to your Post, to its membership, to the state and to the National Organization, are obligations which you now assume. You are more than the presiding officer for meetings. You are guided by the Constitution and by the decisions of the Post as a body, yet the responsibility for the success of the year’s program is largely on your shoulders. You must initiate and carry through programs to completion. You must thoroughly familiarize yourself with the policies and traditions of your Post and of The American Legion. By your sincere acceptance and earnest performance of these duties, may the great trust which your comrades have reposed in you be justified. To you, I extend the

congratulations of the Department, and I wish you well as you assume the responsibilities of your office. I present to you a copy of the Legion Officer's Guide and Manual of Ceremonies to serve as your guide during the coming year."

Commander: "The Chaplain will offer prayer."

Chaplain: "O, God of Might, Wisdom and Justice, through Whom authority is rightly administered, assist with Thy spirit of counsel and fortitude these newly installed officers. May they accept the challenge of their oath. Impress upon each the importance of the duties as well as the honors of their office. May they know the value of working together with Thee. Lead them in the problems that will confront them, keeping them ever mindful of the great heritage preserved by our comrades, living and departed. Vouchsafe into them wisdom and protecting care throughout the year. AMEN."

Installing Officer seats membership with one rap of the gavel. Newly elected officers please rise.

Installing Officer: "My comrades, I present you the officers of your choice. I congratulate you on the selections you have made. You have chosen them to guide the destinies of this Post, now it is your duty to aid them in every way. Help them keep The American Legion a free organization of free men and women, faithful to its principles and ideals."

The gavel is handed to the new Commander and the Installing Officer takes a seat.

New Commander then seats the newly elected officers with one rap of the gavel.

Short Form Installation

For those occasions when it is not practical to conduct the full ceremony for the installation of officers, the following short form has been authorized. This ceremony shall be conducted by an Installing Officer (a duly authorized representative of the Department Commander) who, after being introduced by the retiring Post Commander, proceeds as follows:

Installing Officer: "The Sergeant-at-Arms will bring before me the newly elected officers of this Post."

The Sergeant-at-Arms presents the newly elected officers, standing in one row in front of the Installing Officer, with the new Post Commander to the right of the Installing Officer and the retiring Post Commander to the left of the Installing Officer.

Sergeant-at-Arms: "I present to you the newly elected officers of this Post, whose eligibility records for membership in The American Legion have been duly checked and authenticated."

Installing Officer: “My Fellow Legionnaires, you have been chosen to fill the various offices of (Post Name & #). I know you will vindicate the trust that has been placed in you. I know you will fulfill every obligation required of you. Familiarize yourselves with the duties of your offices and carry out those duties with the same spirit from which arose The American Legion. The welfare and success of this Post depend on you, as does the preservation of the integrity of The American Legion. Protect the good name of The American Legion with the people of our great Nation; help them to know the Legion’s purposes and policies. Remember the tolerance that animates us as members; remember there is no rank among us for we all serve as equals. We all are aiming for the same goals—the ideals of Justice, Freedom, Democracy and Loyalty.

“Remember, too, the cardinal principles of The American Legion are—

“The rehabilitation of all disabled veterans;

“The care of the dependents of those who’ve answered the final call;

“The care of those who now are suffering from wounds, disease and want;

“The education of our children . . . “And Service to the Community, State and Nation.

“You will raise your right hand, say ‘I’ and give your names, and repeat after me—

“I,, do solemnly pledge myself / to perform faithfully and impartially / the duties of the office of The American Legion / I am about to assume, / and I further pledge / I am not a member of / and do not subscribe to / the principles of any group opposed to our form of government.

“Hands down.”

The Installing Officer will move to the left to address the retiring Post Commander.

Installing Officer: “(Addressing the retiring Commander by name), you have just completed a year of service to The American Legion and to (Post name and #). The records of the Post indicate the quality of your service. It is my hope the things you learned about The American Legion and the experience you gained will always be available to those who follow you. On behalf of the Department Commander, I thank you for the splendid service you have rendered The American Legion.”

The Installing Officer will then move to the right to address the newly elected Post Commander.

Installing Officer: “To you, Commander, are entrusted very important duties. You must teach and protect the cardinal principles of The

American Legion throughout your Post. You are entrusted with the supervision of the duties of all officers of your Post. The poor and troubled will come to you and you must see no veteran is turned away without full justice.

“Loyalty to your Post—to its membership—to the state and National Organizations are obligations which you now assume.

“You are more than the presiding officer for meetings; you are guided by the Constitution and the decisions of the Post body; yet, the responsibility of the year’s programs is on your shoulders. You must initiate programs and carry them through to completion. You must familiarize yourself with the traditions of your Post and The American Legion.

“By your sincere acceptance and earnest performance of these duties, may the trust your fellow Legionnaires have reposed in you be justified.

“I extend to you the congratulations of the Department of and I wish you well as you assume the responsibilities of your office.”

(Here the retiring Post Chaplain may offer a prayer for the guidance and success of the newly installed Post officers during their year in office. For a prayer of appropriate length and tenor, see the regular form of Installation.)

The Installing Officer moves to original position and asks all newly installed officers to face the members and guests in attendance.

Installing Officer: “My fellow Legionnaires, I present to you the officers of your choice. I congratulate you on the selections you have made. You have chosen them, now it is your duty to aid them in every way. Help them to keep The American Legion faithful to its principles and ideals.”

DEDICATIONS

The members of the Post will assemble at the designated place in uniform, if such are available, all officers wearing ceremonial badges, members wearing their American Legion caps. They will march to the place of dedication. The Commander, Chaplain and the member designated to receive the gift will take their places on the platform with the public official and other guests. The Post will assemble with the general public.

Unless those who are to give the gift provide otherwise, the Commander will preside. A Past Commander or some other member appointed by the Commander will accept the gift on behalf of the Post.

The program as outlined by the Committee will be followed until the Post Commander is called upon, who will then address the members of the Post.

Commander: “Members of (Post name and #), Department of, The American Legion, and friends:

“We are gathered today for a grateful and patriotic duty, to dedicate (Colors, hall or memorial as the case may be) (and in case of color dedication) these Colors, the emblems of the United States of America and The American Legion. (Or, to dedicate this building as a home for The American Legion; to dedicate this monument, a perpetual memorial to our comrades who died in their country’s service, and to those who offered their lives during time of war (or some other phrase, designating the purpose of the gathering). May we again dedicate our organization and ourselves to the sacred ideals which are here represented, ever remembering that The American Legion’s principal service is for God and Country. The Chaplain will ask the blessing of God upon these ceremonies.”

Prayer by the Chaplain: *(In place of the following prayer, the Chaplain may deliver one of own preference, of the same length and general tenor.)*

“Almighty God, Judge over people and nations, we stand before Thee today as loyal servants of our Country, grateful for its splendid heritage. We ask Thy blessing upon our great Republic. May America ever remain free and mighty and true to her best ideals. Bless the President of the United States and all public servants, that they may walk in justice before Thee and all their acts may redound to the greater welfare of our people.

“We pray Thy blessing upon our Flag, the emblem of the Republic. May it float forever over a free land. May our ancient watchword, ‘In God we trust,’ ever live, and may the faith of our father guide, protect and sustain our people.

“We ask Thy blessing upon The American Legion and its members. May we who served our Country in war continue in times of peace, to serve and to shield America throughout all our days. May this edifice serve for the good of the many; in service to the living may it be a memorial to the dead. May we be eager and steadfast in our devotion to Justice, Freedom and Democracy. May we be ever loyal to our Country and to our God. May our service to the sick and disabled, to the community, the state and the nation merit and have Thy guidance and Thy blessing.

“Finally, we remember in love before Thee our departed comrades, who showed their loyalty in their lives and sealed it with their deaths. We pray especially for our comrades in hospitals and homes and wherever they may be, sick in mind and body. May their pain be eased and their burdens lifted, and may their heroic example be an everlasting inspiration. May Thy spirit

rest upon this service. May it uplift us all to constant devotion to Thy teachings and to the welfare of our Country. Amen.”

Commander: “In memory of those who have given their all to this country, who have made the supreme sacrifice and have answered the call of the ‘Great Commander of all Divisions,’ we will stand in silence and with bowed heads.” (30 seconds’ silence)

Commander: *The Commander will introduce the person who is to present the Colors, Building or Edifice to the Post.*

Presentation Address:

Commander: *The Commander will introduce the Past Commander (or other officer or member designated) who will accept the gift on behalf of the Post.*

Address of Acceptance:

The program as set by the committee shall be followed out, after which the Commander will close the meeting.

Dedication of Colors

Commander: “The assemblage will rise. Sergeant-at-Arms, you will call the guard to display the colors.” (Colors will be advanced to a position in front of the stage or platform and will halt within ten paces of the Commander.) **The Commander will say,** “The bugler will sound ‘To the Colors’ and the audience will stand at salute,” and the Post Standard will be dipped at a 45 degree angle in salute.

After “To the Colors” has been sounded, the Commander will address the entire assemblage.

Commander: “In the name of (Post name and #), Department of, The American Legion, I dedicate these Colors. May they fly perpetually as the emblem of the cause for which we fought and which we now gladly serve. Here is the Flag of our Country; safe within its folds is the freedom and fealty of our nation. Beside it is the Flag of The American Legion, on its expanse the Emblem of our organization—the star of victory, the laurel wreath of remembrance, about it all the sun’s rays, significant of the light of an even brighter day.

“I dedicate these Colors to the purposes of our Post, community, state and Nation, and with them I dedicate this Post to the faithful service of our Nation, our people, and our Flag. Comrades, you will join me in saluting the Flag. Hand Salute! Two!”

At the conclusion of this dedication ceremony, the colors will be properly returned.

Dedication of American Legion Building or Hall

Commander: “In the name of (Post name and #), Department of, The American Legion, I dedicate this structure (hall), embodiment of the ideals of Justice, Freedom and Democracy for which The American Legion exists. As in time of war, we fight for our country, so in time of peace may we serve the Republic fearlessly and well. May we bear in mind the comrades who have gone before, that their memory may dwell within this home and be a constant blessing among us. It is our hope and desire this edifice may be used ever in the service of our disabled comrades; of the widowed and the orphaned; and to the benefit of our community, state and Nation. I dedicate this structure to the purposes of our Post, and with it I dedicate this Post to the faithful service of our nation, of its people, and to the memory of our heroic dead.”

