



# **FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNERALS**

**CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS**



## SECTION 5

## FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNERALS

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## **SECTION 5**

## **FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNERALS**

### **INTRODUCTION**

When a department is called upon to provide a fire department funeral, the department will be under close scrutiny by the family and friends of the deceased, the entire community and the fire service in general.

The ceremony must be conducted with dignity and good taste, always keeping in mind the wishes and feelings of the next of kin.

During a funeral, the department and the fire service is on public display and is judged by the actions, respect and behaviour of its individual members. Best impressions and respect can only be shown by the attendance of all firefighters in dress uniform.

Because a department funeral is a ceremonial occasion, protocol calls for proper recognition of rank in all aspects of the organization of the funeral party.

The following suggestions and guidelines will assist departments in providing uniformity and meeting expected decorum.

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### GENERAL

Department funerals fall into two categories. The first follows the natural death of a firefighter and is known as the **General Service**. This usually entails departmental pallbearers, an insignia guard, and a number of firefighters to pay their respects and those of the department.

The second service follows the death of a firefighter during the line of duty. By virtue of rank, it is also extended to the active chief of the Department, regardless of the circumstances of his/her death. This service, known as **Full Department Honours**, requires more preparation and co-ordination compared to the General Service. The most significant differences occur in the use of a fire department pumper as a caisson to bear the casket, a flag to drape the casket, colours, platoon organization, music, etc. The numbers of people attending probably will be much greater and generally will include representatives from outside the municipality.

Most services will require close co-operation between the department and the union or association, as well as the church, funeral home and outside organizations such as lodges, etc. Liaison should, therefore, be provided between all concerned so that the firefighter receives the respect due his/her performance or sacrifice.

This liaison is best accomplished by a **funeral committee**. In large departments, a funeral committee often is of a permanent nature and begins the necessary preparations as soon as it is notified. If there is no such committee, departments should authorize someone to start arrangements immediately.

The funeral committee should not be cumbersome. Large departments will find three members to be a suitable number, while small departments can probably get by with a committee of one.

The following chapters list steps which require the attention of the funeral committee. It will be obvious that some items do not apply to all occasions. It is better, however, to check all the steps before discarding any, rather than run the risk of inadvertently overlooking something important.

The sequence of events requires certain steps to be completed first, but following that, several arrangements may proceed coincidentally.

The role of the funeral committee is not necessarily to do all these steps but rather to ensure that they will be done.

Similarly, the **parade marshal** may assign others to complete tasks which are described as his/her responsibility. Typical appointments include a **protocol officer, transportation officer, media officer**, etc.

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### FUNERAL COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Visit the spouse or next of kin, offer condolences, and advise her/him that the deceased is entitled to a departmental funeral.

Explain the part the department is prepared to play in the funeral service. Offer any assistance she/he may require, encourage and advise her/him on any decision.

Keep in mind that the final decision about the funeral rests with the spouse or next of kin. Most families, however, need and welcome help at this time and long after the funeral they are appreciative of the role played by the Fire Service.

Notify the Office of the Fire Chief as soon as the type of funeral has been settled. It is important that the Chief be contacted since many of the arrangements fall under his jurisdiction.

### DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Send out necessary notice as soon as time, date, and place of service are known.

Appoint a **parade marshal**. The funeral committee may suggest a suitable person to the chief for his concurrence. Military experience is usually an asset. If possible, the parade marshal's name should appear on the original notice.

If the funeral calls for full department honours, select and prepare a pumper to carry the casket.

Arrange time off, if necessary, for the firefighters directly involved.

Notify city council or municipal body concerned.

Notify the news media.

Order flags to be lowered to half staff (generally only on the day of the funeral).

Provide a copy of this Funeral Procedure to the funeral home and place of service.

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### UNION OR ASSOCIATION RESPONSIBILITIES

If full department honours are to be observed, furnish the flag for the casket. This will be formally presented to the family following service.

If full department honours, arrange for a **colour party**, band, drummers or piper.

Arrange for suitable flowers.

Assign a firefighter to be in attendance during the period designated for visitation at the funeral parlour.

Arrange **pallbearers and guard of honour** as required. With the agreement of the family, the pallbearers could be members of the deceased's crew or close associates. When full department honours are involved, the guard of honour may include senior officers and civic dignitaries.

