

## CHAPTER 9

### MILITARY PROTOCOL, COURTESY, AND UNIFORMS

As a member of the Uniformed Services of the United States, it is important for you to be familiar with military courtesies and customs. Nothing will cause the formation of a negative opinion of you and the Corps faster than an incorrectly worn uniform, improper grooming, or lack of appropriate action or response. While it is generally unnecessary for you to know all the nuances of military protocol, you should know the fundamentals such as saluting, appropriate forms of address, and other basic courtesies.

Common sense is usually the best guide on how to act, but in some circumstances there may be a need for more formal guidelines. Published rules can be found in CCPM Pamphlet Number 61, *Information on Uniforms*, dated September 1993 and updates published in the *Commissioned Corps Bulletin*. The best source of personal knowledge is often a current or former member of the Armed Forces or an experienced PHS officer.

Also, useful resource books, such as *The Bluejacket's Manual* published by the United States Naval Institute, Annapolis, Maryland, are available at military exchanges.

#### Protocol

##### Covered versus Uncovered

You can never go wrong if you are "outdoors" and "covered," i.e., wearing your cover (headgear). "Outdoors" includes covered walks, theater marquees, and overhangs that extend over the sidewalk. You should be uncovered when "indoors."

Each agency and/or military installation has its unique regulations designating covered areas vs uncovered areas.

##### Posting of Colors

This refers to paying tribute to the United States Flag. There are two daily ceremonies in which uniformed service personnel will salute the colors (national flag). The first is the raising of the flag at the beginning of the day (at 0800). The second is at "sunset," and consists of lowering the national flag. During both situations, if you are outdoors, you must stop what you are doing, face the flag or the direction in which colors are being held or, if the flag is not visible, toward the direction of the music, come to the position of attention and render a hand salute.

You must hold this salute until the last note of the music; then you may proceed. On Army and Air Force installations, it is customary to stop your vehicle, get out, come

to the position of attention, and render a hand salute if colors or retreat is sounded. On Naval or Coast Guard installations and colors or retreat is sounded, you must stop your vehicle and sit at attention until the last note of the music is sounded; then you may proceed. If you are in doubt as to sit at attention or exit your vehicle, it is better to be formal than disrespectful. Therefore, it is recommended that you exit your vehicle, face in the direction where colors are being held, come to the position of attention and render a hand salute.

If you are not in uniform, you should face the flag or the direction of the music and stand at attention with your right hand over your heart. **When in uniform, never place your hand over your heart.** When in uniform and covered, you should stand at attention, face the flag and salute. When in uniform and uncovered, you should stand at attention and face the flag with no salute.

### **Pledge of Allegiance**

When uncovered, you face the flag, stand at attention, and recite the pledge. When covered, you face the flag, stand at attention, and render a hand salute during the pledge.

### **Playing of the National Anthem**

When covered, stand at attention, face the flag and salute. When uncovered, (inside) stand at attention, but do not salute.

### **Playing of the PHS March**

You stand at attention and face the PHS flag.

### **Hand Salutes**

You must be able to render and properly return a hand salute. Salutes are performed by smartly raising the right hand until the tip of the forefinger touches the lower part of the headgear, thumb and fingers extended and joined, palm to the left, upper arm horizontal, forearm inclined at 45 degrees, hand and wrist straight while turning the head toward the person being saluted. To complete the salute, drop the arm to its normal position by the side in one motion while turning the head and eyes to the front.

### **Initiating a Salute**

It is the responsibility of junior-ranking personnel to initiate the salute. In other words, enlisted personnel initiate the salute toward you and you initiate toward officers whose rank is senior to yours. When you meet an officer of the same rank, a salute is optional.

### **Greetings (when saluting)**

When you are initiating the salute, accompany your salute with "Good Morning (afternoon, evening, or night, as appropriate), Sir or Ma'am." If you are returning the salute, you should respond with "Good morning (afternoon, evening, or night, as appropriate)." Officers are usually addressed by their rank, i.e., "Good evening, CDR Smith." You can never go wrong using "Sir" or "Ma'am," but, upon the initial meeting of the day, it is a nice touch to properly address a senior officer.

