

**MEMORIAL SERVICE**

**JULY 23, 2023**

**124TH VFW NATIONAL CONVENTION  
PHOENIX CONVENTION CENTER**

**AT APPROXIMATELY 8:20 AM**

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:**

**Comrades, members of the VFW Auxiliary and friends, please take your seats as our Memorial Service is about to begin.**

**AT APPROXIMATELY 8:25 AM**

*(Participants take their respective stations and the Commander-in-Chief prepares to call the session to order.)*

**AT PRECISELY 8:30 AM**

*(Chimes, to mark the hour, will signal the beginning of the Memorial Service.)*

**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

*(one rap of gavel)* **All rise! Sergeant-at-Arms, will you please escort the Gold Star Families and Past National Chaplains to their seats of honor.**

*(The Sergeant-at-Arms will then escort, from the back of the hall, the Gold Star Families and Past National Chaplains to their seats of honor. Ceremonial procession utilizing “Eternal Father, Strong to Save – Navy Hymn.”)*

*(The VFW Auxiliary National President shall join the Commander-in-Chief at the dais, standing to the left.)*

**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

*(To all) Please be seated. (Brief pause.)* There are times when mere words seem far from being adequate. This is such an occasion because we are gathered to recall those who have made the supreme sacrifice – and to honor their families. Thus, our deeds speak better than words.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is founded upon the true comradeship of people bound by experiences, interests and everlasting patriotism. It is the sort of comradeship that lives through succeeding generations and far back into memory because we know that neither time nor events can separate those who have joined in the common defense of our flag and country.

That is the way we feel about the men and women who are absent. While they are physically gone, we remember them. In reality, they are very close to us. They are definitely a part of our thinking and actions. We feel that they have molded the future of our nation. They give us strong incentive to carry on our crusade for lasting peace and better purposes in life.

**The highest tribute this organization can render them – and the most profound respect all of us can demonstrate – is to apply to our own lives the strong faith and undaunted courage which were theirs.**

**To the families of those comrades, we pledge the sincere friendship of this organization.**

**Thank you again for being here with us today.**

*(Brief pause.)*

**I now call upon VFW Auxiliary National President Jane Reape to prepare the Auxiliary Altar.**

**AUXILIARY PRESIDENT:**

**The VFW Auxiliary National Conductress and Color Bearers shall prepare the Auxiliary Altar with placement of the VFW Auxiliary Memorial Altar Cloth and Bible.**

*(Instructions for setting the Altar: Color Bearers enter holding Memorial Altar Cloth, led by Color Bearers 3 and 4, followed by the Conductor/ Conductress, who carries the open Bible. When in front of the VFW Altar, they very slowly lower the cloth onto the Auxiliary Altar. The Conductor/ Conductress places the Bible on the Auxiliary Memorial Altar Cloth and steps back one (1) step.)*

*(Color Bearers 1 and 3 turn right, Color Bearers 2 and 4 turn left and proceed to the rear of the Altar, as Color Bearers 1 and 2 are in line with the Conductor/Conductress, and retire.)*

*(The VFW Auxiliary National President returns to their seat.)*

**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

**Sergeant-at-Arms, you will prepare the hall for the advancement of the colors followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, the National Anthem and posting of the colors.**

*(The Sergeant-at-Arms advances down the center aisle and calls for the Captain of the VFW National Honor Guard to advance the colors. When colors start down the aisle, gives the command to audience to "Present Arms." Playing of "Cadence" while the colors are in motion.)*

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:**

**Present Arms.**

*(VFW National Honor Guard advances colors to front of Altar, salutes Commander-in-Chief, then go to Order Arms and prepare for the Invocation.)*

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:**

**Order Arms.**

**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

**We will now have our Invocation by VFW Auxiliary National Chaplain Lois Callahan. Parade rest.**

*(Comrades, if covered, remain covered unless otherwise directed by the presiding officer.)*

**AUXILIARY CHAPLAIN:**

Invocation

**Almighty God, we thank you for this solemn time to remember those who have gone before us. We thank you for the grace and health to be here so that we may pay tribute to those who have helped secure the liberties and blessings that we enjoy.**