Liaise with the funeral director. If full department honours, describe the capability of the pumper to carry the casket and flowers. Have the parade marshal in attendance so that moving off arrangements can be finalized.

Notify out of town locals and departments.

Arrange refreshments for out of town representatives. Generally, a meeting hall is best. Make sure everyone is properly directed or guided to this location before and after the service.

Arrange necessary uniform accessories such as white gloves.

Arrange a police escort.

Send "Thank You" letters to all concerned.

The above routine should cover most of the situations involved in a fire department funeral. Certain local adaptations of this outline may well be necessary and they can be inserted where necessary.

In the case of smaller departments where certain facilities or capabilities are lacking, it would be in order to contact neighbouring departments for assistance. This will no doubt be gladly rendered.

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### BEFORE THE SERVICE

The parade marshal will meet with the clergy and funeral director as soon as these are known, to review the service and make necessary arrangements.

The parade marshal shall determine the distance to be marched to and from the place of service and gravesite. Allowances for inclement weather should be included in these plans. A march of not less than 1/10 of a mile is appropriate in urban centres.

If the distance to the cemetery is too far to march, the parade marshal will organize the transportation for a motorcade.

The parade marshal should check the parade route, parking, and layout of the funeral home, place of service and gravesite.

The entire service, parade route, etc., should be reviewed with platoon commanders the night before the service.

If a large turnout is expected, such as for a full honours service, a **muster point** for the parade will be necessary. School yards, gymnasium, legion halls, etc. are appropriate. All those taking part in the parade will be instructed to report there, where they will be formed up into platoons. The protocol officer will be responsible for the platoon assignments.

The platoon will be the basic organizational unit for marching in a funeral procession. A platoon will be 24 people, formed up in three ranks, as well as a leader.

Protocol and rank shall determine the composition of each platoon. Chiefs, deputies and municipal officials shall march together, as will junior officers and men. They will be led by a platoon commander of appropriate rank.

The platoon commander is the only person to salute as the casket passes his platoon in front of the place of service or at the gravesite.

Columns of two ranks will only be used for a small funeral. The columns will consist of even numbers.

The parade marshal shall determine which marching organization to use the night before the funeral. He will then inform his protocol officer who shall have responsibility for carrying out the decision.

All fire stations that the funeral motorcade/parade will pass enroute to the cemetery will pay final respects. The district chiefs should be notified to make arrangements and notify

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their men. The station apparatus should be parked on the apron and the crews lined up alongside or in front, at attention, as the motorcade/parade passes. The district chief or senior captain will be at the centre of the apron, in front of the equipment. He will be the only person to salute as the casket passes the fire station.

Weather will determine if the parade will march to the place of service or use buses. Contingency plans for transport must be made. If transport is used, the parade will exit the vehicles a short distance from the place of service and march into position.

Using portable two way radios , the parade marshal — at the place of service — will be responsible for giving the signal for the parade to leave the muster point.

### **MOURNING**

A firefighter or junior officer (depending on the rank of the deceased) should be assigned to the next of kin as an **escort**. This individual should be selected for his/her courtesy and tact.

The spouse's escort will remain with the deceased's next of kin until the interment.

At the funeral home, the spouse's escort should be alert to introduce VIPs to the next of kin.

At the gravesite, the spouse's escort should be alert to any sign of distress from any of the next of kin. He/she will also accept the deceased's headdress, regalia, etc., from the insignia guard.

At the place of service, the casket will be placed parallel to the altar so that firefighters and other mourners can file by to pay their final respects.

Two firefighters will be posted to stand attention at the head and foot of the casket during these final respects. The two men/women will keep their hats on; the other firefighters filing by the casket will hold their hats over their hearts. The two mourning guards will be dismissed just prior to the service.

By pre-arrangement with the funeral director, the casket will be turned at right angles to the altar just prior to the service.

At the muster point (usually large funerals), the protocol officer will introduce VIPs to local department officers, municipal officials, etc.

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### **INSIGNIA GUARD (ARRIVAL)**

On arrival at the place of service, the parade marshal shall march the **insignia guard** to their positions beside the casket. ( See appendix drawings for positions.)

On command, the guard will turn to face the casket and begin their respective evolutions.

The headdress bearer (position 2) will step forward and gently place the cushion with the deceased's uniform cap or helmet on the casket. He/she will then step back and stand at attention.