### **Timing of Salutes**

Salutes are usually rendered between six and 30 paces while covered, however, saluting is more effective between six and 10 paces. If running, you should slow down to a walk prior to saluting. If standing, you should face the senior officer, come to attention, and then render the salute. Salutes should be rendered when officers meet and just prior to departure if a conversation is held. It is the junior officer's responsibility to initiate both salutes. Salutes should be rendered and returned to all members of Uniformed Services. Some services salute in uncovered situations, the proper response is to greet the person saluting you with "Good Morning," "Good Afternoon," or "Good Evening," depending on the time of day. When approaching a group of officers of different ranks, the salute should be directed toward the senior officer. Likewise, if a senior officer approaches a group of officers they should all stop what they are doing and render a proper salute. If you are in doubt, or cannot see the rank device, salute anyway and err on the side of caution.

### **Situations When Not To Salute**

Saluting should not be performed in public conveyances such as inside a metro car or on the platform when obviously inappropriate. You do not salute in other public places where inappropriate, such as theaters, hotels, restaurants prior to being able to remove the cover. When carrying articles in both hands and you approach the "salute zone" from the front, or when abreast of the senior officer say "By your leave Sir or Ma'am." The senior officer should say "Carry-on," "Very Well," or "Permission Granted."

### **Senior Officers Entering a Room**

In an environment with other services, when a senior officer (generally O-6 and above) enters a room or an area where there are mostly enlisted personnel present, in most situations, those personnel will be called to attention. If you are faced with this situation, the proper response is simply, "Carry on" or "As you were."

In PHS, the analogous situation is when a flag officer enters a room with no other flag officers present. The first officer to notice the flag officer is to call, "Attention on deck!" At that time, all officers come to attention until the flag officer orders something to the effect of "Carry on" or "As you were."

### **Proper Salute When Overtaking a Senior Officer**

When moving faster than a senior officer in front of you, you render a hand salute when abreast of the officer and say "By your leave, Sir or Ma'am." The senior officer should return your salute and say "Carry-on," "Very Well," or "Permission Granted." You may then drop the salute and proceed.

### **Riding in a Car**

The place of honor is always on the right, so the senior officer sits on the right. This holds true when walking with a senior officer also. It is the junior officer's responsibility to line up on the correct side of the senior officer. When entering a vehicle the junior officer should enter first and the senior officer last so the senior officer will be in position to exit the vehicle first.

### **Man or Woman First?**

If a male officer is with a female officer, the woman goes first except in these instances: when assistance is needed; when there is no one to escort the female officer to the appropriate seat in a public area; when there is a large crowd where the male officer will clear the way; and at official occasions where rank takes precedence over gender.

## **Courtesy**

### **Standing**

When seated and uncovered a junior officer stands and come to attention when approached by a senior officer. At that point, the senior officer should say "At Ease," "Carry On," or "Be Seated." All officers should stand immediately when a flag-rank officer enters the room. The flag officer should then give one of the above commands.

## **Meals**

During meals, junior officers begin eating only after the highest-ranking officer begins to eat. The highest-ranking officer at the table should begin eating after the highest-ranking officer in the room begins their meal, then other officers at the table may begin. It is the junior officer's responsibility to perform this act of courtesy. The senior officers should also be aware others are waiting for their lead.

## **Meetings**

In meetings, officers use the same courtesy observed in other situations. Senior officers should be addressed as, “Sir” or “Ma’am” or rank and name. Junior officers should be addressed by their rank or rank and name. This is especially important to remember in meetings with other Uniformed Services personnel. Through custom, PHS officers often do not observe this courtesy, but you can never go wrong by following it. In any case, you should never address a senior officer by first name in public meetings (i.e., those in which personnel other than PHS officers are present) and in other settings only with the permission of the senior officer.

