



Convention

Highlights

Sunday, July 23, 2017
Memorial Service

Memorial Service Speaker Says Those Who have Sacrificed ‘Shall not Grow Old’

Marine Lt. Gen. Rex McMillian delivered the address at today’s memorial service. McMillian served as chief of staff for the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing in Iraq in 2003. McMillian, the current commander of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Reserve and Marine Forces Northern Command recalled the memories of 20 U.S. troops, who paid the “ultimate sacrifice.” He led off with the story of Marine Staff Sgt. Ambrosio Guillen, a Korean War Medal of Honor recipient who was killed while serving with F Co., 2nd Bn., 7th Marines, 1st Marine Div., on July 25, 1953. According to his MOH citation, Guillen was “directly responsible for the success of his platoon in repelling a numerically superior enemy force.”

McMillian then remembered Army Master Sgt. Joshua L. Wheeler, a Delta Force operative who was the first U.S. service member killed in action while fighting ISIS on Oct. 22, 2015. McMillian, who has been a pilot for Delta Airlines since 1989, noted a speech by Marine Lt. Gen. John Kelly four days after Kelly’s own son was killed in Afghanistan. Kelly recalled the “selfless devotion” of Marine Cpl. Jonathan Yale and Marine Lance Cpl. Jordan Haerter, who were killed April 22, 2008, in Ramadi, Iraq, when they stopped a suicide bomber at a checkpoint and saved the lives of 150 Marines and Iraqi police.

McMillian concluded with a personal connection to the recent deaths of 15 Marines and a sailor, who died in a July aircraft crash in Mississippi. McMillian noted that nine of those Marines were from his squadron. “We are in mourning over the loss of these comrades,” he said. “We owe it to them to honor their sacrifices.” McMillian thanked VFW for the “humble privilege” to speak and urged attendees to “ensure that future generations owe a debt of gratitude to those who have sacrificed their lives.”

Past VFW National Chaplain Father John Francis Leonard, of Newburyport, N.H., was remembered during the service. A life member of Post 10722 in Pelham, N.H., Leonard died on March 18, 2017.

VFW Auxiliary National Chaplain Peggy Haake provided the invocation, while past VFW National Chaplain Joseph “Nick” Guest delivered the benediction. Led by VFW National Chaplain Peter Hook, VFW and Auxiliary national officers performed the memorial ritual and symbolic tribute.

Those performing included VFW Auxiliary National Soloist Willa Watts, New Orleans bagpipe artist Marta Vincent and Greg Champagne, St. Charles Parish sheriff and accomplished trumpet player. VFW national sergeants-at-arms escorted Gold Star parents and wives before and after the ceremony.

-The End-

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