Dedication of Monument, Shaft or Other Memorials

Commander: “In the name of (Post name and #), Department of, The American Legion, I dedicate this memorial. I dedicate it to the memory of those who fell in the service of our Country. I dedicate it in the name of those who offered their lives so Justice, Freedom and Democracy might survive to be the victorious ideals of the peoples of the world. The lives of those who have made the supreme sacrifice are glorious before us; their deeds are an inspiration. As they served America in time of war, yielding their last full measure of devotion, may we serve America in time of peace.

“I dedicate this monument to them, and with it I dedicate this Post to the faithful service of our Country and to preservation of the memory of those who died that Liberty might live.”

At the end of all dedication ceremonies, a benediction shall be given by the Chaplain.

CEREMONY FOR DRAPING AMERICAN LEGION

CHARTER:

Post has option on choice of drape and length of draping period.

Commander: “It is my sad duty to report that Comrade (or Comrades) has (have) been called from our midst. He/She (they/have) gone to the Commander of us all in post everlasting.

Commander: “Before proceeding with other business of this meeting, we will Drape the Charter in memory of Comrade (Comrades) Sergeant-at-Arms, obtain Drape in preparation for Draping Charter.”

Commander: (Rap gavel three (3) times) “Members rise and face Charter attention.”

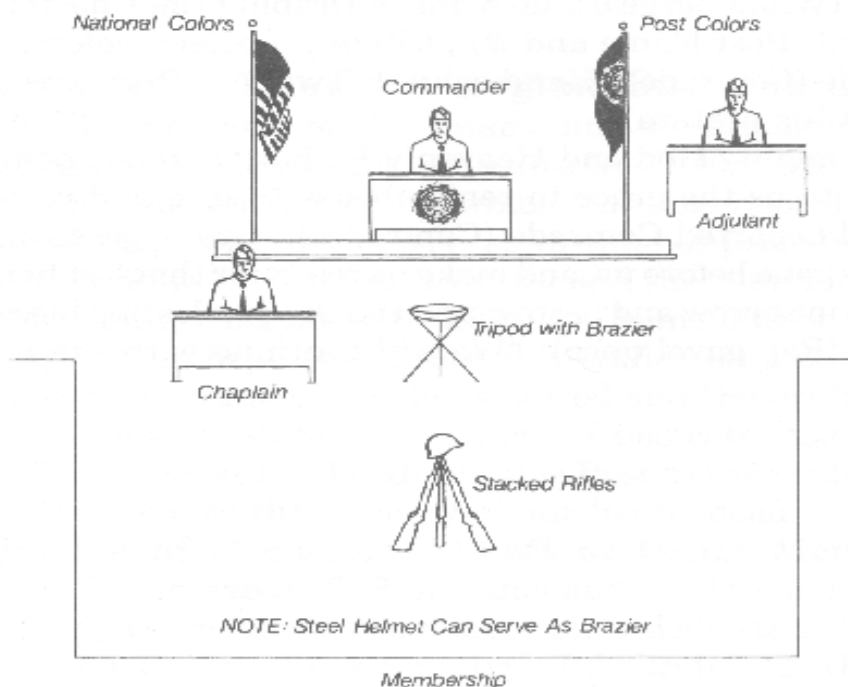
Commander: “Sergeant-at-Arms, you will now Drape our Charter in memory of our beloved Comrade (Comrades) who has (have) passed on.

Commander: (While Sergeant-at-Arms is Draping the Charter) “By this act we, as members of (Post Name and #), (State), proclaim solemn tribute to our departed Comrade (Comrades) Hand salute! Two!” (After “Two,” Sergeant-at-Arms returns to his/her station)

Chaplain: “Almighty God and Heavenly Father, who has dominion over life and death, grant to us the grace to remember with love and reverence our valiant and honored departed Comrade (Comrades). Grant peace and eternal rest to those who have gone before us, and make us ready for that last hour. Strengthen and console those in sorrow and bestow upon us thy everlasting blessing Amen.”

Commander: (Rap gavel once) “We will continue with the regular meeting

POST EVERLASTING



POST EVERLASTING

The diagram (on the previous page) illustrates the proper position of flags and tables or stands which are used by the officers who take part in this ceremony. This equipment (with the exception of the tripod, with brazier and stacked rifles, which are posted during the ceremony) should be put in place before the meeting opens.

Commander: “It is my sad duty to report that Comrade has been called from our midst, and gone to report to the Commander of all.”

(Hesitate momentarily.)

Commander: “Before proceeding with other business of this meeting, we will conduct the Post Everlasting Ceremony for Comrade”

Commander: “Sergeant-at-Arms, allow no one to enter or leave this room until the conclusion of this ceremony. All present will remain silent and will refrain from smoking until the conclusion of this ceremony.”

Commander: “Sergeant-at-Arms, you will place the brazier and stack the rifles before this rostrum, properly arranged for our Post Everlasting Ceremony.” (Sergeant-at-Arms salutes and gives necessary commands to three (3) Rifle bearers and Comrade with brazier. Commander returns salute.)

Sergeant-at-Arms: “The Equipment is properly arranged, Comrade Commander.”

Commander: “Sergeant-at-Arms, you will retire the detail.”

(Hesitate momentarily)

Commander: “This moment is sacred with the almost visible presence of the one who has gone before.

“We come to honor the memory of one who offered his (her) life in the service of country and who has now enrolled in that great spirit army, whose footfalls cause no sound, but in the memory of mankind, their souls go marching on, sustained by the pride of service in time of war.

“Because of them our lives are free; because of them our nation lives; because of them the world is blessed.

“May this service deepen our reverence for our departed comrades.”

(Hesitate momentarily)

Commander: “The Adjutant will place an American Legion cap on the rifles in remembrance of Comrade’s service to our Country in the Army (Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps or Coast Guard) of the United States.”

(Adjutant places cap on top of stacked rifles.)

(Commander waits until Adjutant returns, then gives three raps of gavel.)

Commander: “Sergeant-at-Arms, lights out.”

Commander: “Our Comrade Chaplain will offer prayer.”

Chaplain: “Our Heavenly Father in His infinite wisdom has transferred Comrade to the jurisdiction of the Post Everlasting of The American Legion. May your soul rest in Peace. Amen.”

Commander: “Comrade Adjutant, enter the name of Comrade in the record of members of (Post Name and #) who has transferred to the Post Everlasting.”

(Adjutant enters name in book provided for this purpose; Commander waits until Adjutant stands up.)

Commander: “Comrade Adjutant, hand me the letter containing the Service and Legion records of Comrade which we will transmit to the Post Everlasting of The American Legion.”

(Commander then reads letter)

Commander: “Comrade Chaplain, transmit this letter containing the Service and Legion records of Comrade to the Adjutant of the Post Everlasting.”

(Commander hands letter to the Chaplain who places it in brazier; record is then burned. NOTE: The record burned by the chaplain can be either a blank piece of paper or a typed document. DO NOT burn the deceased member’s post records.)

Commander: “Bugler, sound Taps in memory of Comrade and in memory of all the comrades of the Post Everlasting of The American Legion.”

(Taps)

Commander: “Sergeant-at-Arms, turn on the lights.”

(One rap of gavel seats membership)

Commander: “Comrade Adjutant, remove the hat.”

Commander: “Sergeant-at-Arms, remove the brazier and rifles.”

(A Post Everlasting Citation No. 75228 is available through National Emblem Sales. This thoughtful citation will provide the next of kin with a permanent service record and a tribute to our dearly departed comrade.)

Service and Legion records should contain name in full; date of birth; date of enlistment; branch; rank; etc. theatre of war in which comrade served; battles (if any); date discharged; date joined The American Legion; Legion activities entered into (if any); Legion offices held (if any); date of death.

NOTE: Add or delete as situation requires and as circumstances dictate.

FUNERAL

The American Legion service is nonsectarian. Therefore, it may be varied in accordance with the religious belief of the deceased Legionnaire. The wish of the family of the deceased, and of the officiating clergyman, should be respected.

The casket is covered with an American Flag when closed or as it leaves the chapel or home. In case the deceased served under an Allied Flag, that Flag shall also be displayed near the casket.

At Funeral, Chapel or Home

Commander: “Another Legionnaire has been called to the High Command, and has gone to report to the Commander of us all.”

Chaplain: “Let us pray.

“Eternal God, Supreme Commander of us all, Lord of the far-flung battle line, to whom the ranks of life report, we bow before you with reverent hearts and in sublime faith, knowing you lead us on in death as you have in life. For again you have ordered a Legionnaire to that realm in the West, beyond the twilight and the evening star, where beauty and valor and goodness dwell forever with the unnumbered multitude. Mindful of service nobly done, you have called (name of deceased) to everlasting rest. You have sealed his (her) lips. With the faded blossoms of springtime and the withered leaves of autumn, you have called our comrade to Eternal Peace, to the land of your silent mystery.

“Hear now the sorrows of those who mourn. Touch their tired hearts with healing. Protect them with your holy care. Keep clean and bright in memory the splendid flame that now has flickered out, and shelter us with your compassion.

“Lord of all life, who lives forever, again you have taught us the measure of our days. We are strangers with you and sojourners as our fathers were. Our days are as a shadow and there is none abiding. But you abide. Your years fail not. You never change. A thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. The grass withers, the flower fades, but your word endures forever. And therein is our help and hope.

“You heal the broken in heart and bind up their wounds. Comfort your people. In their sorrow may there be no bitterness, no doubt of your eternal goodness. Give them to know you do not mock us with this stubborn hope of life eternal; that having created and cared for us you will not desert us to the dust; that you hold us with a love unflinching; that our dead are in your

keeping; and that you are able to do far more for them than all we ask or think.