The medal bearer (position 1) then steps forward and gently places the deceased's orders, decorations and medals on the casket. He/she will then step back and stand at attention.

When the third guard (position 3) has stepped back, the three members of the guard will cross their hands in front (right over left). The parade marshal will then salute, which is the signal for the three guards to gently bow their heads in respect. They will remain in this position until the end of the service.

**For a full honours ceremony only:** when the coffin is draped with a flag, the first bearer will stay in position. After the placing of the headdress and medals the third bearer will step forward and place a flag on top of the casket, forward of the headdress and insignia. Together with the first bearer, in alternative movements, they will partly unfold the flag over the casket.

**For a full honours ceremony only:** That done, the two bearers will step back, as previously described. The parade marshal will then salute, which will be the signal for the three guards to gently bow their heads. They will remain in this position until the end of the service.

After the guards bow their heads, the parade marshal shall make an about turn and march out the centre aisle.

### **INSIGNIA GUARD (DEPARTURE)**

After the service, the clergy will move forward down the centre aisle to halt in a position in line with the sixth pew.

At this point, the insignia guard will gently raise their heads and reverse their evolutions.

The third bearer (position 3) begins the sequence by stepping forward to collect the regalia cushion from the casket. He will then step back.

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The second bearer then steps forward to retrieve the headdress and returns to his position.

That done, the first and third bearers will turn to the right and left respectively. They will then march to the head of the casket where they will about turn in line with the second bearer. All three remain at attention. (See appendix drawings for positions.)

**For a full honours ceremony only:** The sequence begins by the first and third bearers stepping forward together. They will refold the flag, which the first bearer will hold. The third bearer completes his movements and the two step back together, then proceed as for a general service.

The procession forms up behind the clergy. The insignia guard follows the casket out of the place of service.

The headdress, regalia, etc., shall be placed on the casket in the hearse, and the guard proceeds to the transport allotted to it.

**For a full honours ceremony only:** the headdress, regalia, etc., shall be placed on the casket on the pumper. The insignia guard will mount the pumper to protect these items from falling. During the procession to the cemetery the pumper lights will be "ON".

### **GUARD OF HONOUR — HONOURARY PALLBEARERS**

The guard of honour consists of eight members and is normally composed of fire department personnel, but it may include civic dignitaries or family friends. They are selected by the Chief of the department in consultation with the funeral committee and the next of kin.

On arriving at the place of service, the guard of honour is escorted by ushers to reserved seats which are at the left front facing the altar.

After the service the clergy leads the funeral procession out. The guard of honour will follow behind the clergy, to form up outside the place of service in two ranks, four paces apart, facing inward.

The guard of honour will salute until the casket is carried through their ranks. They remain at the salute until the casket is placed in the hearse (general service) or on the fire department pumper (full service honours).

When the casket has been placed in the hearse or on the pumper, the honorary pallbearers shall turn outward facing the hearse or pumper and move in slow time to their positions.

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### PALLBEARERS

The pallbearer party will consist of an officer and six other fire department members. All pallbearers should be approximately the same height.

Together with the funeral director, the officer in charge will be responsible for:

- A. The safe transport of the casket.
- B. Ensuring a dolly is available at the place of service entrance so the casket can be set on the dolly and pushed to the front of the place of service.
- C. Dressing the casket at all locations.
- D. In the case of full honours service, attaching the flag to the casket.
- E. Ensuring the casket is placed properly, i.e., sited at right angles to the altar with the head towards the clergy.

When the casket is moved from the funeral home to the place of service, and from the place of service to the gravesite, commands shall be given in a low voice (only loud enough for the pallbearers to hear clearly).

Typical commands are:

- A. "Prepare to lift" "Lift"
- B. "By the right and left, quick march"
- C. "Prepare to halt" "Halt"
- D. "Prepare to lower" "Lower"
- E. "Prepare to release" "Release"

The bearers sit in front pews behind the honorary pallbearers.

The clergy leads the procession in and out of the place of service, and the officer in charge is always at the rear of the casket.

After the service, the casket is pushed down the central aisle to the place of service entrance, where it is lifted off the dolly and carried to the hearse or pumper.

The bearer party then moves to the transport assigned to move it to the cemetery.

