



SOP Funeral Honor Guard Detail

Marine Corps League National Headquarters

Introduction

Funeral Honors is a commitment that each of us as a United States Marine undertake. We as the Marine Corps League (MCL) must hold ourselves to the high standards that the Marine Corps expects from us as well as we expect from each other. This SOP will address the uniforms we will wear and the procedures we will follow. See Attachment "A" for the Honor Guard Ceremonial Manual.

Standards for requesting Military Funeral Honors.

Once a Marine, always a Marine is more than a phrase, it speaks to a commitment to paying final tribute to a Marine's service to our country by providing Military Funeral Honors.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps continues to operate a Military Funeral Honors section in Quantico, Virginia. A toll-free number (866-826-3628) has been established for Families, Funeral Directors, and Marine Corps units to request Military Funeral Honors. The Military Funeral Honors section can be reached at the toll-free number during normal business hours, 0730 to 1630, Eastern Time, Monday through Friday, after normal business hours, or on weekends and holidays, all calls to the toll-free number are routed to voice mail. Messages received after 1630, Monday through Friday, will be returned the next business day. For weekends and holidays, messages are monitored in order to process requests for Military Funeral Honors that take place on the following Monday. Funerals for Tuesday or later will be returned on the following Monday. FAX or emails are not accepted for a request for Military Funeral Honors.

If a Marine Corps League Detachment is contacted directly by a funeral director or next of kin, the Detachment must supply the requestor the toll-free number (866-826-3628) to the Marine Corps' Military Funerals Honors section. All Military Funeral Honors can be requested through the Military Funeral Honors section at Headquarters Marine Corps.

After the request has been made, it will be up to the local I&I staff to contact your MCL Detachment. This may or may not happen. Contact and arrangements are made in many different ways across the Country and the local Detachment knows best how that chain of command works.

Working with the Marine Corps Honor Guard Detail.

It is very important to work with your local Marines to make the Funeral Honors something that the family will remember and cherish. Your duties may be the rifle volley, the playing of TAPS, Folding and presenting the Flag or presenting the Brass to the Family. What ever duties you are tasked with, Work with the Local Marine Corps and work as a team. These should all be worked out prior to the funeral.

Marine Corps League Honor Guard Manual

See attachment A

Marine Corps League Uniforms.

This section will cover the need of common MCL uniforms for Funeral Honor Guard Details and uniform options for inclement weather. It is very important that all MCL Funeral Honor Guard members be dressed alike. The Funeral Honor Guard Commander has the responsibility to ensure that all members are dress appropriately and alike. The following is a list of MCL uniforms that can be worn during your service on the Funeral Honor Guard Detail.

***Note:** The Funeral Honor Guard Uniform requirements below are specifically for the Funeral Honor Guard detail only when performing a funeral. You must revert back to the National Administrative Procedures, Enclosure (3) of the Uniform Code after your duties are finished.

All Funeral Honor Guard Detail members will wear the MCL Red Covers. No MCL Department (Red/Gold) or National (Gold) covers will be worn. All members of the MCL Funeral Honor Guard must wear the same uniform.

No pins are allowed on the MCL Cover per the National Administrative Procedures, Enclosure (3), Section V – MCL Covers.

1. If weather permits, the short sleeve (no tie) or the long sleeve shirt (with tie) can be worn with the MCL patch on the Left sleeve and the American flag on the Right sleeve. The Devil Dog patch may be on the Right Sleeve in lieu of the American Flag.
2. The Funeral Honor Guard Detail members may wear their Ribbons (MCL OR DOD) as per National Administrative Procedures, Enclosure (3), Section I – Medals & Ribbons. For those MCL Members in certain states, who have earned and are required to wear the “Authorized Provider Partnership Program (AP3) Folded Flag Pin, this pin can be worn over the right breast pocket. It will be placed above the name tag if one is worn.
3. At no time will an NCO or Officer Sword be used by anyone participating in a Funeral Honor Guard Detail. Commanders shall render a “hand-salute” when required.
4. White duty belts are allowed as sold in the MCL Ships store. All members of the Funeral Honor Guard Detail must wear the white duty or no one.
5. White gloves are an option, but all members of the Funeral Honor Guard Detail must wear the white gloves or no one.
6. Black trousers as well as dress blues trousers w/blood stripe may be worn with the appropriate belt. If there is an Associate member on the team and you chose the dress blues trousers, the Associate will wear the dress blues trousers without the blood stripe. All members of the MCL Funeral Honor Guard must wear the same trousers, only the Black Trousers or the Dress Blue Trousers. The team must be in the same uniform.
7. Black socks and Dress shoes. Orthopedic shoes are allowed as long as they are black in color.
8. Red Blazer casual uniform can be worn per uniform code.
9. Dress Blues uniform can be worn as well but the Marine must adhere to the Height to Weight and grooming standards as proscribed by the Marine Corps and all members of the Funeral Honor Guard Detail would have to wear the Dress Blues.
10. Inclement weather uniforms. The weather can be quite bad at times so it will be up to the MCL member to wear whatever they like under the HG uniform to keep them warm. The outside jacket may be the choice of the HG. The Red Satin MCL jacket or the United States Marine Corps Full Length All Weather Trench Coat with or without Liner, black insulated gloves and