“Until for us also the day breaks and the shadows flee, grant us so to live so our lives may honor the Legionnaires who have gone before us. Together we may come to the City which you have prepared for those who love you and keep your commandments. For your own name’s sake we pray. Amen.”

Short Eulogy (By one who knew our friend and Legionnaire well.)

Commander: “This moment is sacred with the almost visible presence of the one who has gone before. We come to honor the memory of one who offered life and service for God and Country; one who has now enrolled in that great spirit army whose footfalls cause no sound. But in our memory, their souls go marching on. Proudly we remember their service in time of war. Because of them, our lives are free; because of them, our Nation lives; because of them the world is blessed. May the ceremonies of today deepen our reverence for our honored comrade and friend.

“Let us not enshroud their memory with thoughts of sorrow. Tears or words of sympathy cannot bring back the comfort of those loving hands or the music of voices stilled. The solemn pride of that service is theirs, and for the living to remember.

“Legionnaires and friends, let us here pledge ourselves anew to united service, to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by a devotion to mutual helpfulness in the protection of those left behind.

“We realize how futile are mere words to express our deep and abiding sympathy in your loss. May you feel our comrade is at rest, and in endless peace. Generation after generation, all the shadowy peoples of the past have lived as we live, perplexed and mystified by death. They have gone into the Great Beyond with hearts filled with wistful longing, as all must go.

“Surely there is an afterlife for all who have been loyal and true, a life to which light and peace shall come, where the burden shall be lifted and the heartache shall cease, where the love, the hope and the fulfillment that escape us here shall be given to us, to be ours forever.”

(Here the Chaplain offers a prayer in accordance with the faith of the deceased.)

Chaplain: *(Protestant Prayer)*

“O God, who heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds; look in tender pity and compassion upon thy servants whose joy has been turned into mourning. Leave them not comfortless, but grant that they may be drawn closer to thee and to one another by their common sorrow. Fill their souls

with the light and comfort of thy presence. Grant unto them such a vision of that life wherein all mysteries shall be revealed, and all tears be wiped away, that they may be able to endure. So dwell with them and be their God, until the day break and the shadows flee away; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Chaplain: (Jewish Prayer)

“O Lord, who art full of compassion, who dwellest on high—God of forgiveness, who are merciful, slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness—grant pardon of transgressions, nearness of salvation, and perfect rest beneath the shadow of thy divine presence, in the exalted places among the holy and pure, who shine as the brightness of the firmament, to (name of deceased Legionnaire) who hath gone to his (her) eternal home. We beseech thee, O Lord of compassion, remember unto him (her) for good all the meritorious and pious deeds which he (she) wrought while on earth. Open unto him (her) the gates of righteousness and light, the gates of pity and grace. O shelter him (her) forevermore under the cover of thy wings; and let his (her) soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life. The Lord is his (her) inheritance; may he (she) rest in peace. And let us say, Amen.”

Chaplain: (Catholic Prayer)

“Father, We entrust our brother (sister) to your mercy. You loved him (her) greatly in this life; now that he (she) is freed from all its cares, give him (her) happiness and peace forever.

“The old order has passed away; welcome him (her) now into paradise where there will be no more sorrow, no more weeping or pain, but only peace and joy with Jesus, your Son, and the Holy Spirit forever and ever.

“Eternal rest grant unto him (her), O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him (her). May his (her) soul and all of the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.”

When there is a service at the chapel or home and if the casket is open, the Commander or Chaplain may at the conclusion of the service place a poppy in the casket and say, “The Memorial Poppy is a national symbol of the flowers in Flanders Field that embodies the sacrifices of men and women who served and died for their country in all wars. We now leave this poppy with you in your honor, and as an eternal reminder of the binding comradeship we feel for you. He then salutes and says, Farewell, to our friend, Legionnaire and comrade.”

If the casket is sealed and draped with the American Flag, do not use the poppy, as nothing is placed on top of an American Flag, but salute and say,

“Farewell, my Fellow Legionnaire.”

All Legionnaires present at the funeral service shall pass the casket and salute the deceased Legionnaire. It is not necessary to place another poppy in the casket. After the salute, the Legionnaires present shall leave the funeral chapel in single file and with dignity.

Funeral Escort

*The escort is formed outside the church, chapel, or residence. Upon appearance of the casket, the **Commander commands:** “Present . . . Arms.”*

*After the casket is placed in the hearse, the **Commander commands:** “Order . . . Arms.”*

Procedure at Cemetery

The column having arrived opposite the grave, the firing squad and American Legion members are formed in line facing the grave. The Chaplain or clergy stands at the head of the grave.

The casket is then carried along the front of the line to the grave.

The Firing Squad presents arms.

The casket having been placed over the grave, arms are brought to the order.

*The **Commander next commands:** “1. Parade. 2. Rest.”*

The Officer in charge of Firing Squad brings his detachment to parade rest. On executing parade rest, they all incline the head.

At Graveside

If no previous service has been held, the service for church, chapel or home should be read at the grave, prior to the following committal.

***Chaplain:** “Man, who is born of woman, is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth as a flower and is cut down. He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not.*

***Chaplain (continuing):** “Forasmuch as God hath taken out of the world the soul of our departed comrade, we therefore commit his (her) body to the ground to sleep and his (her) soul to endless peace to rest. The dust returneth to earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it.”*

Benediction (if desired).

At the conclusion of the Chaplain’s service, two pallbearers remove Flag from casket, fold it in the traditional manner (see “Flag and Flag Etiquette” in index), and place it on the arm of Chaplain, who will give Flag to the nearest kin.

***Commander:** “Salute our departed comrade(s).”*

Officer in charge of Firing Squad gives order according to the Infantry Drill Regulations in force at the time.

Squad fires three rounds of blank cartridges, the muzzles of the pieces being elevated.

Bugler: *Taps. (With two bugle echoes from different portions of the cemetery, if possible.)*

The escort is formed into column, marched in quick time to the point where it assembled, and dismissed.

(Wherever the term “Commander” is used in connection with funeral escort, procedure at cemetery and graveside, it refers to the Commander of the Firing Squad. The Post Commander shall be at the head of The American Legion delegation, except where the funeral service is held at the grave. Then the Post Commander shall be on the left of the Chaplain and at the head of the grave.)

American Legion Military Funeral Escorts

An American Legion Military Funeral in its entirety requires twenty-one Legionnaires in uniform, as follows:

1 Chaplain	2 Color Guards	8 Firing Squad
1 Bugler	1 Commander	6 Pallbearers
2 Color Bearers of Firing Squad		

The Commander of the Firing Squad is in charge of all details and movements. The Firing Squad should be composed of members who are familiar with handling the rifle. The Commander should get the squad together before the service and simulate volley firing. The entire escort should be arranged according to height and uniform worn.

In some instances the family calls upon the Post to take charge of the church or home services as well as the services at the grave. As a general rule, however, the church has charge of the church or home services, after which the Post Chaplain conducts the final rites. It is highly desirable the Post conducting the funeral discusses beforehand with the Clergy and the Funeral Director the exact procedure to be followed.

For the guidance of those concerned, the following is suggested:

Post Service in Place of Worship, Chapel or Home

The entire escort should be inside. All uncover except those bearing arms or colors. Pallbearers and Firing Squad should sit as separate groups.

Post Services Following Those at the Place of Worship, Chapel or Home

The Pallbearers are covered, even when carrying the casket. When casket comes into view, the **Commander of Firing Squad** gives the command:

“1. *Escort.* 2. *Attention,*” followed by “1. *Present.* 2. *Arms.*”

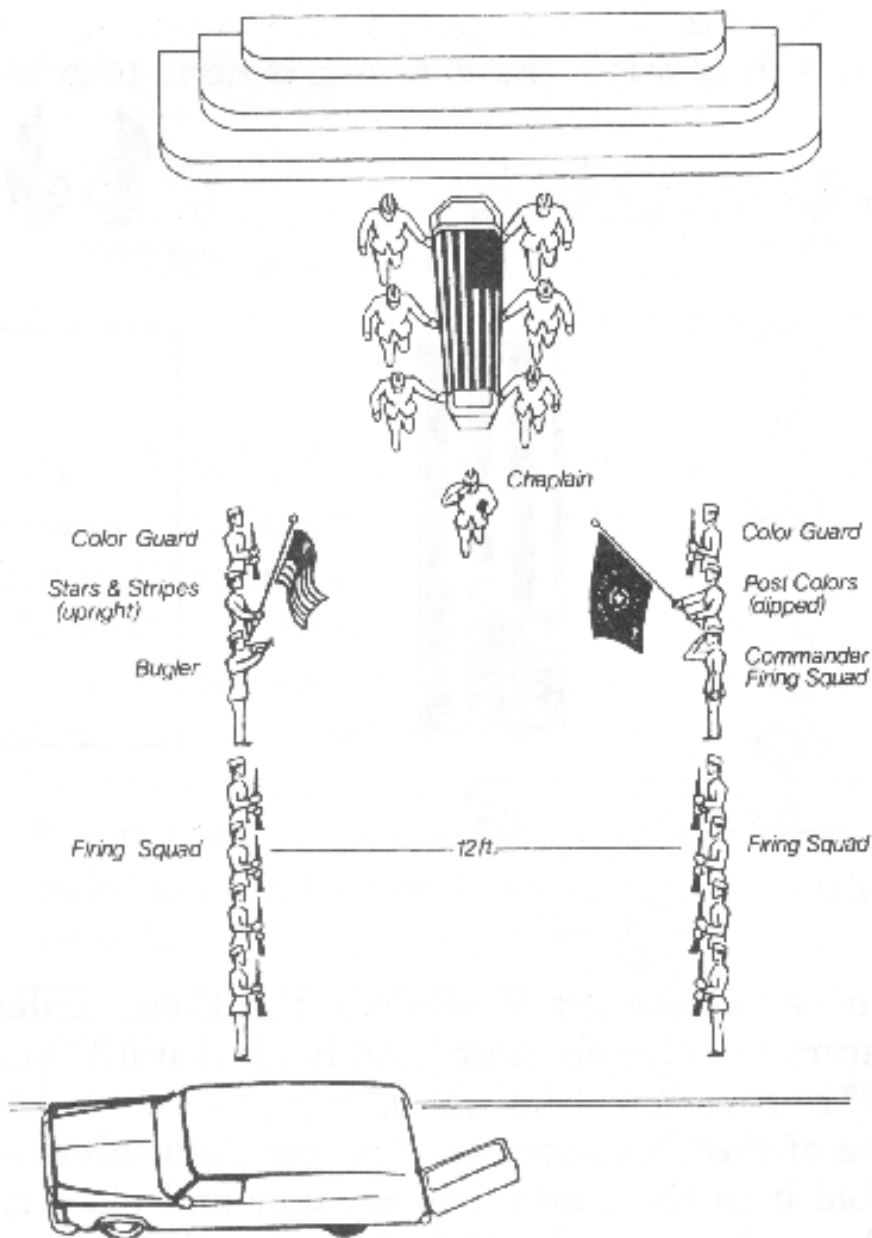
The Commander salutes.

