



## **FLAG ETIQUETTE: Tradition & SHYC Specific**

### **FLAG ETIQUETTE**

*Provided as a courtesy by The Cruising Club of America*

#### ***General***

Morning colors are made at 0800; evening colors at sunset. As used herein, "at anchor" means not underway; "may" means the routine is permissible; "shall" means the routine is required; "starboard spreader" means the lowest, forward most starboard spreader. Only one flag may be displayed in the position called for by the routine. Except as noted herein, any conflict shall be reserved by observing the following hierarchy:

1. Ensign
2. Race Committee flag while acting as committee boat
3. Commodore, Vice Commodore, Rear Commodore, Post Captain, Fleet captain — in that order.
4. Union Jack
5. Club burgee
6. Private signal

#### ***Ensign***

As used herein, "ensign" means the national ensign or the traditional yacht design (if of U.S. registry). A yacht in commission and manned shall display the ensign as follows:

1. At anchor, a yacht shall display the ensign at the stern between morning and evening colors, except a yacht that will be unmanned at color time shall make evening colors beforehand.
2. Underway, a yacht shall display the ensign when there is sufficient light for identification.
  - a) A power yacht shall display the ensign at the gaff or, lacking a gaff, at the stern.
  - b) A sailing yacht, when not racing, shall display the ensign at the stern or at the gaff or upper leach of the aftermost sail. When racing, the ensign shall not be displayed.
3. For U.S. Yachts:
  - a) When in U.S. territorial waters, either national or yacht ensign shall be displayed.
  - b) When in foreign waters, only the national ensign shall be displayed.

#### ***Club Burgee***

The Club Burgee shall be displayed at the bow staff of single masted power yachts, at the foremost truck of schooners and multi-masted power yachts and at the mainmast truck of other rigs. The Club burgee may be displayed at night.

#### ***Dressing Ship***

On the appropriate occasions, a yacht may, when at anchor (or when underway in a marine parade), weather permitting, dress ship from morning to evening colors. Any sequence is acceptable, but the following will give the best mix of colors:

**Starting from bow** - AB2, UJ1, KE3, GH6, IV5, FL4, DM7, PO Third Repeater, RN, First Repeater, STO (Zero), CX9, WQ8, ZY, Second Repeater, Answering Pennant.

### ***Private Signal***

The private signal is normally displayed when the ensign is hoisted. It may be displayed at the mainmast truck of schooners and power yachts and at the mizzen truck of yawls and ketches. Cutters and sloops may display the private signal at the truck in lieu of the burgee except when at anchor. At anchor, they may display the private signal at the jack staff. The private signal may be displayed at night.

### ***Union Jack***

The Union Jack may be displayed at the jack staff between morning and evening colors only at anchor and only on Sundays and holidays (legal or traditional) or when dressing ship.

### ***Foreign National Colors***

Upon entering and remaining in foreign waters, the national colors of the host country shall be displayed at the starboard spreader whenever the U.S. national ensign is displayed. On yachts with no spreaders, it shall be displayed at the masthead.

### ***Starboard Spreader***

The starboard spreader is not an acceptable alternative to other flag positions set forth above. Except as noted, its flag use is limited to foreign national colors of the host country, quarantine flag, flags of visiting flag officers on unofficial business and also signals such as owner absent, code flag hoists and the like.

### ***Size of Flags***

Sizes are optional, but the following is an acceptable standard:

- a) The ensign should approximate one inch on the fly per foot of overall length.
- b) The burgee, private signal and flag officer's flag should approximate one half inch on the fly for each foot of height of highest truck above the waterline on sailing yachts or for each foot of length of power yachts.
- c) Hoists should approximate two-thirds of the fly.



## **SHYC SPECIFIC FLAG ETIQUETTE & LORE**

*According to Past Commodore and Former Flag Lieutenant Michael J. Schnitt*

### ***Chimney Corner Station***

Connected by two footbridges, the clubhouse constructed atop a rock off Chimney Corner Circle, at the mouth of Sachem's Head Harbor in Guilford, CT, is the main Clubhouse and only Shore Station of the Club currently in existence.

