

Americanism/Patriotic Instructor

October 2023

Greetings to all Dept. of NM Americanism Chairmen & Patriotic Instructors, Members, and National Ambassador Linda Roloff:

Happy "almost Autumn" to everyone! I wanted to share some thoughts with you this month about the importance of flag retirements.



We just had a Flag Retirement ceremony at our Post as part of a remembrance ceremony on 9/11 to mark Patriot Day. It made me think, once again, about how important it is to have these events regularly to show our reverence, respect, and love for our country's beautiful symbol of our pride in this land and its heroes. I always think about those who have carried that venerable symbol into battle to preserve our freedoms. And I am always humbled to participate in the longstanding responsibility and tradition that our VFW has to demonstrate the proper, dignified way of dispensing of our U.S. flags that have become tattered and torn after serving our nation as a display of all that we are and all that we strive to be.

Through the years, I have had some great experiences with this ceremony. Here are my top three favorite things about flag retirements:

1. I LOVE when we have youth attend our flag ceremonies. These can be such great teaching opportunities for our future generations, as they witness an event illustrating how important our country's symbols can be to inspire and unite us, and to help us remember our purpose as a democracy and the solemn duty to protect and preserve our people and our way of life.
2. It is a tradition at our Post flag retirements to give each attendee a chance to dedicate a flag to a veteran and place that flag on the fire in their honor. We line up and take turns saying a few words on behalf of someone we love who has served our country and defended our land and its people. The time we take to do this is precious to me, as it helps me to remember why we are members of this great VFW organization.
3. On a lighter note, I always get a kick out of the fact that we inevitably get a visit from the Fire Department at some point in our ceremony. This is because our Post is in a relatively populated area of Las Cruces, and even though we have obtained the proper burn permit, someone always calls and reports a fire due to the black smoke wafting into the air, and it is a requirement that one of our first responder units stops by and checks out our proceedings to make sure everything is done properly and safely. We really enjoy our visits with these American heroes who keep us safe day to day in our community.

I would love to hear about your experiences with flag retirements at YOUR Post! If you haven't been to one of these awesome ceremonies, please consider attending, and please share with me your thoughts in one of your reports.

Yours in Service,

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