180 ear muffs are also allowed. The USMC issued "Navy Blue" Sweater may also be worn under the Red Satin Jacket or the USMC All Weather Trench Coat, when the Dress Blue Trousers are worn. When the Red Satin jacket is worn, all jackets should be identical, without different patches and pins attached.

11. All members of the Honor Guard must be in the same uniform. No other items should be worn unless approved by this SOP.
12. At no time will bayonets, swords. Pistols, or pistol holsters be used in conjunction with any Marine Corps League uniform for the Funeral Honor Guard detail.

Dennis Tobin

Dennis Tobin
National Senior Vice Commandant
Corporate Secretary

2/1/2019

Date

Wendell W. Webb

Wendell W. Webb
National Commandant
Chief Executive Officer

2/1/2019

Date



Attachment "A"

Marine Corps League Funeral Honor Guard Manual

Marine Corps League National Headquarters

Introduction

Military Funeral Honors have always been provided whenever possible. However, the law now mandates the rendering of Military Funeral Honors for an eligible veteran if requested by the family. As provided by law, an honor guard detail for the burial of an eligible veteran shall consist of not less than three members of the Armed Forces. One member of the detail shall be a representative of the parent Service of the deceased veteran. The honor detail will, at a minimum, perform a ceremony that includes the folding and presenting of the American flag to the next of kin and the playing of Taps. Taps will be played by a bugler, if available, or by electronic recording. Today, there are so few buglers available that the Military Services often cannot provide one.

Code of Conduct

As Military Honors Detail participants, we represent all members of the Marine Corps League. We are judged by our actions and words when performing the Military Honors Ceremony. It is important to remember that the Ceremony should be handled with the utmost respect for the Veteran and his/her family. When the funeral procession arrives at the grave site, members of the procession will be observing us. We must maintain a solemn, military bearing at all times even after the service is complete and while returning to our cars. Casual conversation must not take place while family members are present as sound travels easily. If different instructions must be given, it should be done in a hushed, respectful manner.

All commands will be given in a loud and clear manner.

- Do Practice on arrival - before Ceremony -

Positioning / Timing Protocol

Upon arrival at the cemetery, the Detail Commander will inspect the Detail to make certain that they are in the proper uniform.

The Detail Commander is responsible for ensuring each step in the ceremony is executed properly, from the arrival of the funeral cortege to its departure.

The bugler should be placed at the gravesite, so they are in view of the family, approximately 30-40 yards from the grave.

The firing party should also be in view of the family, with positioning 45 degrees off head/blue field of flag, approximately 75 ft. from grave. But this is highly adjustable due to footing, family seating, etc. The firing party may include three, five, or seven rifle bearers, reflecting the American military custom of firing "three volleys of musketry" over the graves of fallen comrades.

When the funeral procession is entering the cemetery and is within view, the Detail Commander will call the Detail to order.

- The detail Commander gives the command, **DETAIL FALL IN.**



The detail is formed in line, with the detail Commander, approximately six feet in front of and three feet to the right of the detail party.

- The Commander will then give the command, **DETAIL ATTENTION**

DETAIL ATTENTION



- The detail Commander will give the following Commands.

a. Dress Right Dress



b. Ready Front



c. PARADE REST! (or “AT EASE” Detail Commanders choice)

PARADE REST



d. Whispered command “UNLOCK” (if not done at “Fall in”.)

When the family is ready to proceed, the funeral director will now signal the pallbearers to withdraw the casket from the hearse and carry it to the grave. The bugler and firing party are already at their gravesite positions.

When casket/urn arrives and is within immediate view of the gravesite, the Commander will give the following commands;

- **DETAIL ATTENTION**, at which time the Commander will give the following command, **PRESENT ARMS!**

PRESENT ARMS

When casket/urn is in place

The Commander will give the following commands, **ORDER ARMS**, followed by the command, **PARADE REST**.



PARADE REST



When the religious service is completed, the clergy or the funeral director will ask the mourners to stand for the rendering of the Ceremonial Volley. The Active Marines will pick up the Flag and extend it over the casket/urn. The Commander will give the following commands

- Members of the Detail will execute the following sequence of three movements: **The Commander will give the commands**

- a. **ATTENTION!**
- b. **HALF RIGHT – FACE**



- c. **PORT ARMS** (3 step movement) Note: Move the right foot (Left always anchored), 12 inches to the right. The legs are kept straight so the weight of the body rests equally on both feet.