**We ask that your spirit abide with us during this ceremony. May it bring healing to our hearts and peace to our organizations. Let the words, music and prayers offered this morning be pleasing, true and honorable.**

**Remembering is the best way to honor, and today we honor our comrades, brothers and sisters.**

**All this we ask in humility and love, Amen.**

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:**

**Please join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our country, followed by the singing of our National Anthem by VFW Auxiliary National Soloist Mary Touve Kackman. Present Arms.**

*(VFW National Honor Guard goes to Present Arms for the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem.)*

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:**

*(Leading all members in recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.)* **I Pledge Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.**

**NATIONAL SOLOIST:**

*(“National Anthem”)*

*(Following the National Anthem, the VFW National Honor Guard will post the colors.)*

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:**

**Order Arms!**

*(Pause until the VFW National Honor Guard retires.)*

**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

**Please be seated. Comrades, members of the VFW Auxiliary and friends, we meet at this time to commemorate our comrades of the United States Armed Forces who have answered the last call, and their families whose service and sacrifices too often goes without the recognition it deserves.**

**The VFW Ritual provides that the audience shall refrain from applauding. The Sergeant-at-Arms will see that there is no disturbance during the ceremonies.**

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:**

**Commander-in-Chief, your order will be obeyed.**

**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

**I request that the VFW National Chaplain preside.**

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**Comrade Commander-in-Chief, I am at your service and shall endeavor to perform this solemn duty with reverence and in the spirit of faith, hope and charity.**

*(VFW National Chaplain takes station of the Commander-in-Chief; the Commander-in-Chief is joined by the VFW Auxiliary National President and prepares to be escorted by the Sergeant-at-Arms.)*

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**We will now have the lighting of the POW/MIA candle and the Armed Forces Vigil candle by the Commander-in-Chief and the VFW Auxiliary National President.**

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

Prayer

**O God Almighty, Creator and Ruler of the Universe, some of our comrades and companions are prisoners of war and missing in action. Comfort them, we pray, in their isolation from their homes and loved ones; supply their needs and protect them from want and deprivation; strengthen and sustain them that they may face discouragement with courage and hardship with resolution. Grant that they may find patience to endure, and peace in the knowledge of Your continuing presence.**

**O God, we ask that You will strengthen and protect all our members of the armed forces of the United States of America. On the day of battle may they be courageous and strong, resourceful and capable, resolute and victorious. In the time of peace may they serve with dignity and honor, as effective emissaries of good will for this Nation. May their devotion and loyalty to You and to their homeland inspire them in moments of challenge, and comfort them in tribulation and long separations from loved ones.**

**And finally, we ask they may return safely to serve You and our Country in the days and years to come. Amen.**

*(Pause)*

**This year, our Memorial Roll Call recognizes departed Past Commander-in-Chief Clifford G. “Cliff” Olson, Jr. who passed away on July 13, 2022, Past Commander-in-Chief Thomas J. “Tommy” Tradewell who passed away on August 2, 2022, Past National President Sandy Germany who passed away on November 15, 2022, and Past National President Helen Harsh who passed away on May 25, 2023.**



**Clifford G. “Cliff” Olson, Jr. was National Commander-in-Chief from 1983 to 1984. The family of Clifford G. “Cliff” Olson, Jr. is being represented by Michael Raymond, Past Department Commander. The family could not attend but his wife wanted to offer a written message, “Thank you to all of the delegates in attendance who will be remembering my husband, and Past Chief Clifford Olson, Junior. The VFW was a part of his life and our lives for as long as I can remember. We have met so many good people along the way, and he achieved so many wonderful things. We are honored that you will be remembering him at the 124th National Convention. I wish we could be there but again, thank you for remembering him.”**

**Thomas J. “Tommy” Tradewell was National Commander-in-Chief from 2009 to 2010. The family of Thomas J. “Tommy” Tradewell is being represented by Michele Rathke, Past Department Commander. The family could not attend but wanted to offer a written message, “While Tom was serving in Vietnam, he became close friends with three other young soldiers. On March 23, 1968, these three young soldiers were killed in action close to where Tom was. Tom received a Purple Heart Ribbon for his injuries, but in his mind and heart these three young soldiers will**

