

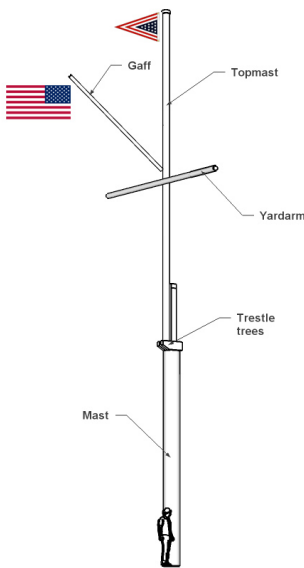


PIYC's Chapter of the IOBG

“Why is our Yacht Club’s burgee flying above our US flag?”

That is probably the most frequently asked question by many members of PIYC. Gaff-rigged poles are used by navies, boaters and yacht clubs around the world. Onshore, the "yacht club style flagpole" with a gaff represents the mast of a ship. A gaff-rigged pole with a

yardarm as shown in the photograph illustrates the proper flying of our burgee, the US flag, the Florida State flag, the Clean Marina flag, the Florida Council of Yacht Club (FCYC)'s flag and the International Order of the Blue Gavel (IOBG)'s flag.



Many people are confused about the proper way to fly the national ensign from a gaff-rigged pole. The national ensign should be flown from the gaff and the club or organization burgee should be flown at the masthead.

The gaff-rigged pole had its origins at sea. Because of all the sail carried by the rigging of these vessels, the flag of a nation could not be clearly viewed if it was placed at the top of the mast. The stern of the vessel was the position of command and the captain's quarters were located aft. Early boats also had the nobleman's banner, king's banner, or English ensign staff fixed to the stern rail. As sails changed, long booms sweep across the stern rail every time the ship tacked, so the ensign staff had to be removed when the ship was under way. Since the captain and other officers were still aft, the nearest position from which they found it practical to fly the ensign was the gaff. Over

time, this became the place of honor to display the national flag. When the ship was moored, the ensign staff was set up again on the stern rail.

The usual argument given by those that think it is wrong to fly the national ensign from the gaff is that the national ensign is flying below a club burgee or other flag contrary to the Flag Code. Notice that even when the national ensign is flown from the stern of a ship, it is lower in height than other flags flying on the ship. When the ensign is flown from a gaff-rigged pole, a flag flown at the top of the mast is not considered above the ensign because it is not being flown directly above the ensign on the same halyard.

The ensign should be flown from the highest point of honor, and over time, that has become the peak of the gaff. Flying the national ensign from the top of the mast while flying another flag at the gaff would be flying another flag in a position of superior honor since the peak of the gaff is the highest point of honor.

A mast should be installed as if it is the mast of a ship putting out to sea, i.e., heading toward an intended viewer. That is, the gaff should point aft. If you stand at the base of the pole looking forward (toward the intended viewer), the extremities of the yardarm are termed port (on your left) and starboard (on your right), just as they would be on a vessel.

The flagpole or mast of a yacht club is considered to represent the mast of a vessel, and the peak of the gaff, if one is used, is the place of honor from which the U.S. ensign is flown, just as if would be on a gaff rigged boat.

If you are interested to find out more about proper flag etiquette, mark your calendar for 22 October 2014 from 0900 to 1200 hours in the PDR in the Pelican Isle Yacht Club.

P/C Peter Franck
President
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IOBG