

# I am Old Glory!---A Reading for Retiring Wornout Flags

I am a symbol of your country, of the principles for which you stand. Men and women have defended me with their blood and their lives because I stand for all that is good in your country. I have become the emblem of your unity, your power, your thoughts and purpose as a nation. I have become a symbol of a growing, changing nation. I am the banner of glory from the past, and like your country, I have a great future. I have no other character than that which you give me from generation to generation. The choice is yours.

I have flown in majestic silence above the hosts that execute those choices, whether in peace or war. And even through silence I have spoken to you--- voices from the past of those men and women who went before you, and from those records they've written about me. Those same records describe the character of those who eternalized my colors. My blue field is a symbol of their faith and glory. My red stripes denote their sacrifice and bravery - even the loss of their life-giving blood. My white denotes their purity of heart and mind.

But tonight, my colors reflect my years - for I am faded, tattered and worn. Rather than reflect misunderstanding upon those characteristics and colors for which I have flown, I must be retired so that fresh colors might be raised. The only proper retirement of my emblems is to return to the earth through fire, for fire symbolically denotes the presence of God.

For more than ten score years I have been the banner of hope and continue to be an enduring banner of the United States of America. Freedom for generations after generation of Americans. Men have followed me into battle with unwavering courage. You have looked on me as a symbol on national unity. You have prayed that you and your fellow citizens might continue to enjoy life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. So long as you love liberty more than life itself, so long as truth, justice and charity for all remain rooted deeply in human hearts, I shall continue to be the enduring banner of the United States of America.

But tonight, I bid you adieu.

## Alternative (longer) Version:

I am old glory; for more the 9 score years I have been the banner of hope and freedom for generation after generation of Americans. Born amid the first flames of America's fight for freedom, I am the symbol of a country that has grown from a little group of 13 colonies to a united nation of 50 sovereign states. Planted firmly on the high pinnacle of American Faith, my gently fluttering folds have proved an inspiration to untold millions. Men have followed me into battle with unwavering courage. They have looked upon me as a symbol of national unity. They have prayed that they and their fellow citizens might continue to enjoy the life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, which have been granted to every American as the heritage of free men. So long as men love liberty more than life itself, so long as they treasure the priceless privileges bought with the blood of our forefathers; so long as the principles of truth, justice and charity for all remain deeply rooted in human hearts, I shall continue to be the enduring banner of the United States of America.

Remember as you look at your Flag, which is the symbol of our nation, that it is red because of human sacrifice. It is blue because of the true blue loyalty of its defenders. It is white to symbolize liberty - our land of the free. The stars are symbols of the united efforts and hope in the hearts of many people striving for a greater nobler America.