

YMCA RAG/LEATHER PROGRAM

THE GOLD RAG

Instructions:

This is not a part of the ceremony and is not to be read aloud; but all Riggers who have parts in conducting the ceremony should study it carefully.

In the presentation of the Rag there is a very close, inter-personal relationship with a strong emotional impact. Your sincerity in what you are doing and saying as you take part in the ceremony and as you welcome the Rigger to this step is an element that makes for a meaningful experience.

READING

Persons with special parts speak loudly, clearly, and slowly. As you prepare, if there are words, which are unfamiliar to you, ask about them. Remember to speak in a warm, personal tone. Be sure to read your part over in advance several times so that you know what you are saying.

HOW WE LEARN

We learn best by the "feeling" that moves between us, rather than by just what we say. Show a deep feeling of affection for those whom you are welcoming into the Rag Society.

Explanations during the ceremony appear in parenthesis and are not to be read aloud.

This ceremony should be held in a secluded spot away from camp, including in any one ceremony only the number of persons for which space is available at the Riggers' Emblem.

Personnel necessary for the GOLD RAG Ceremony:

Director – stands at the gate of the square.

Four Counselors – stands at the corners of the square.

*Knowledge

*Honor

*Friendship

*Great Purposes

Guides for the candidates.

Ideas For Making Your Rag Ceremonies Special

Use music.

PERSONALIZE: i.e., "Tom, whom do you bring?"
"I bring Kathy and Ben, who wish..."

Use readings, scriptural and others, which are personalized to reflect the individual's counseling sessions.

Use them at the end, or interspersed throughout the Ceremony.

Speak slowly and clearly. Use pauses.

Be purposeful and serious; no unnecessary talking.

Open and close with prayer.

Everyone should be standing or sitting behind or to the side of the candidates when they take off their blindfolds, so they have an unobstructed view of the point.

Whenever possible, have one person guide each candidate up the trail. This is more personal and intimate than the "chain gang" method and eliminates the need for spoken instructions on where to walk.

Be conscious of rustling papers, etc. Plan ahead when pages will be turned.

Go over the sequence of events at the point beforehand, to eliminate uncomfortable pauses while we figure out "What's next."

At night, candles provide a nice light at the point if it is fire safe and regulations permit.

Put a Rag on the cross that symbolizes the Ceremony in progress.

Keep the blindfold on the new Ragers until all wishing to speak privately with him/her have had the opportunity. Ask the newcomer(s) to sit and be comfortable during this time.

Allow time after for the new and old Ragers to share some personal thoughts before the ceremony is closed.

Leave the newcomer(s) alone at the point after the ceremony. Be sure to tell them that you'll be waiting a few yards down the trail.

The Gold Rag – A challenge to deeper understanding and concern for others

CEREMONY

GUIDE: (New Gold Ragger will be blindfolded, and led to a spot a few yards from the Rag Emblem. A short period of prayers shall be led by the Director.)

_____, today you are presenting yourself in the spirit of dedication and taking another step toward the ideals, which we have set for ourselves as Ragers.

In accepting the Blue Rag, you accepted the goal of loyalty to God, your Country, and others. With your Silver Rag, you became a personal disciple of God, committing your life to Him and His Cause. Your Brown Rag carried the challenge of service, through a well-rounded life.

In accepting your Gold Rag, you are accepting a challenge for a deeper understanding of and concern for your fellow man.

I invite you to join in a quiet and serious hour with God. I urge you to be silent, so that you may hear Him speak through the stillness...through the voice of others...and from within your heart.

(Guide will lead the Ragger to the Director, standing at the gate of the square.)

DIRECTOR: Guide, whom do you bring to the gate of the Golden Court?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____, who would like to deepen his/her understanding and concern for others.

DIRECTOR: If you would become a wearer of the Gold Rag, you must dedicate yourself to a deepening concern for the welfare of others. Friends may help you along the way; but they cannot grow for you. This you must do for yourself, with the help of God. If this is your sincere desire, please answer, "Yes."

NEW RAGGER(s): (Answers) "Yes."

DIRECTOR: As the Keeper of the Central Shrine in the Golden Court, it becomes my responsibility to give you this charge as follows:

“Listen to the voice of God!
Around you! Within you! Listen!
He calls you to grow!
To stretch your mind with new knowledge;
To stretch your muscles with clean play and hard work;
To stretch your heart to include new friends;
To stretch your soul and fill it with beauty and hope and great purposes!
Listen to the Voice of God!”

If you are willing to listen, and to grow as God directs you, please answer, “Yes.”

NEW RAGGER(s): (Answers) “Yes.”

DIRECTOR: You may proceed to the Golden Court of Knowledge.

(Guide leads Ragger(s) to the first corner of the square.)

KNOWLEDGE: Guide, whom do you bring to the Golden Court of Knowledge?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____, who would like to deepen his/her understanding and concern for others.

KNOWLEDGE: The challenge of this court is that you shall grow in understanding – that you shall “stretch your mind with new knowledge.” If you would learn to understand others better, you must first understand yourself. If this is your desire, please answer, “Yes.”

NEW RAGGER(s): As Keeper of the Gate of Knowledge, it is my responsibility to give you a charge in these words:

“Thank you, God, for this new day in which to grow.
For wondrous things, which, when this day is done, I shall know.
For each new face that I shall meet throughout this day,
And for the lessons I shall learn from all who come my way.
And thank you; too, for strange ideas I shall meet,
That calls for my best efforts, lest I know defeat.
And if, sometime today, I seem to fail, help me to know
Tomorrow’s still another day in which to grow!”