As the Chaplain leads body through escort, the Commander holds the right hand salute (Chaplain salutes Flag only).

Post Banner is dipped as casket passes.

The Firing Squad remains at "Present Arms" until casket is in hearse and doors closed; then the **Commander** gives "1. Order. 2. Arms."

The units should be arranged at the building exit before the body comes out of the place of worship or home in the following order:



The escorts enter cars as quickly as possible.

The Firing Squad, Color Bearers, Guards and Commander should go ahead of the procession and get their places.

The Chaplain, Bugler and Pallbearers should go to the cemetery ahead of the funeral procession.

The Firing Squad can be given necessary drill at grave before the hearse arrives.

No definite arrangement at the grave is advisable because the surroundings at each grave differ. The following plan, changed when necessary, is satisfactory.

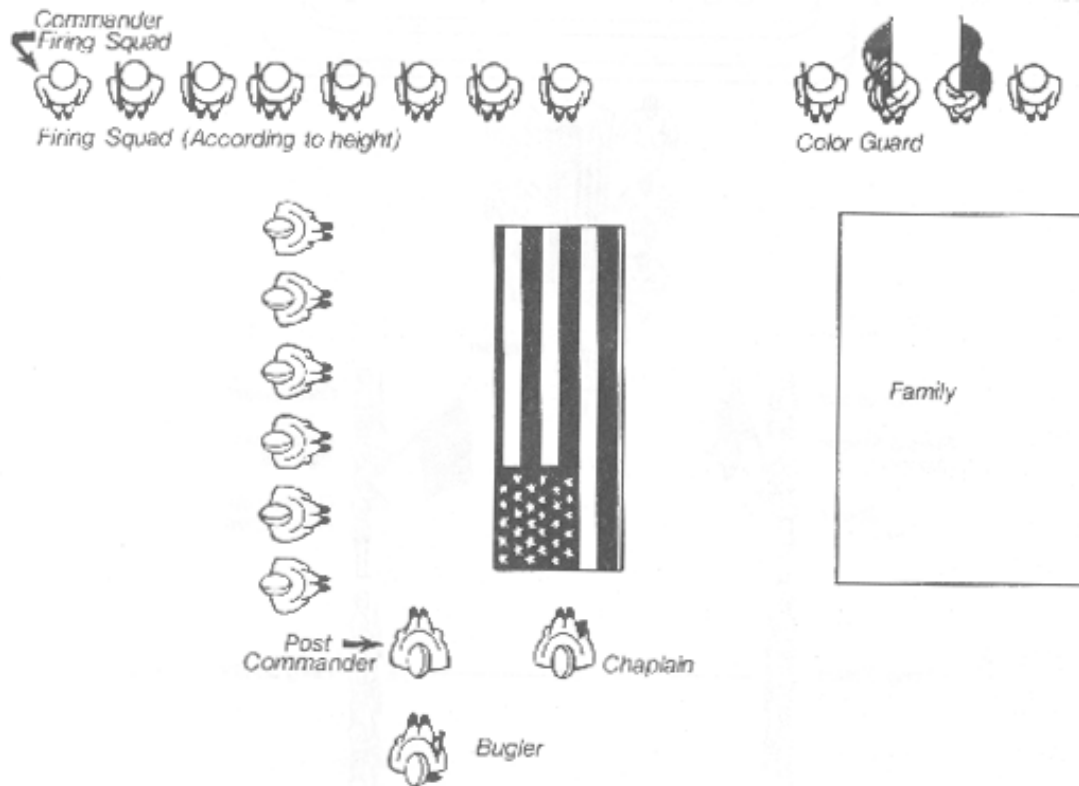
The Pallbearers at cemetery await the opening of the hearse.

The Chaplain leads the casket from hearse to grave.

Upon sight of casket, the **Commander** gives "1. *Present.* 2. *Arms.*" and holds it until body is set over grave.

Then "1. *Order.* 2. *Arms.*"

When the casket is in position, the following general plan is satisfactory:



As the Chaplain begins the grave services, the **Commander** brings Firing Squad and Pallbearers to "Parade, Rest" and holds it until Chaplain's services are complete; **then** "1. *Escort.* 2. *Attention.*"

At the conclusion of the Chaplain's service, two Pallbearers remove the Flag from the casket, fold it in the traditional manner and place it on the arm of Chaplain, who will give flag to nearest kin following the services.

Chaplain: "The Government of the United States presents to you, through The American Legion, the flag under which our comrade served."

Other appropriate remarks can be made by Chaplain.

As soon as Flag is presented, the Firing Squad fires three volleys:

At the **Commander's order**, "*Ready*," bring the rifle so that the muzzle of rifle is level with point of chin. The right foot should be placed to the rear about 10 inches. The right hand should be on small of stock and left hand at rear of sight.

At command, "*Load*" (rifles should be loaded, none in chamber before body is taken from hearse) work bolt and put cartridge in chamber.

Remain at position of "*Ready*" until order "*Aim*" is given.

An aiming point should be designated so elevation of rifles is uniform.

The command of execution is "*Fire*."

After firing, the first and second volleys come to position of "*Ready*" and wait for command, "1. *Ready*. 2. *Aim*. 3. *Fire*."

Upon completion of third volley, come to "*Present Arms*" without command.

If rifle jams, don't attempt to fix it; simulate firing.

The bugler now takes position at head of grave and blows Taps.

Echo Taps, if possible, are very impressive.

The **Commander of Firing Squad** gives "*Order Arms*."

This concludes the services and the **Commander** gives "1. *Right or Left Face*. 2. *At Trail*. 3. *Forward*. 4. *March*," followed by the Colors and then by Pallbearers.

Traditional Method of Folding United States Flag

Diagram appears on the following page

1. During the military funeral ceremony, the Flag is folded immediately at the conclusion of Chaplain's service.

2. The two Pallbearers remove the Flag from the casket, hold it taut and then fold the lower striped section of the Flag over the blue field.

3. The folded edge is then folded over to meet the open edge.

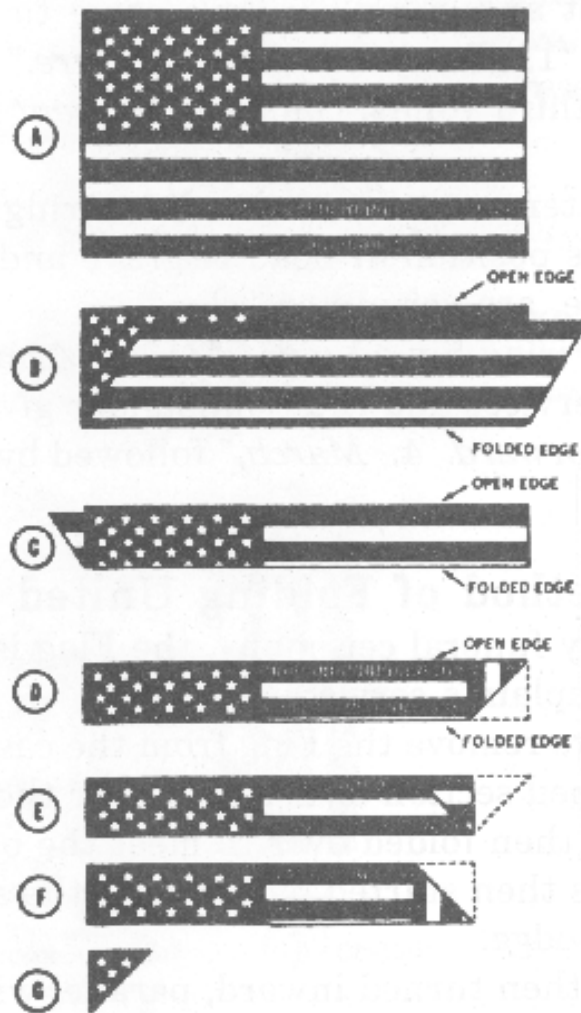
4. A triangular fold is then started by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to the open edge.

5. The outer point is then turned inward, parallel with the open edge, to form a second triangle.

6. The triangular folding is continued until the entire length of the Flag is folded in this manner.

7. When the Flag is completely folded, only the blue field should be visible, and it should be folded in the triangular shape of a cocked hat.

FOLDING THE FLAG



MILITARY FUNERAL HONORS FOR VETERANS

On October 5, 1999, President Clinton signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act, Public Law 105-261. Section 578 of the Act reflects the extensive deliberation on Military Funeral Honors conducted between the Department of Defense and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) to include The American Legion. Some of the key features of the law are:

- ◆ The law mandates military participation in a basic Military Funeral Honors Ceremony consisting of the folding and presentation of the flag and the playing of "Taps" for every eligible veteran upon request.

- ◆ Funeral Directors will be the focal point for requesting military participation In rendering funeral honors.
- ◆ Military personnel to perform this ceremony shall consist of two or more Uniformed members of the Armed Forces, with at least one member from the Service in which the deceased veteran served.
- ◆ Members of Veterans Service Organizations are encouraged to participate in Military Funeral Honors and to augment military funeral details when requested.
The law allows reimbursement of expenses for members of VSOs, however, a Final decision on reimbursement policy will be forthcoming. The Military Services have been requested to conduct training for those VSO elements which
Will be participating in Military Funeral Honors.
- ◆ Members of the National Guard and Reserves are also encouraged to participate
In military funeral honors and will receive an allowance of \$150/day as well as Retirement points.

