

At the request of Scott Lamb, Saratoga National Cemetery Director, Patriot Guard Rider leadership met with Scott and the leaders of the Volunteer Saratoga National Cemetery Honor Guard Association, Commander Art Dutcher, and Vice-Commander Don Boone, for the express purpose of developing **unified** protocols for everyone's participation of military honors funerals at the cemetery. Such protocol revisions will include PGR Parking, Command Calling, presentations.

The meeting was a thorough discussion of why and how we got to where we are and why we have operated the way we have. The SNC Honor Guard Association recognized the need to create uniform and consistent protocols across all five squads. To that end they have developed a very extensive and professional Standard Operating Procedures manual covering 65 pages. This manual makes reference to a number of military procedure manuals for content and context.

As a result of the meeting the following changes have been adopted:

Patriot Guard Riders (PGR) protocols will be highlighted in **RED**

Saratoga National Cemetery Honor Guards (SNC HG) protocols will be highlighted in **BLUE**. The individual responsible for making SNC HG command calls is referred to as the Flag Detail Leader (FDL)

PARKING:

Patriot Guard Riders will not park in the shelters anymore. PGR parking, motorcycles, and cages will park on the right side of the road of the respective shelter. Dismount and walk to the shelter in a timely fashion. This is as efficient as in shelter parking, but it eliminates any potential conflict in the shelters with funeral parties and mourners that are assembled in the shelters. SNC cemetery personnel will ensure that PGR attendees establish their flag line at shelter prior to commencing Military Funeral Honors (MFH) – this may possibly occur on those occasions when the PGR escort is arriving **with** the funeral procession.

COMMAND CALLS:

- **PGR at Shelter** - While in the flag line at shelter, when the vehicle carrying the deceased enters the parking area the PGR flag line will be called to Attention and the command "Present Arms" will be given. Once vehicle comes to a stop "Order Arms" will be given. Flag line to remain at Attention. SNC HG will be called to attention by the FDL at this time and will remain at this position.
- At this point, with the unified command protocols being followed by the SNC HG Team, PGR will now **NOT** be making command calls and will **follow** the command calls made by the SNC HG FDL.
 - **What's different?** SNC HG FDL will be calling "Present Arms" when the casket/urn begins to move up the walk to the shelter. "Order Arms" will be given when the military honor guard takes their position next to the casket/urn. Everyone remains at attention.
 - There will **not** be a "Present Arms" command at the rifle volley.
 - "Present Arms" command will be given prior to the playing of taps and "Order Arms" will be given at conclusion of Taps.
 - At the presentation of the flag to the family or flag being placed on the pedestal, there will be no "Present Arms" command.

- Depending on the presentation protocols in place the FDL will salute the family after presentation of the shells and then move to a position to salute the veteran. No general verbal commands are given by the FDL during this time.
- “Official” military honors cease upon the retirement of the service flag and FDL makes final salute to veteran and exits shelter – no general verbal commands are given.
- Following service flag retirement PGR LRC will present the plaque to family members. This presentation will follow the protocols that the military follows – plaque given to the family or placed on pedestal. After presentation PGR LRC will salute family/veteran and PGR flag line will be called to “Present Arms” – after short interval – “Order Arms” command given followed by “Stand At Ease”.
- Upon the deceased veteran being removed from the shelter, PGR flag line will be called to attention immediately followed by “Present Arms” then after the veteran is out of sight the “Order Arms command is given followed by “Stand Down” at which point PGR will move to form a flag line (Sentinel) near the removal vehicle. Once the removal vehicle has left the shelter area, PGR will be dismissed to their motorcycles where they will quietly leave the cemetery.
- There may come a time such as on a busy Friday where we may have motorcycles pass a shelter in use. Please be sensitive to this and ensure that motorcycles are being operated as quietly as possible.

General Protocols:

Communication among all parties is the key to ensuring that the Military Honors Funeral is as dignified and honorable as we can collectively make it. Protocols of the SNC HG may change slightly from individual funeral to funeral **but the PGR will only be following the commands given by the HG FDL.**

To that end it will be the responsibility of the PGR LRC and the SNC HG FDL to meet prior to the funeral service to discuss any issues related to the upcoming funeral. It is equally important that the PGR LRC and the SNC HG FDL meet AFTER the service to share any comments or concerns over what had just transpired. This will be especially important in the initial weeks of the new protocol rollout. This way different LRC's and different SNC HG squads will eventually interact, and it will be important that this level of communication remain in place for some time to come.

PGR LRC for the mission will be responsible to sharing this new information among those PGR members in attendance.

Thanks for everyone understanding on this issue.