The casket is always carried feet forward, **except** when it is taken off the hearse or pumper to be placed over the grave.

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### THE GRAVESITE

#### The Insignia bearers

- A. On arriving at the gravesite, the insignia bearers will pick up their respective items and step back and await the casket's removal. They then follow the casket to the gravesite.
- B. When the casket is placed on the grave, the insignia bearers will repeat their place of service ceremony, then step back, salute, and take up a position beside the honorary pallbearers.

#### Honourary pallbearers

- A. On arriving at the gravesite, they proceed to the hearse or pumper in the same order as when the transfer of the casket took place.
- B. They will salute as the casket is removed from the hearse or pumper.
- C. Under command of the officer in charge of the bearer party, they will then march off in slow time to the gravesite.

#### Next of kin

Next of kin shall stand opposite the honorary pallbearers. A chair should be available for the spouse and/or elderly members of the next of kin in case they are overcome by grief.

#### Platoons/Columns

- A. The platoons will exit from their transport at the cemetery.
- B. Under command of the parade marshal, they will form up in platoons (or columns) and march in slow time to the gravesite.
- C. At the gravesite, they will position themselves according to rank: senior and junior officers behind the next of kin, men/women facing the next of kin behind the honorary pallbearers.

### FOLLOWING LAST RITES

The Chief of the department will step forward and offer his condolences to the spouse of the deceased and/or next of kin.

While this is taking place, the parade marshal shall march the insignia guard around the grave to the family.

The parade marshal shall also offer brief condolences and will then introduce each member of the insignia guard as they hand the deceased's accoutrements to the spouse's escort or as desired by the family.

The parade marshal will then march the insignia guard back to their original positions.

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Following the departure of the next of kin, the parade marshal shall then dismiss the parade which will reboard transportation for return to the muster point and the reception.

### **THE POST SERVICE RECEPTION**

Following the burial, refreshments should be made available. The original muster point is often the most appropriate site.

The availability of refreshments will be announced at the muster point before the parade sets off.

Following the funeral, the department and fire service is still on public display and is judged by the actions and behaviour of its individual members. The best impression can only be shown when firefighters maintain a proper sense of decorum, manners and control.

The parade marshal and protocol officer will ensure VIPs are looked after and are introduced to the Chief of the department.

### **THE MEDIA**

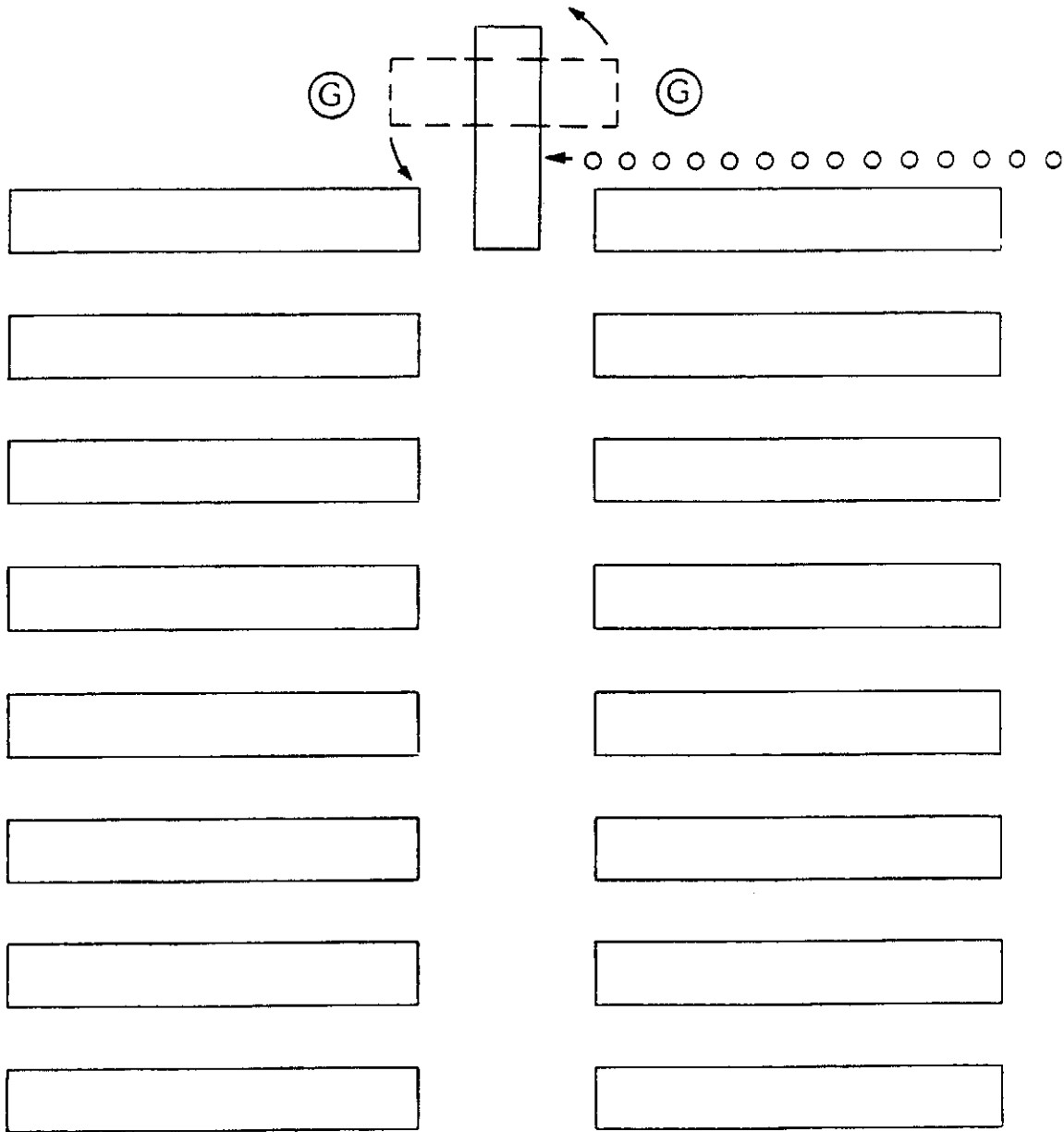
If the department has a **public relations officer**, this person should be included in the funeral's planning sessions.