Due to a limited number of buglers in the Military Services, a recorded version of “Taps” is often used. To ensure superior quality of playback, the Department of Defense has recorded the playing of “Taps” at Arlington National Cemetery on compact discs for presentation to veterans’ families. There will be a wide distribution of these compact discs to American Legion Departments, to Funeral Directors, and to participating military units.

PATRIOTIC HOLIDAYS

Memorial Day

Public Hall or Grove

It is well to remember that Memorial Day originated at the close of the Civil War, and therefore, Posts of The American Legion should give due recognition on the program to the veterans of earlier wars.

After the audience is seated, the Post enters, either in uniform or wearing ceremonial badges, and files into reserved space or seats.

The Commander stands before the Post, or upon the platform where the guests, speakers and Chaplain are seated.

Commander: “Comrades, this day is sacred with the almost visible presence of those who have gone before us. We honor the memory of those who gave their lives in the service of our country, and of those others who have dropped their burdens by the wayside of life, and are gone to their eternal rest. May the ceremonies of today deepen your reverence for our

departed friends and comrades. Let us renew our pledge of loyalty to our Country and its Flag. Let us resolve by word and deed to emphasize the privilege and duty of patriotism.

”In place of the following prayer, the Chaplain may deliver one of own of the same length and general tenor.

Chaplain: “Let us pray. Almighty God, Giver of all victories, we thank Thee for the opportunities which abide in our land, for Thy guidance in the hour of peril and Thy tender love in times of need. Help us to remember with reverence the valor and devotion of our departed comrades; not only those whose bodies consecrate our Country’s soil, but also those who sleep beyond the seas, and those others whose resting places will not be known until that last day when the deep will have given up its dead. O God, teach us to honor them by ever cherishing the ideals for which they fought. Keep us steadfast in the cause of human rights and liberties, of law and order, and true Americanism. Give us the power to see, and the will to do the right. Grant that The American Legion may preserve the high ideal for which our comrades died. May Thy merciful blessing rest upon those they left behind. Keep us forever firm in righteousness, humble of heart, and unselfish in purpose. Amen.”

Music or readings. The following are suggested: Kipling—Recessional, Alan Seeger—Memorial Day Ode, McCrea—In Flanders Fields.

Speaker, or speakers, of the day, introduced by the Commander.

Tribute to Veterans of all Wars

It is suggested speeches be strictly in the nature of a tribute to, or eulogy of, the dead in all our wars, and speaker should be advised accordingly.

In the absence of a speaker, or if desire for any other reason, the following address may be given:

Commander: “Again our nation has assembled to honor its heroic dead. A thousand battles of land, sea, and air echo the glory of their valiant deeds. Under the quiet sod, or beneath the murmuring waves, their bodies sleep in peace. But in the destinies of veterans, their souls go marching on. Because of them our lives are free. Because of them our nation lives.

“When we recall the things they did, the hero hosts seem mighty in our midst. When peril threatened and their Country called, with what divine self-sacrifice they left their paths of peace to spring to arms, to make their breasts a barricade against the nation’s foes. No sorrow for the loved ones left behind could dim the purpose in their souls. No weariness of march and

watch could keep them from their hearts' desire. No horror of the field, or sea, or air could beat their courage down.

“They fought for us; for us they fell. Now with one accord, in deepest reverence, we do them honor. Let us not remember them in anguish; they would not wish our pity. For their sakes also let us not forget the loved ones left behind. Our tears or words of sympathy cannot bring back the comfort of those loving hands or the music of those voices stilled. Only the solemn pride of having given more than all the rest is theirs who live to weep. But all the world, because of what they gave, is debtor to them.

“Comrades, on this Memorial Day let us pledge ourselves anew to patriotic service. Let us make ourselves the friend and brother, son and father, of those who will not see their own again in mortal flesh. Let us grasp with fearless hands the Flag so nobly borne before, and, like those others, plant it always on the battlements of righteousness.

“All who stand with us today, will you not consecrate yourselves with us to emulate their sacred service that those who rest in heroes' graves may not have died in vain?

“Let us stand with bowed heads in solemn memory of our heroic dead.”

Thirty seconds' silence.

“The Star-Spangled Banner,” sung by the audience.

Commander: “The Chaplain will now pronounce the benediction, after which the audience will please remain until the Post has marched out of the hall.”

Chaplain: “Benediction.” *The Post files out of the hall.*

Cemetery Ceremony

In case there are no exercises elsewhere, those at the cemetery may be lengthened to include Memorial Day Service for Public Hall of Grove.

Order of March:

1. Colors

2. Music

3. Firing Squad

4. American Legion

5. Others *On arrival at the cemetery, the procession is drawn up in hollow square, or other suitable formation.*

Commander: “1. Parade. 2. Rest.” *Execute parade rest, inclining the head.*

Commander: “Comrades, attend the Memorial prayer.”

Chaplain: “Eternal God, we thank Thee for this hallowed soil. Make us worthy, we pray Thee, to guard our heritage of pride through all the years to come. In memory of these, our dead, may we pledge to our beloved land the same service and the same devotion. And, O Lord, secure to us evermore the peace for which our comrades died. Amen.”

The following floral ceremony may be omitted.

Commander: “Sergeant-at-Arms (or other comrade designated), you will deposit upon the monument (or graves) of our comrades a token of our enduring memory.”

Sergeant-at-Arms deposits flowers.

Commander: “The flowers may wither, but the spirit of which they are the symbol will endure until the end of time.”

In the case of naval posts, it may be desired to scatter flowers on sea or a stream instead.

Commander (to the officer in charge of Firing Squad): “Salute the dead!”

Officer in charge of Firing Squad shall cause the salute to be fired in the manner prescribed by the Infantry Drill Regulations in force at the time.

Bugler: Taps.

Post returns in the same order of march as before.

Independence Day

This ceremony is intended for public halls or groves where public services are held.

The audience is seated. After the preliminary parade, the Post enters, in uniform or wearing ceremonial badges, and files into the reserved space, or seats. The Commander takes designated place upon the platform with the Chaplain, guests and speaker.

Commander: “(Post, Name and #), Department of, The American Legion, attention to orders.”

The Adjutant shall read orders.

After the rewarding of orders, the Post will be seated.

Commander: “Comrades and friends: We meet to celebrate the anniversary of our Country’s independence. The Vice-Commander will read portions from the Declaration made by our forefathers on July 4, 1776.”

The Vice-Commander shall then read:

“When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to

the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed and that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over the states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

“We, therefore, the representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, assembled, appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions, do, in the name, and by the authority of the good people of these colonies, solemnly publish and declare, that these united colonies are, and of right ought to be free and independent states; that they are absolved from all allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the state of Great Britain, is and ought to be totally dissolved; and that as free and independent states, they have full power to levy war, conclude peace, contract alliances, establish commerce, and to do all other acts and things which independent states may of right do. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.”

Commander: “This declaration was followed by years of struggles. Therefrom our nation was born, and on September 17, 1787; it adopted the Constitution, the charter of our rights and liberties, whose preamble I now request our Second Vice-Commander to read.”

Second Vice-Commander: “We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution for the United States of America.”

Commander: “This government guaranteed by these great documents has been preserved to the present day. We now pay tribute to those who fought for its establishment and preservation. The same spirit which animated them promoted the heroes of the World War of 1917 and 1918 to fight to preserve the freedom of civilization of the world. Out of that struggle grew The American Legion, whose preamble I now request the Chaplain to read.”

Chaplain: “For God and Country, we associate ourselves together for the following purposes:

“To uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States of America: to maintain law and order; to foster and perpetuate a one hundred percent Americanism; to preserve the memories and incidents of our association in the Great Wars; to inculcate a sense of individual obligation to the community, state and nation; to combat the autocracy of both the classes and the masses; to make right the master of might; to promote peace and good will on earth; to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of Justice, Freedom and Democracy; to consecrate and sanctify our comradeship by our devotion to mutual helpfulness.”

Music.

The Commander will introduce the speaker of the day.

It is optional for the Post to have children in patriotic dress to sing “America,” “Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean,” or other patriotic music at this point.

Chaplain: “Let us stand in silence in memory and in honor of the soldiers of the Revolutionary War and those after them who have fought that Liberty might endure.”

“The Star-Spangled Banner.”

The Post files out and is dismissed.

Veterans Day

Public Hall or Grove

The Post files in and is seated in reserved space or seats. The Commander, Chaplain and other officers or members with speaking parts take their places on the platform. The active parts are given by four officers or other members designated by the Commander.

Commander: “The Chaplain will offer prayer.”

The following prayer is optional. In its place the Chaplain may deliver one of own of the same length and tenor. If any member shall object to prayer on conscientious grounds, then thirty seconds’ silence in memory of the dead shall be observed, provided the same is so ordered by a majority of the members present.

Chaplain: “O God of Hosts, we bow our heads in thankfulness for the victories Thou hast granted us—to us and to those peoples who have united with us to stamp out the evils of aggression, intolerance and greed.

“We beseech Thee to bring the blessings of understanding to the families and friends, in this and other lands, of those who have given their lives that men may be free. Grant, O God, that those closest to the fallen may mingle the pain of their losses with the ennobling light of sacrifice for civilization—sacrifice for a better world for this and other generations yet unborn.

“Grant us too, O God, the courage to so live with the family of nations around the world that the end of strife will be the beginning of enduring peace. Grant us patience in planning with our fellow men and women a world in which nations may resolve their differences by peaceful means.

“Touch Thou the souls of people in every land with the enduring light of wisdom so they may form a brotherhood which will strive to further the arts of peace under laws and ethics blessed by Thy love.

“Grant us now Thy continued blessing upon unity and strength, that makes victories possible in war, that we may win greater victories of peace.

