

Rolling Thunder® Flame of Freedom Protocol



The Flame of Freedom has one purpose and that is to provide a light as a symbol of hope lighting the way home to the Missing Man Table. The Flame is available to any Rolling Thunder chapter to incorporate into ceremonies associated with a Missing Man Table. The Flame has two priority uses and cannot be booked during the times these ceremonies are held. First, the Candlelight Vigil at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Friday evening before the demonstration ride held on Memorial Weekend. The Flame will be used to escort Gold Star families as they walk along the monument during this solemn remembrance of their loss. The second is The Ride Home held during the POW recognition ceremony in Andersonville, Georgia in September of each year.

The following protocol is to be followed when using The Flame.

A Missing Man Table must be set. A Rolling Thunder member stands behind the table at parade rest, while another member reads a narrative description of the table and its purpose.

The Flame is introduced by a Rolling Thunder member walking down, clockwise around the table standing behind the table and just to the right of a Rolling Thunder member standing a parade rest. The purpose of walking clockwise represents the soldier leaving the comforts of home and walking into harms way.

As The Flame is brought to the table a Rolling Thunder member reads a statement that describes the purpose of The Flame. The following is offered as an example but can be altered to fit a particular circumstance. ***The only requirement is that whatever is spoken ties The Flame to the Missing Man Table.***

For hundreds of years the light in the distance meant hope. The flickering in the distance of the light high atop the lighthouse tells of nearing land in a heavy fog, the dim light of a front porch says come inside to the warmth of home, and let us not forget the lantern of Paul Revere riding through the streets to warn the British were coming. There was a time long ago that our forefathers fought to provide us with freedom, then came other wars fought to preserve those freedoms. Today we fight to protect that freedom.

This flame is also a symbol. It lights the way home for your brothers and sisters in arms. It crosses this great country to tell everyone the soldier stands with pride and honor to keep us free and we keep the light burning to show the way home. The light does not cast a shadow for its sole purpose to send the message of hope, to let everyone know we will not forget.

The Table that sits before you is a symbolism of faith and hope. A place waiting undisturbed until the soldier returns. The flame will light this table as long as the table sits empty.

At this point, invite any in attendance with family members currently serving in theater in harms way to come down as the candles are lit. If the table has more than one candle for each place setting, always light each candle directly off the flame and not off of the table candles.

The Flame walks counter clockwise around the table lighting each candle at each place setting. If only one candle is used on the table only one candle is lit. When lighting the candles it is important to light each from The Flame and not from other candles on the table. The purpose of walking counter clockwise is to represent the soldier returning home.

Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES will The Flame be used to solicit money for any purpose.