Remember that the scriptures tell us that Jesus increases in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man. Go, and do thou likewise.

(Guide leads candidate to the second corner of the square.)

HONOR: Guide, whom bring you to the Golden Court of Honor?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____, who would like to deepen his/her understanding and concern for others.

HONOR: Before you approached this Court of Honor, you pledged yourself to listen to the voice of God, around you and within you as he calls you to grow. In your efforts to understanding those about you, you have pledged yourself to alertness in acquiring knowledge.

In presenting yourself to this court you are accepting a challenge to live, and work, and play, at your very best. If this is your sincere desire, please answer, "Yes."

NEW RAGGER(s): (Answers) "Yes."

HONOR: As keeper of the Gate of Honor it becomes my responsibility to remind you of this commitment, given in prayer:

"O God, give me clean hands, clean words, and clean thoughts. Help me to stand for the hard right against the easy wrong. Save me from habits that harm. Teach me to work as hard and play as fair in Thy sight alone as if the whole world saw. Forgive me when I am unkind, and help me to forgive those who are unkind to me. Keep me ready to help others at some cost to myself, and send me chances to do some good every day. Amen."

(Book of Common Prayer)

(Guide leads Ragger(s) to the third corner of the square.)

FRIENDSHIP: Guide, whom do you bring to the Golden Court of Friendship?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____, who would like to deepen his/her understanding and concern for others.

FRIENDSHIP: As you begin your journey through the Golden Courts, you pledged yourself to listen to the voice of God calling you to grown by "Stretching our mind to new knowledge" and by "Stretching your muscles to clean, play and hard work."

You stand now at the Golden Gate of Friendship. The challenge of the court requires that you "Stretch your heart to include new friends." If this is your sincere desire, please answer, "Yes."

NEW RAGGER(s): (Answers "Yes.")

FRIENDSHIP: Then as the keeper of the Golden Gate of Friendship, it is my responsibility to remind you of the words of the man whose concern for others was so great that he gave his life as a sacrifice for his friends:

"Jesus said, 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friend. You are my friends if you do what I have commanded you!'"

As you accept this challenge to "Stretch your heart to include new friends," may your circle of friendship become wider and more inclusive in the years ahead.

You may proceed to the Golden Court of Great Purposes.

(Guide leads Ragger(s) to remaining corner of the square.)

GREAT PURPOSES: Guide, whom do you bring to the Golden Court of Great Purposes?

GUIDE: I am bringing _____, who desires to deepen his/her understanding and concern for others.

GREAT PURPOSES: Having passed through the previous Golden Courts, you have accepted the challenge to be guided by the still small voice within and around you as it calls you to grow. You have indicated your desire to "Stretch your mind with new work," and to "Stretch your heart to include new friends." You stand now at the Gate of Great Purposes. If you are willing to "Stretch your soul and fill it with beauty and hope and great purposes, please answer, "Yes."

NEW RAGGER(s): (Answers) "Yes."

GREAT PURPOSES: Remembering that as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he I give you the final charge in the words of St. Francis of Assisi:

“Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace!
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury – pardon;
Where there is doubt – faith;
Where there is despair – hope;
Where there is darkness – light;
Where there is sadness – joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

With these purposes in mind you may proceed to the Central Shrine of the Golden Courts.

(Guide leads Ragger(s) back to Director.)

DIRECTOR: You have come once more to the Central Shrine of the Golden Courts. May I remind you that you have accepted four steps in growth as a challenge to your Gold Rag:

“To stretch your mind with new knowledge;
To stretch your muscles with clean play and hard work;
To stretch your heart to include new friends;
To stretch your soul and fill it with beauty and hope and great purposes!”

With each challenge you have pledged yourself to listen to the voice of God as He guides you in your growth.

May His presence be with you constantly this year, as you become a wearer of the Gold Rag. You will now kneel on your left knee to receive your Rag.

(While tying the Rag, a few words of encouragement should be shared with the new Ragger(s). As soon as the Rag is tied, have the person sit down, still blindfolded, and be comfortable. Other Raggings may wish to speak personally with the new Ragger(s). When all the Rags are tied and everyone is finished with their personal talks with the new Ragger(s), the Keeper of the Point asks for the blindfolds to be removed. Raggings may take their appropriate positions around the emblem or everyone may sit out the circle.)

You see before you the Emblem of the Ragers. It is traditional that no Rager enters that portion of the Rag Emblem reserved for other Rags. The circle stands for the circle of friendship of all YMCA's and people around the world. The square represents the foursquare life of a true Rager: physical, social spiritual, and mental. The triangle stands for strength because it is the strongest geometrical figure known to man. Because of this strength – we have named the three points: Body, Mind, and Spirit – to remind you to keep the challenge that you have accepted for yourself. And at the center of our emblem and at the center of our hearts – lies the cross. It appears so that we won't forget the wonderful lesson that Jesus taught to us through His life – His example and His words. (An appropriate story may be told.) Shall we repeat, or sing, the Ragers' Creed?

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be friend to all – the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.

We will ask our Chaplain to lead us in short prayer, followed by all of us joining in the Lord's Prayer.

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