“Amen.”

Music or singing:

Commander: “On this day, Veterans Day, we are commemorating the services of veterans of all wars.

“We remember how men and women set aside their civilian pursuits to serve their nation’s cause, defending the freedom of mankind and preserving our precious American heritage.

“We believe our strength on the field of battle, on the supply lines which nourished our armed might, lay in the justice of our cause against the forces

of evil. We believe our determination made us better warriors because we fought with our minds and our hearts as well as our bodies.

“We recognize service to our country and her cause does not end with the termination of military service. We continue our endeavors in behalf of an honorable world peace with a feeling of profound gratitude to God, and to the men and women who gave their lives as their part of the cost of this noblest of causes.

“Out of blood and sweat we learned of purpose, sacrifice, tolerance, bravery and discipline. These are solid foundation stones upon which a great nation is built. In our continuing quest for an honorable world peace we must cultivate these virtues.”

President or representative of the American Legion Auxiliary: “The waging of war involves more than just the combatants who fight to the death on the field of battle. The fighting forces begin at the fireside and in the hometowns. The repercussions of war’s terrible brutality have chilled the heart and dimmed the hopes and dreams of many a loved one left behind on the homefront.

“While the horrors of the battlefield may not have been our experience, we have lived with the terrifying loneliness created to answer an aggressor’s challenge.

“In waging war, we have moved forward with a unity of purpose which made us strong, forgetting pettiness, egotism and pride. Our hearts beat in tune with those in other nations fighting for freedom and the dignity and opportunity of mankind. In our constant quest for an honorable world peace, there is need for unity of purpose if we truly are to move toward a brighter tomorrow.”

First Officer: “If there be glory in war, it is the almost incredible spirit which it engenders. Those who offered their lives, sacrifice their all, with magnificent abandon. Heroism becomes contagious. Yet, too, in warfare, greed and brutality are epidemic. Too often it is these later which persist in the peace that follows. Let us strive to see the same spirit of self-sacrifice is cultivated in peace as has been exhibited in war.

“It behooves us to rear new standards of success, to inspire youth in peace as youth was inspired in war. Public honor must be given, where public honor is due; not to the manipulator of a market, the seeker after profit, power or position; but rather, let us honor the heroes of science who alleviate human suffering and carry to greater heights the standards of civilization.

“Let us honor those who in public service seek not how much they may secure from the nation but how much they can give. Let us honor those who devote their lives to that education which will lead our children on to live and laugh and learn and love, as we have only dreamed of doing. Let us honor those veterans who carry into ordinary affairs of life a noble idealism and sincere capacity for self-devotion. Let us translate the devotion of war into a devotion of peace. Let us will to live as well as die for our Country.”

Woman Veteran: “The hurts of war fall alike upon those who wear the same uniform, no matter how they may differ in race, creed or culture. Those who fight together suffer together to achieve a common aim.

“In the similarity of battle dress, there is a common denominator. The common purpose, the sharing of danger and suffering which brings in time of war a tolerance which adds strength to the cause.

“As we put aside the brown and blue and green fabrics that made us one people on the battlefields, we can hold in our minds that tolerance we have achieved. In tolerance there is progress—progress toward a better and a happier world.”

Second Officer: “Courage is one of the virtues born of war—the courage of individuals in the face of danger and the courage of nations to protect the weak and punish the aggressor.

“There is bravery to be shown in peace as well. May we recapture the courage which turned the wilderness into cities, that bound men together under government.

“We can turn slums into comfortable homes; turn uncertainty into certainty. We can reach new heights of civilization and opportunity for the men and women of this nation if we have the courage to expect and work for a better way of life.

“There can be romance in this challenge also. The bravery that fights for political, social, economic and spiritual gains may be more difficult to practice—may be unsung when achieved—but it is all the more worth striving for.”

Third Officer: “War has taught us the lesson of obedience to command.

‘The game is more than the player . . .

And the ship is more than the crew.’

“There is a greater discipline we must now pursue if we are to preserve this virtue of obedience in our quest for an honorable world peace. That is

obedience to the laws we, ourselves, make—the voluntary discipline of citizenship.

“Under our system of government we may change the laws by majority rule. We may persuade our neighbors to new theories or new courses. We may advocate in free elections the choice of veterans or plans. As good citizens we follow the choice of the majority, whether that choice be the individual’s or not.

“This is the virtue of discipline which must be ours in peace. This is the lesson we must learn at home, in school, on the playing fields, in organizations, in the community, and the nation. It is the lesson of voluntary obedience to the decisions of the majority.

“We must not be unmindful either of the conclusions of other peoples with whom we have joined in the quest for an honorable world peace, this is the higher order of disciplines.”

Commander: “In time of peace we can use the ennobling virtues of war and put behind us its ugliness and suffering. In peace we shall go forward together to scale new heights of achievement in unity of purpose, in sacrifice for the common good, in tolerance for those of different faiths and creeds, in bravery to fight for social and economic gains, and in the discipline of good citizenship. We shall move forward in the sight of God as a strong nation in a peaceful world.”

Other speakers may be introduced by the Commander:

“The Star-Spangled Banner”

Post files out.

FLAG CEREMONIES

Retirement of Old Colors

This ceremony is a suggested outline to be followed when an American Legion organization may wish to retire, not destroy, colors which have become unserviceable.

Commander: “It has been recommended our worn set of old colors be fittingly retired. As they have served our Post for many years and on a great variety of occasions we shall retire them with the respect they deserve.

“Sergeant-at-Arms, you will have the Color Guard advance and present the colors for final inspection.”

The colors are brought to the commander’s rostrum in proper form.

Sergeant-at-Arms: “We have the honor to present for inspection and retirement the colors which have served our Post for (name number) years.”
(Sergeant-at-Arms steps to one side.)

Commander: The members of the inspection team will examine the colors.” (The two inspectors can be Post officers.)

First Inspector: “The colors have become faded and worn as a result of use in Post functions. I recommend they be retired.”

Second Inspector: “These colors have become unserviceable in a worthy cause and they should be honorably retired from further service.

Commander: “Sergeant-at-Arms, prepare the colors for retirement.”

Sergeant-at-Arms instructs the Color Guard to prepare to retire the colors.

The Commander gives three raps of the gavel.

Commander: “The Chaplain will offer prayer.”

Chaplain: “Almighty God, Captain of all hosts and Commander over all, bless and consecrate this gathering.

“We thank you for our country and its Flag, and for the liberty for which it stands.

“We thank you for The American Legion and its banner, and the privilege you have given us to serve our country in its hours of need and to continue to serve our country in time of peace. Amen.”

Commander: “Sergeant-at-Arms, retire the colors.”

It is presumed most Posts will desire to retain their old colors in a trophy case or some other place where they can be properly displayed or stored.

Dignified Disposal of Unserviceable Flags

(Diagram of arrangements appears on the following page)

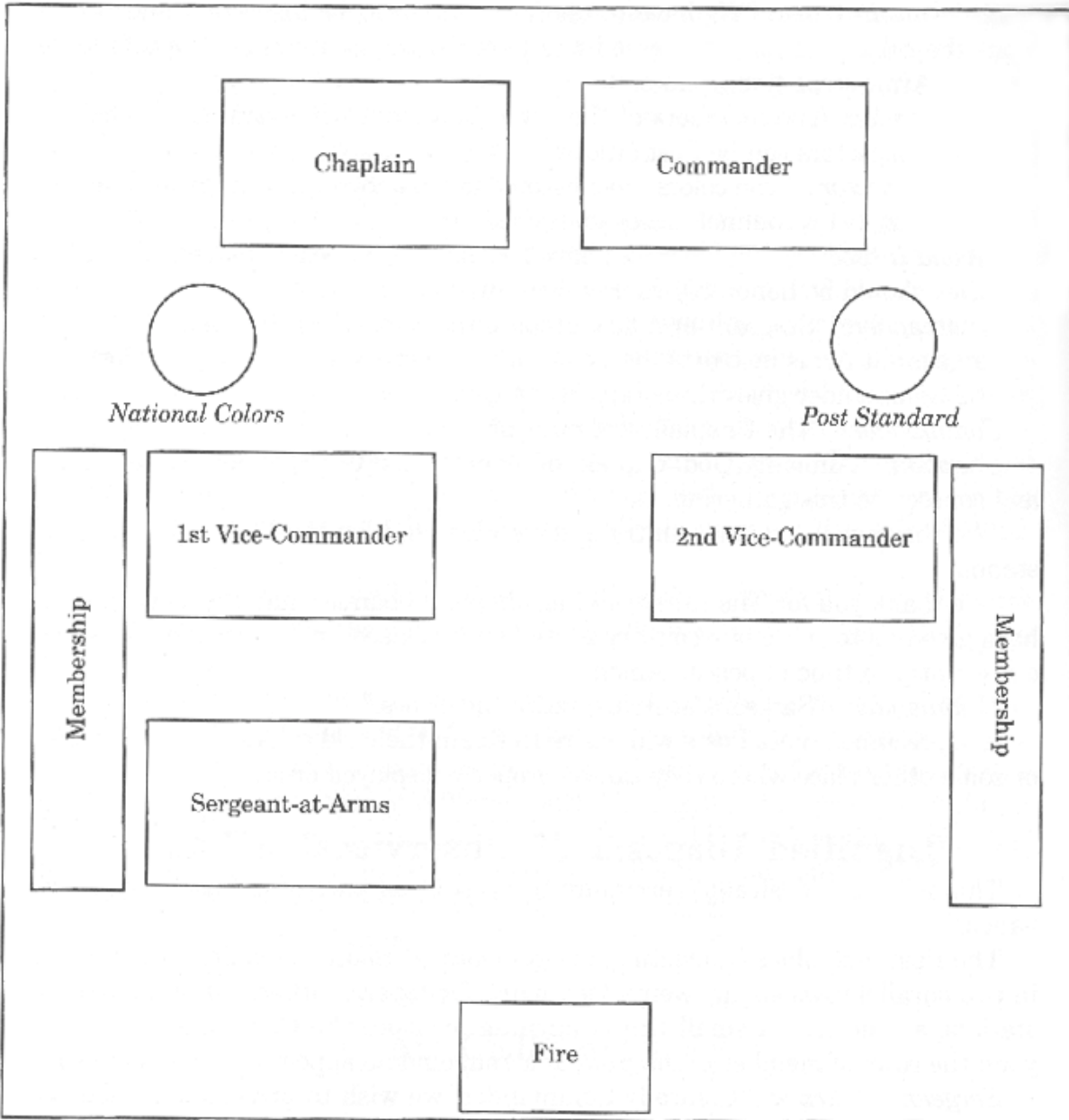
This is a very desirable ceremony to present as part of a Flag Day observance.