PORT ARMS.



- Followed by the command READY UNLOCK
- The Commander will now give the command, AIM FIRE, three times
- When the command “AIM” is given, each rifleman will raise their rifle to a position of 45 degrees from the horizontal.
- On the command “Fire”, each rifleman will squeeze the trigger quickly and lower the rifle to the position of port arms



- After the three commands, **AIM, FIRE**, have been given, the Commander will give the command **CEASE FIRE-LOCK**. At this point the detail will bring their feet back together (smartly) and finger lock their rifle.
- Then, on command **HALF LEFT**, the detail will bring the heel of their right foot smartly against the heel of the left foot, completing the left face.



- From this position, the detail Commander gives the command “**PRESENT ARMS**”



- Taps are now played.

- Upon the completion of Taps, the Commander gives the command, “ORDER ARMS”

ORDER ARMS



- **NOTE:** The detail will remain at attention after Taps is played, and the flag is folded and presented
- Upon the completion of Taps, the Commander will give the command, **PARADE REST.**
- After the ceremony, (memorial service) is over, either the family lays flowers on the casket or the funeral director makes closing announcements, the Commander will give the command, **DETAIL DISMISSED,** (one step back)
- Police all brass. The detail Commander will present the Funeral Director the spent cartridges to be distributed amongst the immediate family members. The detail Commander will now pay his respects to the immediate members of the family and present them with his Detail business card and Tribute coin, if appropriate. (Tribute Coin to be distributed only to the families of Marines)
- The detail will leave the grounds with their rifle at Trail Arms.

TRAIL ARMS

History of Taps

Of all the military bugle calls, none is so easily recognized or more apt to render emotion than Taps. Up to the Civil War, the traditional call at day's end was a tune, borrowed from the French, called Lights Out. In July of 1862, in the aftermath of the bloody Seven Days battles, hard on the loss of 600 men and wounded himself, Union General Daniel Adams Butterfield called the brigade bugler to his tent. He thought "Lights Out" was too formal and he wished to honor his men. Oliver Wilcox Norton, the bugler, tells the story, "...showing me some notes on a staff written in pencil on the back of an envelope, (he) asked me to sound them on my bugle. I did this several times, playing the music as written. He changed it somewhat, lengthening some notes and shortening others, but retaining the melody as he first gave it to me. After getting it to his satisfaction, he directed me to sound that call for Taps thereafter in place of the regulation call. The music was beautiful on that still summer night and was heard far beyond the limits of our Brigade. The next day I was visited by several buglers from neighboring Brigades, asking for copies of the music which I gladly furnished. The call was gradually taken up through the Army of the Potomac."

This more emotive and powerful Taps was soon adopted throughout the military. In 1874 It was officially recognized by the U.S. Army. It became standard at military funeral ceremonies in 1891. There is something singularly beautiful and appropriate in the music of this wonderful call. Its strains are melancholy, yet full of rest and peace. Its echoes linger in the heart long after its tones have ceased to vibrate in the air.

- From an article by Master Sergeant Jari A Villanueva, USAF.

Using the Ceremonial Bugle

Conditions: Given a ceremonial bugle, you will perform "Taps" as part of a military funeral honors ceremony. You have checked your instrument ahead of time and prepared yourself for the ceremony.

Standards: The performance of "Taps" is a stationary function.

Performance Steps:

1. *Prepare for the ceremony:*

- a. Inspect your uniform.
- b. Check the batteries in the insert and replace if necessary.
- c. Firmly seat the bugle insert inside the bell of the bugle.

(Figure 1).

- d. Set the volume control based on distance from funeral site or for an inside ceremony.
- e. Test the bugle prior to the funeral service.
- f. Place the insert in the off position and prepare for the ceremony.

- g. Position the bugle horizontally between the left arm and body, with the bell pointed forward and the left hand gripping the front tubing of the bugle and assume the position of attention (Figure 2).

Fig 1



Fig 2



- h. Assume the parade rest position (Figure 3) while waiting for the veterans remains to arrive.

Fig 3



Simultaneous movement occurs:

- 1) Left foot moves 10 inches to the left of the right foot.
- 2) Right hand moves to the small of your back, centered on the belt.
- 3) Fingers and thumb extended and joined with palm facing outward.

Fig 4



2. *Perform the following actions:*

- a. When the remains arrive at the burial location and are being moved from the hearse or caisson to the gravesite, come to the position of attention and render a hand salute (Figure 4). After the casket is put in place, cut your salute and return to the position of parade rest (Figure 3).
- b. On cue, when it's time for "Taps" to be played:

Fig 5



1) Come to the position of attention.