### ***Club Flagpole***

Located on the promontory rocks to the south of the Clubhouse, the Club flagpole is akin to the mast of a ship that is facing westward out into Long Island Sound.

The flagpole is equipped with a gaff and a yardarm. The halyards on the port and starboard sides of the yardarm are analogous to the shrouds of a mast aboard a ship.

The American Flag should be displayed from the gaff. The Club burgee should be displayed from the masthead. Signal flags, when in use, should be displayed from the yardarms.

Port and starboard navigation lights may also be hoisted from their respective yardarms and activated from sunset to sunrise.

### ***Colors***

The ceremony of raising and lowering the American Flag and Club burgee is referred to as making "colors".

### ***Signal Cannon***

A signal cannon or gun is used to call attention to the colors ceremony. Only one gun shall be fired for colors. Horns and whistles are not an acceptable substitute. Currently in-use by the Club is a Winchester signal cannon firing 10-gauge blank shells.

A signal cannon shall not be fired on Sunday during morning colors.

### ***Flag Lieutenant***

Appointed by the Commodore, the Flag Lieutenant is responsible for ensuring colors are made each day of the Club's commissioned season. In the event the Flag Lieutenant cannot be on site to actively perform a requisite duty, he or she may designate a proxy.

### ***Colors during Normal Operations***

Normal operations shall govern from Opening Day to Closing Day of the Club's commissioned summer season.

Every day at 0800, the American Flag and Club burgee shall be hoisted (briskly) on the flagpole, in that order. Except on Sunday morning, the signal cannon shall first be fired after three rings of the bell to alert members and other nearby persons of the raising of the colors.

Every evening at sunset, the Club burgee and American Flag shall be lowered (ceremoniously), in that order. The signal cannon shall first be fired after three rings of the bell to alert members and other nearby persons of the lowering of the colors. The Club burgee (and signal flags on special occasions) may, at the discretion of the Flag Lieutenant, be lowered before the firing of the cannon.

Upon firing of the cannon, all persons on premises and in the harbor shall pause what they are doing, stand at attention and face the flagpole, gentlemen shall remove their caps, and all shall maintain silence as a salute to the flags. Once the American Flag has been fully lowered, the senior ranking member at the Club (Commodore, Vice Commodore, Fleet Captain, Past Commodores according to their seniority, remaining officers of the Executive Committee, non-officer members of the Executive Committee, and regular members according to their tenure of membership, in that order) shall pronounce that the membership can resume their normal activities (typically by calling out "As you were!").

When the Commodore, Vice Commodore, and/or Fleet Captain is at the Clubhouse, his or her distinguishing Club flag may be hoisted from the starboard yardarm to indicate his or her presence to the membership. If multiple flag officers are present, the senior most ranking flag officer's flag should be the one displayed if there are insufficient halyards to accommodate multiple flags.

#### ***Special Occasions***

During special occasions, as determined by the Commodore, such as Opening Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, the Annual Regatta, and Closing Day/Labor Day, the signal flags may be flown from the port and starboard yardarm of the flagpole, and yachts in the harbor may dress ship.

The signal flags typically read "SHYC" on the port (southern) yardarm and the date or calendar year on the starboard (northern) yardarm. Each side shall be hoisted two-thirds up the halyard and be aligned with one another.

On Opening Day, the Club burgee is hoisted full mast, and then lowered to half-mast (halfway between the masthead and the yardarm), to pay respect to members that have taken their last sail during the prior year. The Club burgee shall remain at half-mast for the duration of the day.

Yachts dressing ship during special occasions shall follow the protocol outlined in the "Dressing Ship" section above.

#### ***Half-Masting Flags***

On occasions of national mourning, the Commodore may direct the Flag Lieutenant and membership to half-mast the American Flag on the Club flagpole and private yachts, respectively. On occasions directed by the Commodore, the Club burgee on the flagpole is lowered to half-mast out of respect for members who have taken their last sail.

The subject flag(s) must first be fully hoisted before lowering to half-mast.

### ***Easterly Breeze***

In the event of an easterly breeze at Chimney Corner Station, the American Flag may be lowered slightly to prevent the flag from hitting the gaff, allowing the colors to fly freely without unnecessary wear-and-tear. After the easterly breeze has passed, the American Flag shall be raised to full hoist.

