

The Right Stuff
“One Nation Under God”
By Kent Brooten

OK, I admit it, I am a little anal about some things. (If you ask my Scouts, they’ll probably tell you I’m a little anal about A LOT of things!).
One of course would be cotton. It boggles my mind anyone would wear cotton on a Boy Scout outing. This past weekend I saw so many blue jeans that I was considering going into the kerosene wick business.

I’ve attended a plethora of BSA ceremonies recently which were ALL WRONG.
Hello?

OK, they weren’t “all wrong” but they weren’t right.

As Boy Scouts, we should be setting the standard, reinforcing the “right way to do things”.

(sigh)

Unfortunately, we seem to be doing it the way we learned, which, also unfortunately, may not be the correct way.

Just to be sure I had it right, I looked up the US Flag Code.

Do a Google search, it can be found anywhere.

Here’s the deal: whenever the flag is in motion, we are supposed to salute.

The code says this:

§9. 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 in uniform should render the military salute. Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute. All other persons present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with their right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart. Citizens of other countries present should stand at attention. All such conduct toward the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes.

The US Flag Code gives us a huge amount of flexibility on how we conduct an opening / closing flag ceremony. But it’s clear that when the flag is moving, we are saluting.

The boy calling the colors at a regular troop meeting could say something like this:

Troop Attention, will the audience please rise

Color Guard attention

Color Guard forward march, Scout hand salute

Color Guard Halt.

Color Guard present the colors.

Please follow me in the Pledge of Allegiance: “I pledge allegiance....”

Color Guard post the colors

Color Guard honor the colors

To

Color Guard dismissed

(they return to ranks)

Troop at ease, the audience may be seated.

At a “flag pole” ceremony, when the colors rise above the color guard’s shoulders, ALL should be saluting until the flag reaches the pulley (it may be beyond that but at least until then).

About 15 years ago, a dad in the troop was convinced that he knew the “right way” to do a flag ceremony because he was in the military for 20 years. I have to chuckle however because we’ve had guys in the Army, the Coast Guard, the Navy and the Air Force. All did it slightly different. I believe we should defer to the US Flag Code.

My second pet peeve is the way we recite the Pledge of Allegiance. I was tickled with the latest revision of the BSA Handbook which took note of the fact that we are “one nation under God”. During the Pledge we don’t say “one nation (COMMA) under God”, we say “...ONE NATION UNDER GOD”. Anyone that has seen the Washington Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial will see in huge letters, chiseled in marble that we are indeed “one nation under God”.

“In God we Trust” is on every coin and on every piece of paper currency. It is who we are, what we believe in and one of the guiding principles of the Boy Scouts of America for the past 100 years!