

## How the Smedleys Construct and Use Our VFP flags

Hello Everyone,

We, the Smedleys, have been carrying our flags on ten foot PVC poles for the past few years in all the parades, protests and events that we participate in. They are extremely effective, both visually impressive, creating a powerful presence and it is great P.R. for VFP. It is our symbol, the flag is very effective branding for our organization. I keep about twelve flags, ready to go, in an old golf bag, they fit perfectly.

We just had a very successful Veterans (Armistice) Day event with a parade, behind the official parade sponsored by the American Legion (why we are behind is a long story, not to be gone into here) and a speaking and music event outside Faneuil Hall in Boston. I should add that we had more vets on the street than probably the rest of the parade combined, we had the Leftist Marching Band (our house band) leading our alternative parade. We had a police motorcycle escort in front of us. They were there to keep us a few hundred yards behind the official parade but with their lights on they appeared to be our lead escort. (see attached photo of us coming up the street as the AL folks are scrambling to get off the reviewing stand).

We had a few hundred people and approximately 40 - 50 VFP flags in the air during the parade.. You put a flag on a ten foot pole and put the end of the pole on your hip (an additional 2 feet) as you walk, that flag is way up there, way above anything else waving in the breeze. It is an overwhelming visual presence at any event. You put ten flags in the air and it is extremely impressive and makes you look a lot larger and more of a visual presence than you may actually be.

I have been asked to share with you in VFPbiz just how we put the poles together. A short tutorial so to speak, so here goes.

1. Go to Home Depot or Lowes and purchase a 10 foot long,  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch PVC piping.  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch works best. We have tried 1 inch (too heavy),  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch is too flimsy.  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch is perfect.
2. Cut the 10 foot pole into three sections, two 4 foot pieces and one 2 foot piece. There is a specific tool at home depot for cutting the pipe. It is a hand held small guillotine type tool, similar to a pruning tool for plants. You open the blade put the pipe into the tool where you want to cut and squeeze the handle. It will progressively and easily cut through the PVC pipe in a straight line, making a smooth cut.
3. You will need two coupling pieces to attach the pieces of the PVC pipe together. The reason we cut the pipe into these lengths is one for versatility, you can change the height of the flag to a variety of different lengths. If you are in a parade you might want the flag high in the air. If you are witnessing on the side of a street you may want it a little shorter.

Another reason is that the three poles roll up in the flag perfectly when you are putting the flag away.

4. How to attach the flag to the pole. We have been using rubber bands but now are switching to a more permanent attachment. We will continue to use rubber bands on some of the flags for versatility.

Rubber Bands:

Go to Staples and get the rubber bands. # 64 work well, #84 work the best. One problem with rubber bands is that eventually they wear out and you have to replace them. The #84 is wider than the #64 and certainly last the longest.

Here is the trick. Take the rubber band and put it through the bottom grommet on the flag, so that you have a loop on each side of the grommet. Take the two loops of the rubber band and loop both loops over the PVC pole. It is important to start with the bottom grommet. The flag is now attached to the pole at the top.

Then slide the attached rubber band down the pole and attach the top grommet the same way – wala you have the flag attached. Now attach the different sections of the pole and you are ready to go.

Plastic Ties:

I am currently switching to plastic ties on most the poles, but will keep some with rubber-bands. The reason for this is that with the rubber bands you can take it apart quickly if you just want to hold a flag or tape a flag to an informational table or put one on the wall at an event etc.

One of our members in the past took some of the flags and attached the flag to the poll with plastic ties. He put the tie through the grommet and then around the PVC pole and tightened the tie. This is a good idea in theory but presented a problem in that the ties would slide down the pole, regardless of how tight you thought it was attached. We had to put rubber bands around the ties to hold them in place on the pole.

Here is our more permanent solution:

Drill a hole through the  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch PVC pole just about 1 inch from the top of the pole. Drill the hole through both sides. I am not sure of the drill bit size I am using but it is just the same width as the plastic ties. I am using 20 cm ties, eight inches long. You can get these at Home Depot. You could use shorter ties but the larger ties gives you a better grip when tightening the ties.

Put the tie through the grommet then through the holes in the pole. Attach the end of the tie and pull it till it is as tight as possible. Pull the flag tight against the pole, pull it very taut. Make sure the bottom grommet is lined up with the “hole” in the pole at the top, not the hole in the top grommet, this may be different now that the tie is tight. When the flag is taut, mark the pole with a magic marker at the bottom of the bottom grommet hole. Now drill the second hole at this mark. Attach the flag as you did above. This will assure that the flag is pulled tight against the pole in a straight line.

When the flag is attached just cut off the excess tie and there you are.

There is also a white PVC cap that can be put on top of the pole, just in case you are into accessories’.

I hope this is helpful. If you have any questions please get in touch.  
Have a great day,  
Pat Scanlon, Coordinator, VFP Chapter 9, Smedley Butler Brigade