The Post assembles in meeting, out-of-doors, at night. Members are aligned in two parallel rows about twenty feet apart, facing each other. Officers at their stations as shown. A small fire is burning opposite the Commander and beyond the rows of members.

Sergeant-at-Arms: “Comrade Commander, we wish to present a number of unserviceable Flags of our Country for inspection and disposal.”

Commander: “Comrade Sergeant-at-Arms, advance with your detail and present the Flags for disposal and inspection.”

”Sergeant-at-Arms calls detail to attention. They form at the Post of the Sergeant-at-Arms, take the Flags which are to be inspected, march abreast down center until opposite the Second Vice-Commander, turn right and halt two paces in front of the Second Vice-Commander. The Sergeant-at-Arms steps one pace forward and salutes.



Sergeant-at-Arms: “Comrade Vice-Commander, we present these unserviceable Flags for your inspection.”

Second Vice-Commander: “Is the present condition of these Flags the result of their usual service as the Emblem of our Country?”

Sergeant-at-Arms: “These flags have become faded and worn over the graves of our departed comrades and the dead soldiers, sailors, and airmen of all our Nation’s wars.”

Second Vice-Commander: “Present these Flags to the First Vice-Commander for his inspection.”

The Sergeant-at-Arms salutes, about faces, commands the detail, “About Face,” crosses behind the detail and takes post at its left, commands “Forward March.” The detail marches to within two paces of the First Vice-Commander, halts and proceeds as before.

Sergeant-at-Arms: “Comrade Vice-Commander, we present these Flags which have been inspected by the Second Vice-Commander, for your further inspection.”

First Vice-Commander: “Have any of these Flags served any other purpose?”

Sergeant-at-Arms: “Some of these Flags have been displayed in various public places.”

First Vice-Commander: “Present them to the Commander for final inspection and dignified disposal.”

Sergeant-at-Arms: The Sergeant-at-Arms salutes, about faces, commands the detail “About Face,” crosses behind the detail and takes position on its left commands “Forward March.” The detail marches to center, turns left, halts within two paces of the Commander, Sergeant-at-Arms steps one pace forward and salutes.

Sergeant-at-Arms: “Comrade Commander, we have the honor to present for final inspection and proper disposal these Flags of our Country.”

Commander: “Have these Flags been inspected by the First and Second Vice-Commanders?”

Sergeant-at-Arms: “They have.”

Commander: “Comrade Second Vice-Commander, what does your inspection show and what do you recommend?”

Second Vice-Commander: “Comrade Commander, since these Flags have become unserviceable in a worthy cause, I recommend they be honorably retired from further service.”

Commander: “Comrade First Vice-Commander, what does your inspection show and what do you recommend?”

First Vice-Commander: “Comrade Commander, since these Flags have become faded and worn in a tribute of service and love, I also recommend they be fittingly destroyed.”

Commander: “Comrades, 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 we and our comrades have worked for and lived for, and died for—a free nation of free men and women, true to the faith of the past, devoted to the ideals and practice of Justice, Freedom and Democracy.

“Let these faded Flags of our Country be retired and destroyed with respectful and honorable rites and their places be taken by bright new Flags of the same size and kind, and let no grave of our soldier, sailor, or airman dead be unhonored and unmarked. Sergeant-at-Arms, assemble the Color Guard, escort the detail bearing the Flags and destroy these Flags by burning. The members shall stand at attention.”

Color Guard forms. The detail about faces. Preceded by the Color Guard, the detail marches down center to the fire. National Colors cross over and take position on the right of the fire, facing the Commander. Post Standard takes position on left of fire. The detail lines up behind the fire, which is burning low.

Commander: “The Chaplain will offer prayer.”

Chaplain: “Almighty God, Captain of all hosts and Commander over all, bless and consecrate this present hour.

“We thank you for our Country and its Flag, and for the liberty for which it stands.

“To a clean and purging flame we commit these Flags, worn out 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.”

Commander: “Hand salute.”

Color Guards present arms. Post Standard is dipped. All officers and members, except those on the Flag detail, salute. Members of the Flag detail dip the condemned Flags in kerosene and place them on a rack over the fire. Bugler sounds “To the Colors.”

Commander, at conclusion of “To the Colors:” “Two.”

The Color Guard shall resume its station and detail is dismissed.

Color Guard advances down center and places Colors. Members of the detail resume their places among the members.

Flag Presentation

1. Open ceremony with Chairman or Master of Ceremonies calling gathering to order and briefly outlining purpose of meeting.

EXAMPLE—The audience will please come to order. We gathered here for an important patriotic and solemn purpose. To witness the presentation of the Flag of our country, “Old Glory” to, by

2. Let us stand while pronounces the invocation.

(Post Chaplain or local minister)

3. Reading—“Your Flag and My Flag,” by Wilbur D. Nesbit (Chairman introduces person who will give the reading). Note: Check your School or Public Library for other appropriate verse on the Flag.

4. Purpose of Presentation—A brief explanation of purpose of presentation, the organization or person presenting the Flag and the organization or individual to whom the Flag is to be presented. (By chair or other designated person.)

5. Presentation of Flag—Person making presentation should have Flag ready. Be sure Flag has been properly folded in form of colonial hat with only the blue field and stars thereon showing. (See “Flag and Flag Etiquette” in index.) Person who is to receive the Flag is called from the front of audience, and after a few well-chosen words by the presenting person, receives the Flag.

EXAMPLE—It is a great privilege and pleasure to have the honor of presenting this beautiful symbol of our country, the Flag of the United States of America, “The Stars and Stripes,” to, on behalf of May it always fly over our land, representing a government instituted by our founding fathers, that will always champion Freedom and Justice.

6. Acceptance of the Flag—Person receiving Flag makes acceptance speech.

EXAMPLE—With sincere thanks and appreciation, I accept this beautiful and precious Flag on behalf of Thank you.

7. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag should be recited by everyone present. (Legionnaires will remove their caps.)

8. Mass singing— “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “America,” or other appropriate patriotic song.

9. Benediction.

Note—This suggested program is for a brief ceremony. Should a more elaborate program be desired, such as raising the Flag on a flagpole, etc., hold presentation

ceremonies as indicated above and extend program following item #6 and before mass singing and the benediction.

If a flag raising is included in the ceremony, it's recommended an Honor Guard consisting of at least seven (7) riflemen, two (2) Color Bearers carrying the American Flag and American Legion Colors, and two (2) Legionnaires to raise the Flag be marched to the flagpole. (A 150 feet distance is recommended, although this will vary as circumstances permit.)

After the Flag is raised, and/or National Anthem is played, the Honor Guard should fire one volley as a salute to the Flag.

If a band is not available to play the National Anthem, a bugler could be substituted to play "To the Colors."

THE FLAG CODE

Title 36, U.S.C., Chapter 10

As amended by P.L. 344, 94th Congress

Approved July 7, 1976

SS170. National Anthem; Star-Spangled Banner

The composition consisting of the words and music known as The Star-Spangled Banner is designated the national anthem of the United States of America.

SS171. Conduct during playing

During the rendition of the National Anthem when the flag is displayed, all present except those in uniform should stand at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. Men not in uniform should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should render the military salute at the first note of the anthem and retain this position until the last note. When the flag is not displayed, those present should face toward the music and act in the same manner they would if the flag were displayed there.

SS172. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag; manner of delivery

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, "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," should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform, men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag, and render the military salute.

SS173. Display and use of flag by civilians; codification of rules and customs; definition

The following codification of existing rules and customs pertaining to the display and use of the flag of the United States of America is established for the use of such civilians or civilian groups or organizations as may not be required to conform with regulations promulgated by one or more executive departments of the Government of the United States. The flag of the United States for the purpose of this chapter shall be defined according to Sections 1 and 2 of Title 4 and Executive Order 10834 issued pursuant thereto.

SS174. Time and occasions for display

(a) It is the universal custom to display the flag only from sunrise to sunset on buildings and on stationary flagstaves in the open. However, when a patriotic effect is desired, the flag may be displayed twenty-four hours a day if properly illuminated during the hours of darkness.

(b) The flag should be hoisted briskly and lowered ceremoniously.

(c) The flag should not be displayed on days when the weather is inclement, except when all weather flag is displayed.

(d) The flag should be displayed on all days, especially on New Year's Day, January 1; Inauguration Day, January 20; Lincoln's Birthday, February 12; Washington's Birthday, third Monday in February; Easter Sunday (variable); Mother's Day, second Sunday in May; Armed Forces Day, third Saturday in May; Memorial Day (half-staff until noon), the last Monday in May; Flag Day, June 14; Independence Day, July 4; Labor Day, first Monday in September; Constitution Day, September 17; Columbus Day, second Monday in October; Navy Day, October 27; Veterans' Day, November 11; Thanksgiving Day, fourth Thursday in November; Christmas Day, December 25; and such other days as may be proclaimed by the President of the United States; the birthdays of States (date of admission); and on State holidays.

(e) The flag should be displayed daily on or near the main administration building of every public institution.

(f) The flag should be displayed in or near every polling place on election days.

(g) The flag should be displayed during school days in or near every schoolhouse.

SS175. Position and manner of display

The flag, when carried in a procession with another flag or flags, should be either on the marching right; that is, the flag's own right, or; if there is a line of other flags, in front of the center of that line.

(a) The flag should not be displayed on a float in a parade except from a staff, or as provided in subsection (i) of this section.