The media may be interested in the funeral, particularly if it is a full honours, ceremony. The PRO should obtain photographs of the deceased and prepare either a complete obituary for release or a fact sheet about the deceased. These could be made available to media attending.

A media table should be available and plainly marked at the muster point. The protocol officer should direct any media enquiries to the PRO.

If possible, the PRO or the official department photographer should discreetly photograph the entire ceremony. These photographs will be useful for the official department scrapbook, to improve future ceremonies, and, if requested, for the family of the deceased.

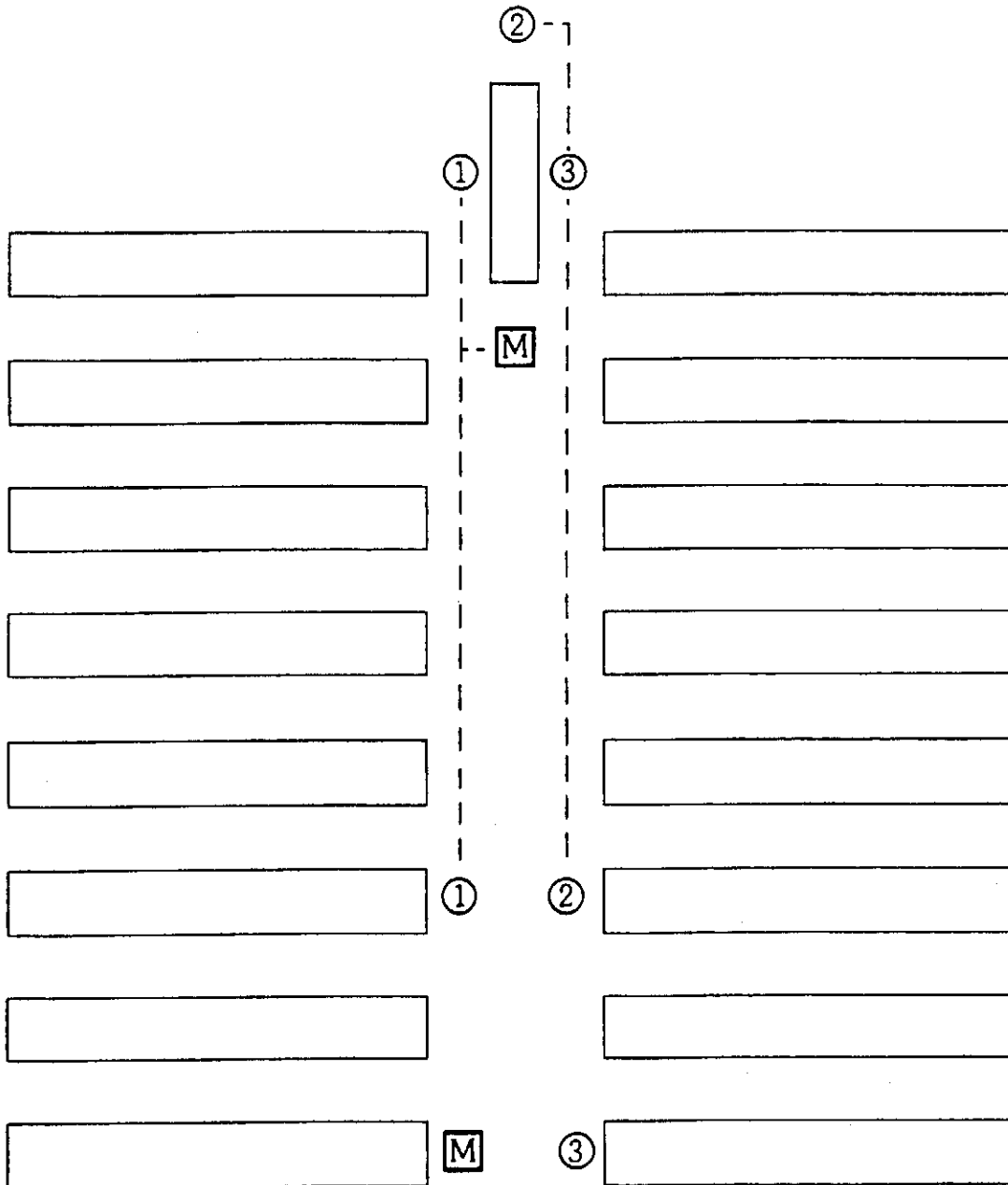
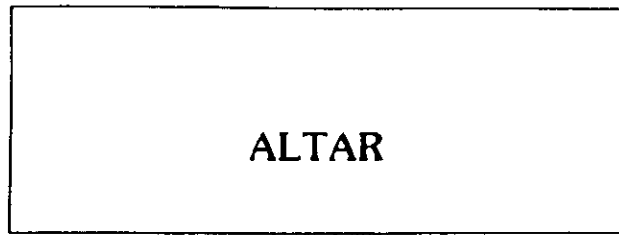
ALTAR



**LEGEND**

ⓐ Mourning Guard