### ***Inclement Weather***

If safety allows, the flags shall be removed from the flagpole prior to incoming thunderstorms or winds of gale force or above on the Beaufort scale. The flags, which are of all-weather material, may stay up during normal rain passing.

In the event of an incoming hurricane, the Hurricane Warning flags may be hoisted on the starboard (northern) yardarm.

### ***Colors for the Club Launch***

The Club launch shall display its colors during operating hours throughout the regular season and shoulder seasons of the Club. If operating after colors, only the Club burgee shall be displayed.

### ***Club Burgee and Distinguishing Flags of Officers, Executive Committee Members, and Past Commodores Largely Restated from Article X of the Club's Constitution***

The distinguishing signal of the Club shall be a pointed flag, of dimensions three units on the fly for every two units on the hoist, divided by a diagonal line running from the head of the luff, red above and blue below the diagonal, to a point bisecting the lower side.

The Commodore's pennant shall be rectangular flag, the breadth two-thirds of the length, divided by a diagonal line running from the head of the pennant, red above and blue below the diagonal, and bearing three white stars in line horizontally from luff to leach.

The Vice-Commodore's pennant shall be the same as the Commodore's but bearing two white stars, similarly placed.

The Fleet Captain's pennant shall be the same as the Commodore's but bearing a white foul anchor instead of the stars, placed midway upon the dividing diagonal line with the shank of the anchor leaning at a 20-degree angle from an upright position towards the luff.

By resolution of the Executive Committee the Flag Lieutenant, when afloat on official business, is authorized to carry a distinguishing pennant, consisting of the Club signal, bearing a white arrow, placed horizontally, point inward, three-fourths the length of the signal.

The pennant of all members of the Executive Committee and all standing committee heads shall be a pointed flag of dimensions three units on the fly for every two units on the hoist, divided by a diagonal line running from the head of the luff, red above and blue below the diagonal, to a point bisecting the lower side, bearing a single white star placed midway upon the diagonal line.

Additionally, by resolution of the Executive Committee the Past Commodores of the Club shall be authorized to carry a distinguishing pennant consisting of a rectangular flag, the breadth two-thirds of

the length, divided by a diagonal line running from the head of the pennant, red above and blue below the diagonal, and bearing three gray stars vertically oriented on the luff, and a gray foul anchor with the crown placed three quarters of the way to the leach upon the dividing diagonal line with the shank of the anchor leaning at a 20-degree angle from an upright position towards the luff.

***Display of Distinguishing Flags of Officers,  
Executive Committee Members, and Past Commodores***

Flag Officers, Executive Committee Members, and Past Commodores may display their respective flags day and night in lieu of the Club burgee.

***Precedence***

When in procession or when approaching a dock, mooring, or other landing stage, boats shall give way to the boats with Flag Officers aboard and active Race Committee boats in order of their seniority (for avoidance of doubt, Race Committee is senior to the Flag Officers amidst a racing environment).

***Display of Flags by Yachts Underway Before or After Colors***

Yachts underway may display their colors before or after colors. If making way after colors, they shall be lowered promptly after anchoring or making port.

***Display of Flags while Racing***

Yachts racing shall follow the relevant sections of any Sailing Instructions or notices provided by Race Committee. Traditionally, a sailing yacht does not display an ensign while racing, which (among other things) indicates her status as racing to other yachts.

***Crossed Burgees or Flags***

When crossing burgees and flags, the senior burgee or flag is to be placed in the honored position to the right when facing an audience; or to the left when facing the crossed display on a graphic, yacht, or apparel item.

The seniority of a club burgee is determined by the date of establishment of the club. The American Flag, as well as national flags of other countries, are senior to burgees and thus enjoy the honored position to the left when facing the crossed display or graphic. The yacht ensign, private signals, Flag Officers' flags and Race Committee flag are junior to the Club burgee and thus are displayed to the right when facing the crossed display or graphic.

***Other Protocol***

For information on protocols not outlined in the procedures above, please address all inquiries to Past Commodore Michael J. Schnitt.