(b) The flag should not be draped over the hood, top, sides or back of a vehicle or of a railroad train or a boat. When the flag is displayed on a motorcar; the staff shall be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.

(c) No other flag or pennant should be placed above or, if on the same level, to the right of the flag of the United States of America, except during church services conducted by naval chaplains at sea, when the church pennant may be flown above the flag during church services for the personnel of the Navy. No person shall display the flag of the United Nations or any other national or international flag equal, above, or in a position of superior prominence or honor to, or in place of, the flag of the United States at any place within the United States or any Territory or possession thereof: **Provided**, That nothing in this section shall make unlawful the continuance of the practice heretofore followed of displaying the flag of the United Nations in a position of superior prominence or honor, and other national flags in positions of equal prominence or honor, with that of the flag of the United States at the headquarters of the United Nations.

(d) The flag of the United States of America, when it is displayed with another flag against a wall from crossed staffs, should be on the right, the flag's own right, and its staff should be in front of the staff of the other flag.

(e) The flag of the United States of America should be at the center and at the highest point of the group when a number of flags of States or localities or pennants of societies are grouped and displayed from staffs.

(f) When flags of States, cities, or localities, or pennants of societies are flown on the same halyard with the flag of the United States, the latter should always be at the peak. When the flags are flown from adjacent staffs, the flag of the United States should be hoisted first and lowered last. No such flag or pennant may be placed above the flag of the United States or to the United States flag's right.

(g) When flags of two or more nations are displayed, they are to be flown from separate staffs of the same height. The flags should be of approximately equal size. International usage forbids the display of the flag of one nation above that of another nation in time of peace.

(h) When the flag of the United States is displayed from a staff projecting horizontally or at an angle from the window sill, balcony, or front of a building, the union of the flag should be placed at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half staff. When the flag is suspended over a sidewalk from a rope extended from a house to a pole at the edge of the sidewalk, the flag should be hoisted out, union first, from the building.

(i) When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall, the union should be uppermost and to the flag's own right, that is, to the observer's left. When displayed in a window, the flag should be displayed in the same way, with the union or blue field to the left of the observer in the street.

(j) When the flag is displayed over the middle of the street, it should be suspended vertically with the union to the north in an east and west street or the east in a north and south street.

(k) When used on a speaker's platform, the flag, if displayed flat, should be displayed above and behind the speaker. When displayed from a staff in a church or public auditorium, the flag of the United States of America should hold the position of superior prominence, in advance of the audience, and in the position of honor at the clergyman's or speaker's right as he faces the audience. Any other flag so displayed should be placed on the left of the clergy man or speaker or to the right of the audience.

(l) The flag should form a distinctive feature of the ceremony of unveiling a statue or monument, but it should never be used as the covering for the statue or monument.

(m) The flag, when flown at half-staff, should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flag should be again raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day. On Memorial Day the flag should be displayed at half-staff until noon only, then raised to the top of the staff. By order of the President, the flag shall be flown at half-staff upon the death of principal figures of the United States Government and the Governor of a State, territory, or possession, as a mark of respect to their memory. In the event of the death of other officials or foreign dignitaries, the flag is to be displayed at half-staff according to Presidential instructions or orders, or in accordance with recognized customs or practices not inconsistent with law. In the event of the death of a present or former official of the government of any State, territory, or possession of the United States, the Governor of that State, territory, or possession may proclaim that the National flag shall be flown at half-staff. The flag shall be flown at half-staff thirty days from the death of the President or former President; ten days from the day of death of the Vice President, the Chief of Justice or a retired Chief Justice of the United States, or the Speaker of the House of Representatives; from the day of death until interment of an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, a Secretary of an executive or military department, a former Vice President, or the Governor of a State, territory, or possession; and on the day of death and the following day for a Member of Congress. The flag shall be flown at half-staff on Peace Officers Memorial Day, unless that day is also Armed Forces Day. As used in this subsection—

(1) The term "half-staff" means the position of the flag when it is one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff;

(2) The term "executive or military department" means any agency listed under Sections 101 and 102 of Title 5; and

(3) The term "Member of Congress" means a Senator, a Representative, a Delegate, or the Resident Commissioner for Puerto Rico.

(n) When the flag is used to cover a casket, it should be so placed that the union is at the head and over the left shoulder. The flag should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.

(o) When the flag is suspended across a corridor or lobby in a building with only one main entrance, it should be suspended vertically with the union of the flag to the observer's left upon entering. If the building has more than one main entrance, the flag should be suspended vertically near

the center of the corridor or lobby with the union to the north, when entrances are to the east and west or to the east when entrances are to the north and south. If there are entrances in more than two directions, the union should be to the east.

SS176. Respect for flag

No disrespect should be shown to the flag of the United States of America; the flag should not be dipped to any person or thing. Regimental colors, State flags, and organization or institutional flags are to be dipped as a mark of honor.

(a) The flag should never be displayed with the union down, except as a signal of dire distress in instances of extreme danger to life or property.

(b) The flag should never touch anything beneath it, such as the ground, the floor, water, or merchandise.

(c) The flag should never be carried flat or horizontally, but always aloft and free.

(d) The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, bedding, or drapery. It should never be festooned, drawn back, nor up, in folds, but always allowed to fall free. Bunting of blue, white, and red, always arranged with the blue above, the white in the middle, and the red below, should be used for covering a speaker's desk, draping the front of the platform, and for decoration in general.

(e) The flag should never be fastened, displayed, used, or stored in such a manner as to permit it to be easily torn, soiled, or damaged in any way.

(f) The flag should never be used as a covering for a ceiling.

(g) The flag should never have placed upon it, nor on any part of it, not attached to it any mark, insignia, letter, word, figure, design, picture, or drawing of any nature.

(h) The flag should never be used as a receptacle for receiving, holding, carrying, or delivering anything.

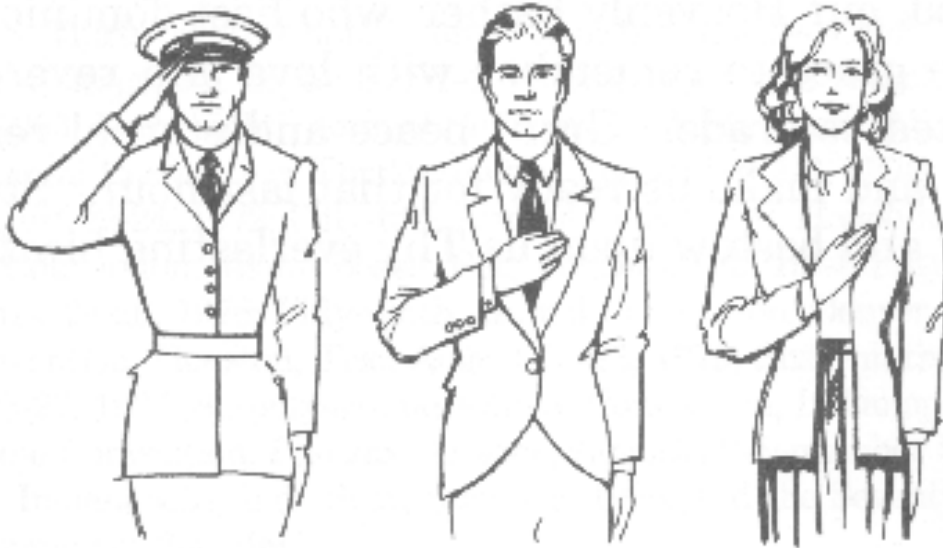
(i) The flag should never be used for advertising purposes in any manner whatsoever. It should not be embroidered on such articles as cushions or handkerchiefs and the like, printed or otherwise impressed on paper napkins or boxes or anything that is designed for temporary use and discard. Advertising signs should not be fastened to a staff or halyard from which the flag is flown.

(j) No part of the flag should ever be used as a costume or athletic uniform. However, a flag patch may be affixed to the uniform of military personnel, firemen, policemen, and members of patriotic organizations. The flag represents a living country and is itself considered a living thing. Therefore, the lapel pin being a replica, should be worn on the left lapel near the heart.

(k) 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.

SS177. Conduct during hoisting, lowering or passing of flag

During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag or when the flag is passing in a parade or in review, all persons present, except those in uniform, should face the flag and stand at attention with the right hand over the heart. Those present in uniform should render the military salute. When not in uniform, men should remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Aliens should stand attention. The salute to the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes.



SS178. Modifications of rules and customs by President

Any rule or custom pertaining to the display of the flag of the United States of America, set forth in Section 171-178 of this Title, may be altered, modified, or repealed, or additional rules with respect thereto may be prescribed, by the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States, whenever he deems it to be appropriate or desirable; and any such alteration or additional rule shall set forth in a proclamation.

For the sake of uniformity when reciting the “Pledge of Allegiance,” in an attitude of prayer, or in paying respect to the deceased, each Legionnaire should hold the Legion cap by inserting the fingers of the right hand into the cap, leaving the front of the cap at the top and placed over the heart with the Legion Emblem facing outward.

Prayers For Special Occasions

With greater emphasis given by The American Legion to the “God and Country” program, many Post Chaplains have been asked to give prayers at meetings other than Post meetings. Therefore, the following prayers have been printed as a guide for their use:

For Joint Meetings

Most gracious Father of us all, from Whom comes all help and blessings, look upon us gathered here, and with Thy favor, direct us in all our actions. Grant to us vigilant hearts; give us minds to know Thee, diligence to seek Thee, and wisdom to find Thee. Sanctify us with Thy presence, bless us with Thy might, and assist us with Thy counsel; that all our endeavors may begin with Thee and through Thee may be happily ended. AMEN.

Benediction

May the strength of God sustain us; may the power of God preserve us; may the hand of God protect us; may the way of God direct us; may the love of God go with us. AMEN.

Memorial Service

Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who hast dominion over life and death, grant to us the grace to remember with love and reverence our valiant and honored departed comrade. Grant peace and eternal rest to those who have gone before us, and make us ready for that last hour. Strengthen and console those in sorrow and bestow upon us Thy everlasting blessing. AMEN.