2) Ready instrument. With your right hand, reach across and using your right index finger place the insert in the “on” position (Figure 5). *This movement will require some practice if you are wearing gloves.*

3) While your index finger is still inside the bell of the bugle, and the bugle is in the “on” position, continue on around and push the play button. You now have five seconds to bring the bugle up to the play position.

4) With your left hand, bring the bugle up to your lips while simultaneously bringing your right hand up to grip the top and center of the bugle. Release your left hand and bring it down to your side (Figure 6).

5) Left arm hangs straight down without stiffness.

6) Keep left thumb straight along seam of trouser leg.

7) Left hand fingers are curled with tip of the thumb touching first joint of index finger and with the first joint of the fingers touching the trousers.

8) “Taps” is played and lasts about one minute.

9) While “Taps” is being played, breathe normally as if actually playing the instrument. This will provide the veterans family with a more realistic visual image of a live bugler.

Fig 6



- 10) Upon completion of “Taps”, bring your left hand up and grip the front tubing of the bugle and return to the carry position (figure 7)

Release your right hand and bring it down to your side and remain in the position of attention until the ceremony is complete.

There is no need to place the bugle in the “off” position at this time. After the funeral detail departs the area, you may place the insert in the “off” position and the service is complete.

Fig 7



Flag Folding

How to fold the Flag

Step 1



To properly fold the Flag, begin by holding it waist-high with another person so that its surface is parallel to the ground and straighten out the flag to full length.

Step 2



Fold the lower half of the stripe section lengthwise **over** the field of stars, and offset 1 ½ inch at the very first fold, length-wise **holding the bottom and top edges securely.**

Step 3



Holding the flag so that the side with the blue square is toward the ground, fold the flag in half again lengthwise, bringing the folded edge up to meet the open edge (as shown) so that the blue square and stars are on the outside

Step 4



Make a triangular fold by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to meet the open (top) edge of the flag.

Step 5



Turn the outer (end) point inward, parallel to the open edge, to form a second triangle.

Step 6



The triangular folding is continued until the entire length of the flag is folded in this manner.

Step 7



When the flag is completely folded, there should only be a little bit of blue cloth remaining, which will be tucked neatly into the fold at the end. Once the flag is completely folded, the only thing visible should be the triangular blue field of stars.

Throughout the entire folding process, the flag never touches the ground and the two folders work together to execute each fold.

Flag Presentation Speech

Bent on right knee, in front of person to receive flag.

“Sir/Ma’am, On behalf of the President of the United States, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and a grateful nation, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one's service to Country and Corps.”

After presenting the flag, return to the position of attention and render a hand salute.

All hand salutes will be given in a slow 4 second count, from the time your hand leaves your side to the time it touches your cover. And it will return to your side with the same 4 second count.

Meaning of Flag-Folding Program

The flag-folding ceremony represents the same religious principles on which our great country was originally founded.

The portion of the flag denoting honor is the canton of blue containing the stars representing states our veterans served in uniform. The canton field of blue dresses from left to right and is inverted only when draped as a pall on the casket of a veteran who has served our country honorably in uniform.

In the U.S. Armed Forces, at the ceremony of retreat, the flag is lowered, folded in a triangle fold and kept under watch throughout the night as a tribute to our nation’s honored dead. The next morning it is brought out and, at the ceremony of reveille, run aloft as a symbol of our belief in the resurrection of the body.

Symbols for the Folds of the Flag

The **first** fold of our flag is a symbol of life.

The **second** fold is a symbol of our belief in eternal life.

The **third** fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks, and who gave a portion of his or her life for the defense of our country to attain peace throughout the world.

The **fourth** fold represents our weaker nature; as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace, as well as in times of war, for His divine guidance.

The **fifth** fold is a tribute to our country, for in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right, but it is still our country, right or wrong."

The **sixth** fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The **seventh** fold is a tribute to our armed forces, for it is through the armed forces that we protect our country and our flag against all enemies, whether they be found within or without the boundaries of our republic.

The **eighth** fold is a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor our mother, for whom it flies on Mother's Day.

The **ninth** fold is a tribute to womanhood, for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great have been molded.

The **10th** fold is a tribute to father, for he too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since he or she was first born.

The **11th** fold, in the eyes of Hebrew citizens, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon and glorifies, in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The **12th** fold, in the eyes of a Christian citizen, represents an emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, God the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost.

When the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, "In God We Trust."

After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it has the appearance of a cocked hat, ever reminding us of the soldiers who served under Gen. George Washington and the sailors and Marines who served under Capt. John Paul Jones and were followed by their comrades and shipmates in the U.S. Armed Forces, preserving for us the rights, privileges and freedoms we enjoy today.

Throughout the entire folding process, the flag never touches the ground and the two folders work together to execute each fold.

Ceremonial Rifles for Detachment

Please see <https://www.mclnational.org/ceremonial-rifle-program.html>