Note: Casket is turned following Last Respects



### INSIGNIA GUARD PROCEDURE

#### LEGEND

- M** Parade Marshal
- ①** Carries Medals
- ②** Carries Headdress
- ③** Carries Flag (Full Honors Only)

ALTAR



Honorary Pallbearers

Next-of-Kin

Pallbearer Party

Relatives

Uniformed Mourners

Relatives

Uniformer Mourners

Civilian Friends

Uniformed Mourners

Civilian Friends

Uniformed Mourners

Civilian Friends

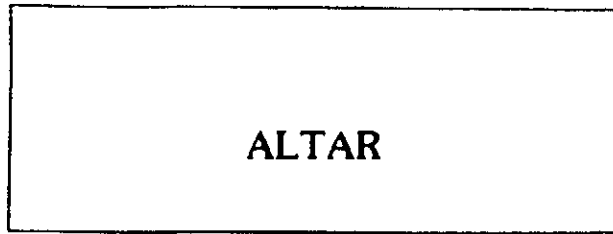
The Public

Civilian Friends

Ushers & Parade Marshal

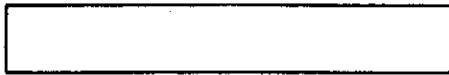
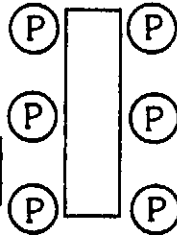
The Public

SEATING ARRANGEMENTS



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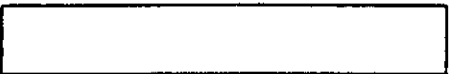
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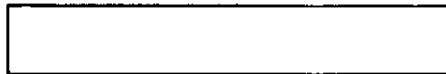


