

Old Glory-ous Rules

By Reg P. Wydeven
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When I was in 5th grade, my good friend Tim and I were in charge of raising and lowering the American flag every day in front of the school. Our principal taught us how to fold the flag into a triangle and to never let it touch the ground. Rain or shine, Tim and I were out there every day diligently doing our duty.

When my dad was in the Marine Corps, he was on funeral detachment for 47 military funerals. He had the much more somber task of taking the flag off the casket, folding it into a triangle and presenting it to the family of the deceased serviceman.

But even with our impressive combined flag resume, both of us were clueless when folks at our office asked how long we were supposed to leave our flag at half-staff in honor of President Ford passing.

Well, on Flag Day, June 14, 1923, the National Flag Code was adopted by the National Flag Conference, which was made up of representatives of the Army, Navy and 66 other national organizations. On June 22, 1942, Congress passed a joint resolution making these rules for the use and display of the flag into law, in addition to rules for conduct during the playing of the National Anthem and the Pledge of Allegiance.

If you display the flag at your business or home, here are some important parts of the Flag Code to keep in mind:

- The flag should be flown at half-staff 30 days from the date of death of the President or a former President; 10 days for the Vice President, the current or a former Chief Justice, or the Speaker of the House; from the day of death until internment of an Associate Justice, a Secretary of an executive or military department, a former V.P., or a Governor; 1 day for a member of Congress; until noon on Memorial Day; and by the order of the President.
- If flown 24 hours a day, the flag should be properly illuminated at night.
- The flag should not be displayed during inclement weather, unless it is an all weather flag.
- State flags or Green Bay Packers flags should never be raised above or at the same height as the American flag.
- 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.
- The flag should never touch anything beneath it, such as the ground, the floor or water.
- The flag should never be used as wearing apparel, such as when Kid Rock wore one as a poncho during a Super Bowl performance.
- The flag should never have anything written or attached to it, like President Bush's faux pas of autographing a miniature flag.
- The flag should never be used for advertising.
- A lapel pin of the flag should be worn on the left lapel near the heart.

According to the Code, the flag represents our living country and thus, is itself considered a living thing. Therefore, when the flag is in such condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display, it should be destroyed in a dignified way, preferably by burning.

Wow. That's a lot for a 5th grader to remember.

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