## **Uniforms**

### **Uniform of the Day**

The Uniform of the Day is the uniform(s), prescribed from among the PHS-authorized uniforms, by your Local Uniform Authority (LUA) generally based upon the season of the year. The LUA for the Washington, DC area is the Surgeon General. There are other LUAs for each agency for other areas of the country. Check with your LUA for guidance on seasonal wear and variances and with questions about appropriate wearing of the uniform.

### **Quality**

All uniform components should be obtained from official uniform suppliers that meet the specifications listed in the CCPM (including shirts, blouses, skirts, pants, shoes, etc.) and must fit in a reasonable manner and be of the same material or designated combination.

### **Cleanliness**

Your uniform should be clean and all devices, insignia, lace, with ribbons neat and free of tarnish or fray. Shoes should be shined and in good repair.

## **Identification Badges**

You must continue to be in proper uniform with name tag, ribbons, rank device, and corps device on your uniform. Additionally, no article(s) other than the agency or meeting identification badge should protrude from or be attached to the uniform (e.g., pens, pencils, calculators, and necklaces).

## **Jewelry**

One watch and one bracelet are permitted. One finger ring per hand in addition to a wedding ring is permitted. Ankle bracelets are not permitted. Appropriate tie clasps/tacks may be worn one inch below the center of the male officer's tie. Earrings are not authorized for male officers, while female officers may wear 6 mm gold ball earrings.

## **Ribbon Bars**

Ribbons are worn on the left breast with the lower edge of the bottom row centered one-fourth inch above the pocket or in the same relative position as if a pocket were present. Ribbons should be worn in the appropriate descending order of precedence as prescribed in the CCPM with the highest honor placed on the uppermost row nearest the heart.

## **Men's Grooming**

Men's hair must be neat, clean, and groomed in a tapered manner without touching the ears or collar and not fall below the eyebrows when the headgear is removed. The bulk of the hair should not exceed two inches. Sideburns should be neatly trimmed, tapered, of even width (not flared), not extend below the earlobe, and end in a clean-cut horizontal line. Beards and/or mustaches should be neatly trimmed and groomed. The bulk of the beard should not exceed one-half inch and the length should not exceed one inch. Unless worn with a beard, a mustache should not extend below, nor outward more than one-quarter inch beyond, the corners of the mouth. Whether worn with a beard or separately, no portion of the mustache may extend below the line of the upper lip. PHS is the only service that authorizes beards to be worn routinely, i.e., for other than medical reasons.

## **Women's Grooming**

Women's hair must be worn in a conservative arrangement that may touch the collar but not fall below it or show under the brim of the hat. Ponytails and hair ribbons are not permitted. Braids and plaited hair may be worn close to the head but must not interfere with the proper wearing of the headgear, and not be done in an overtly ornate manner or include beads, objects, or decorative items. Inconspicuous pins or

fastening devices may be used if a neutral or hair-matching color. Cosmetics should be inconspicuous and in good taste. Nails may extend no more than one-fourth inch beyond the fingertips and be polished with a neutral or clear shade. Hosiery should be beige or neutral shades, undecorated, and seamless. Glasses should be either military issue or of a similar conservative style from commercial sources.

## **Closing**

Not all officers remember all these instructions when a proper appearance is necessary, and usually at the most inopportune time. It is common for clutch-backs, devices or ribbons to fall off, device pins will break and devices will swing a kilter to the remaining pin, shoe laces break, hats are forgotten, hems come undone, and any number of minor mishaps. You should inform fellow officers of a uniform problem, but you **MUST** be polite and discrete in how you let them know since they may truly not know. Never do this in front of others and never do it in anything but a sincere manner. This is true in all situations, but particularly when junior officers address senior officers. It is prudent to keep several spare clutch-backs in a small bag in your office desk drawer, a spare set of PHS collar and rank devices, and safety pins for lost or loose buttons. Paper clips and binders are handy in a pinch, and a complete spare (seasonal or Dress Blue) uniform in the office is never a bad idea. Dress for success, and show you are part of a special service with a proud and distinct history.