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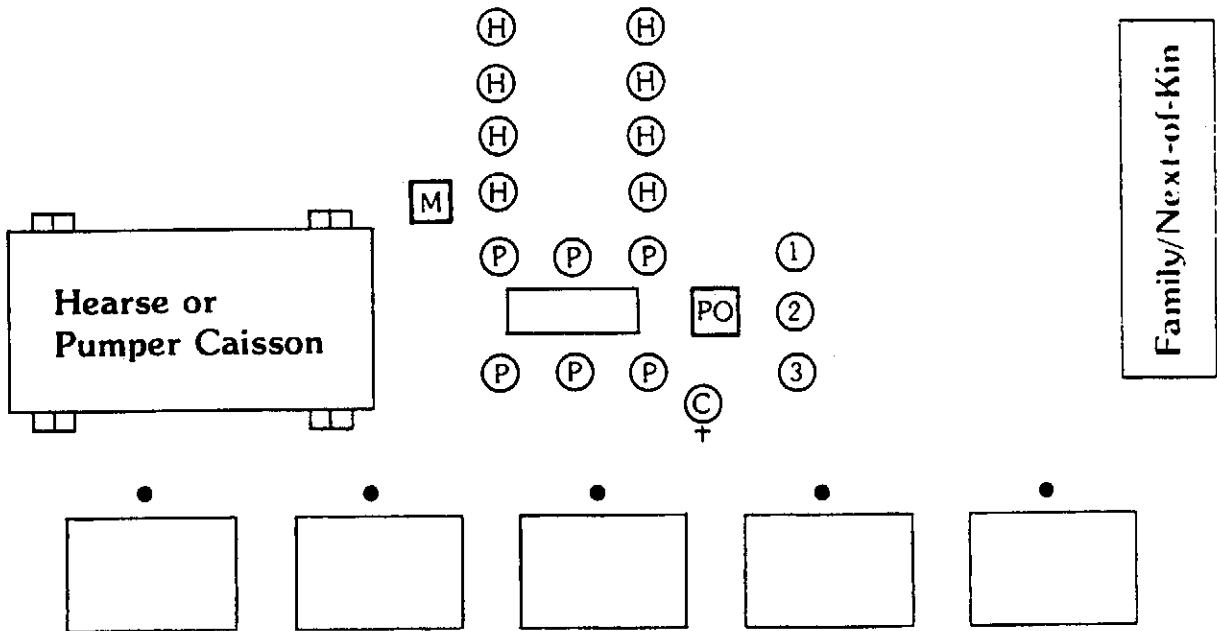
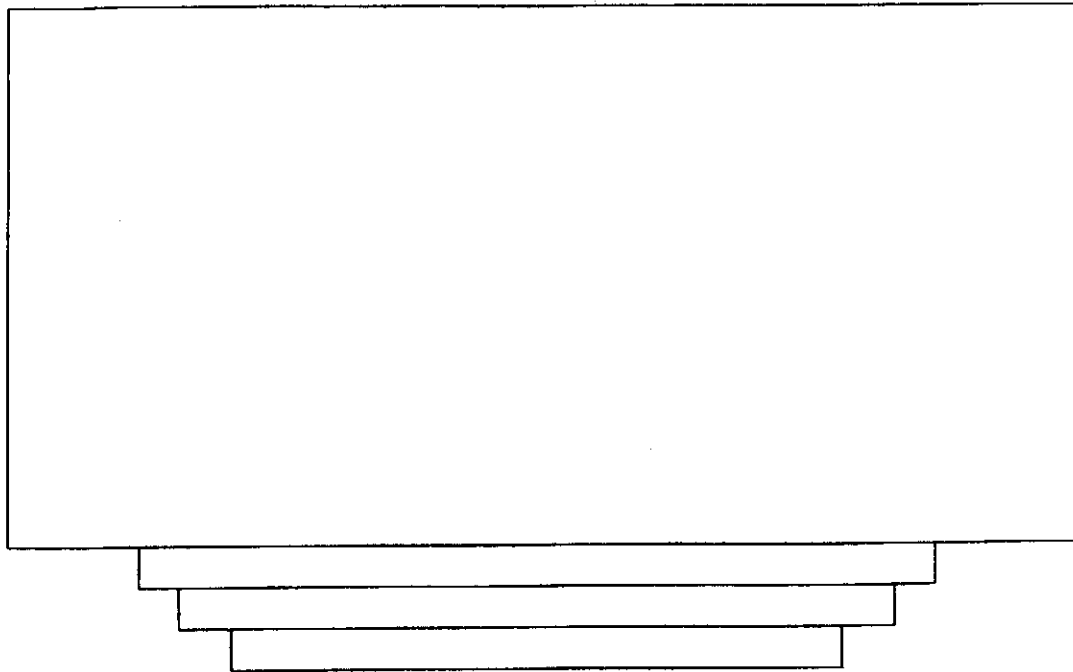
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**LEGEND**

