

Teaching How to Properly Retire A Flag

A VFW Post in Kansas hosts the local Boy Scouts twice a year to teach them how to dispose of worn flags

Jan 29, 2021

Over the past seven years, a VFW Post and its Auxiliary in Kansas retired more than 1,200 U.S. flags in conjunction with the local Boy Scouts.

Post 7830, its Auxiliary and Boy Scout Troop 46 in Mankato, Kansas, about 178 miles north of Wichita, Kansas, have gathered twice a year for the past seven years and counting to conduct flag retirement ceremonies.

“It’s become a tradition here in Mankato,” said Post 7830 Quartermaster Gerald McAtee. “We invite the local Boy Scout troop to the Post twice a year, where Post and Auxiliary members teach the scouts what the flag stands for before starting the ceremony to dispose of the flags.”

Between 2014 and January 2021, the Post disposed of more than 1,200 worn and tattered flags at these retirement ceremonies with Troop 46, whose participation earns each individual Boy Scout present his “citizenship” merit badge.

Each year, Post 7830 members collect between 175 and 250 flags from the local depository, which sits next to the Post in downtown Mankato, in preparation for their retirement ceremony.

At each ceremony, Post members guide and stand by as the Boy Scouts assist in properly folding each flag, which can be difficult with certain tattered flags, before saluting and placing them in the fire.

“It’s a wonderful thing to see the Scouts honor and salute each flag, understanding that it’s a symbol of our freedom, not just an old piece of material,” McAtee said. “Not everyone knows how to respectfully retire an old, tattered American flag, so we take pride in knowing our local Scouts do.”

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