**never be forgotten. Tom dedicated a portion of his life to making sure that the memory of our fallen soldiers and their families will never be forgotten. God Bless our Veterans and their families.”**

**Sandy Germany was National President from 2005 to 2006. Sandy Germany is being represented by Past National President Armithea “Sissy” Borel.**

**Helen Harsh was National President from 1994 to 1995. Helen Harsh is being represented by Past National President Dixie Hild.**

*(A symbolic red rose will be presented to them by the Sergeant-at-Arms.)*

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**We will now prepare for our Memorial Roll Call Tribute.**

*(The VFW and VFW Auxiliary line officers will assemble in a semicircle behind the VFW National Chaplain and prepare to deliver their message.)*

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**Comrade Commander-in-Chief, what message of comfort can you bring as we remember those who have answered the final call?**

**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

**We can keep their memories bright and strong. We can remember their service to this country and their service to their fellow comrades and family members.**

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**VFW Auxiliary National President, how can we maintain hope in the midst of our sadness and loss?**

**AUXILIARY PRESIDENT:**

**Every life has a beginning and an end. No matter the time in between, we can be thankful that we had those years together and were able to share our hearts and lives with them.**

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**Comrade Senior Vice Commander-in-Chief, what message of condolence do you have for those bereaved?**

**SR. VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

**Mourning is a natural part of this life, and it means we have celebrated a life well lived. The pain we feel is a reflection of the deep love and friendship we shared.**

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**VFW Auxiliary National Senior Vice President, what can we do to make sure these lives are never forgotten?**

**AUXILIARY SR. VICE PRESIDENT:**

**We can continue to meet together as we are now, and to speak of them with fondness and love. We must remember and honor the memory of those we lost.**

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**Comrade Junior Vice Commander-in-Chief, what can we do in our lives today to continue the legacy of service of those gone before us?**

**JR. VICE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

**We can continue to serve our fellow veterans, their families and our communities. We must always honor the dead by helping the living.**

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**VFW Auxiliary National Junior Vice President, what hope can you offer to those gathered here as we realize how short life can be?**

**AUXILIARY JR. VICE PRESIDENT:**

**Every day holds the opportunity to serve those around us. Our faith, friends and family can be our strength and hope as we travel life's road.**

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**VFW Auxiliary National Chaplain, what can we take away from this Memorial Service so that our lives hold meaning once we depart?**

**AUXILIARY CHAPLAIN:**

**Each of us must extend a hand of friendship to those around us. We must unite in our common goal of serving veterans, their families and the military community. Remembering what brings us together will keep us united. In this way, we can best honor those comrades, sisters and brothers we have lost.**

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**We are thankful for these inspiring words from each of you. Let us learn the lesson of the hour which is that one day we too will answer the final call and someone will be remembering us.**

**Let us live our lives so that when our time comes to depart this life, we can do it with a good conscience, in the comfort of our faith or beliefs and in perfect charity toward everyone we meet.**

**Let us pray.**

*(VFW National Chaplain delivers extemporaneous prayer.)*

*(Officers, except VFW National Chaplain, take their seats.)*

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**God grant to the living, grace;  
to the departed, rest;  
to the Nation, peace and unity;  
to us all, Your servants, the  
promise of everlasting life,  
light to guide us on our way,  
courage to support us,  
and Your blessing to unite us in  
service to You, our God, and this  
our Country. Amen.**

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**Phoenix Boys Choir will now  
perform “My Country Tis of Thee.”**

**PHOENIX BOYS CHOIR:**

*(Phoenix Boys Choirs performs “My  
Country Tis of Thee.”)*

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**Comrades, in commemorating the  
virtues of our departed heroes  
who served their country in time  
of need, we now offer our  
symbolic tributes.**

**I place upon our sacred shrine  
these red flowers, which  
symbolize the zeal of our departed  
comrades in upholding  
brotherhood, truth and justice.**

*(Places flowers on shrine.)*

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**Comrade Past Commander-in-  
Chief, what tribute have you to  
offer?**