- 1-2-3 Insignia Bearers
- P Pallbearer Party
- PO Officer-in-Charge, Pallbearers
- H Honorary Pallbearers
- C Clergy

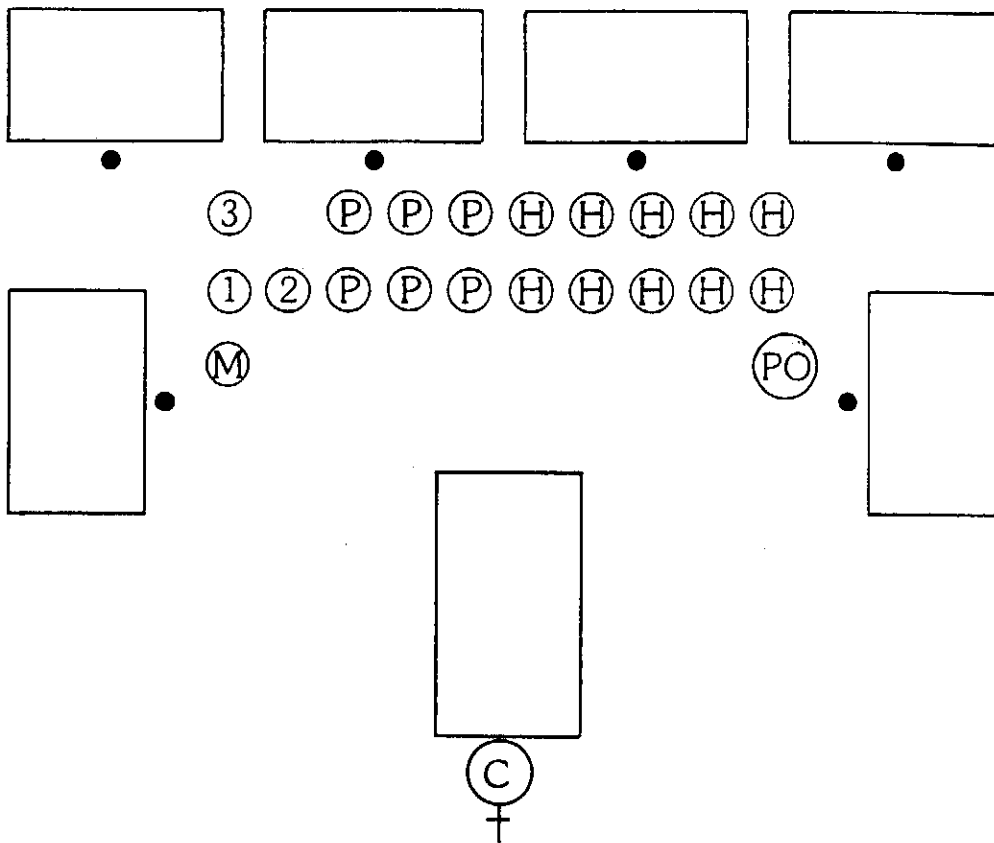
**THE PROCESSION  
FOLLOWING  
THE SERVICE**



**LEGEND**

- M Parade Marshal
- Platoon Commanders & Platoons
- H Honorary Pallbearers
- P Pallbearers
- PO OIC Pallbearers
- 1 2 3 Insignia Guard

**CHURCH EXIT FORMATION**



## GRAVESITE FORMATION

### LEGEND

- M Parade Marshal
- Platoon Commanders & Platoons
- H Honorary Pallbearers
- P Pallbearers
- PO OIC Pallbearers
- 1 2 3 Insignia Guard