**PAST COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

**These white flowers I place as a  
token of the purity of affection we  
have for our departed comrades.**

*(Places flowers on shrine.)*

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**Comrade Commander-in-Chief,  
have you a tribute to offer upon  
this sacred shrine?**

**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

**The blue of our national standard  
symbolizes truth and fidelity.  
Therefore, I place these blue  
flowers from nature's bosom in  
token of our sincere respect for all  
departed comrades.**

*(Places flowers on shrine.)*

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**Members of the VFW Auxiliary,  
will you offer a tribute to the  
memory of our departed  
comrades?**

**AUXILIARY PRESIDENT:**

**I place upon our sacred shrine this wreath as a symbol of eternity. Its color bespeaks life everlasting. Thus do we say that the deeds of our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, on land, on sea and in the air, are immortalized in the hearts of a grateful people.**

*(Places evergreen wreath on shrine.)*

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**While America's military service personnel are overseas defending liberty around the world, they leave behind those who love them most. The family members of the military keep the home fires burning. Their prayers, their care packages, their phone calls and their emails give support and encouragement for those at war.**

**They stand by their side in a show of love and commitment. We honor their sacrifices today.**

**I ask the VFW Auxiliary, what tribute do we offer to those family members gone before us?**

**AUXILIARY PRESIDENT:**

**These white flowers we bring as a token of the love that we have for our departed brothers and sisters, and these white orchids we bring as a token of remembrance for our departed Past National Presidents.**

*(Sergeant-at-Arms will escort the Commander-in-Chief and President to the Auxiliary Altar and place the white flowers around the Bible on the Altar as Phoenix Boys Choir performs “America the Beautiful.”)*

**MUSICAL SELECTION:**

*(Phoenix Boys Choir performs “America the Beautiful.”)*

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**Commander-in-Chief, please approach the dais for the purpose of introducing our guest speaker.**

**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

*(Introduction of the Guest Speaker.)*

It is now my distinct pleasure to introduce our speaker (former Commissioned Armor Officer from West Point and Desert Shield/Desert Storm veteran) ... The Honorable William G. Montgomery, Justice, Arizona Supreme Court.

**JUSTICE WILLIAM MONTGOMERY:** *(“Memorial Address”)*

**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

**Thank you Justice Montgomery.**

*(Guest speaker takes his seat.)*

**VFW Auxiliary National Soloist Mary Touve Kackman will now perform “Hallelujah” (Veterans Version).**

**NATIONAL SOLOIST:**

*(Mary Touve Kackman performs “Hallelujah” (Veterans Version))*

*(Upon conclusion of the musical selection, the VFW National Chaplain will introduce the Past VFW National Chaplain, selected to deliver the Benediction, followed by the playing of “Taps.”)*



*(Comrades, if covered, remain covered, unless otherwise directed by the presiding officer.)*

**VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

**Please stand for the Benediction by Past VFW National Chaplain Peter R. Hook followed by the playing of “Taps” by Mark Scott.**

**PAST VFW NATIONAL CHAPLAIN:**

Benediction

**Almighty God, as we conclude our annual memorial service, we are reminded that You, O Lord, are God, Creator, and the giver of life. You have blessed all present here today with life and we are grateful for each day we have been given.**

**As we have remembered and honored those who once sat with us, we give thanks for the time we had with them and for their commitment and service to preserve liberty and freedom in our own land and in the world. The fallen, whether in the air, on the land, or on the sea, have provided for all that which we appreciate today.**

**May we continue to remember our comrades with grateful hearts, full of thanksgiving to You for Your grace and mercy to them.**

**And now Lord, be gracious and merciful to us, and let Your light shine upon us for You are our God and Savior, King of kings and Lord of lords, and unto You we ascribe glory now and forevermore. Amen.**

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:**

*("Taps") Present Arms!*

**TAPS:**

*(Mark Scott)*

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS:**

*("Taps") Order Arms!*

**COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF:**

**This concludes our Memorial Service. I would like to acknowledge and thank all of you for your respectful participation in this solemn service.**