



Convention Highlights

Sunday, July 22, 2018
Memorial Service

Memorial Service Honors Two Former VFW, Auxiliary Leaders

Two former VFW and Auxiliary leaders who died in 2017 were remembered at today's memorial service. Past VFW Commander-in-Chief James R. "Bob" Currieo (1982-83), who died in October, also led VFW's Washington Office from 1994 to 1996. Past National Auxiliary President Lorraine Frier, who died in June, led the Auxiliary from 1999 to 2000.

Matthew Naylor, president and CEO of the National World War I Museum and Memorial, presented the memorial address. Naylor, who has worked at the Kansas City-based museum since 2013, said "the world in which we live is arguably more like the world of 1913 than it has ever been in the past 105 years."

He noted that, "more than ever, the voices of hope and courage need to be heard in this conflicted world where threats are more consequential than we might ever have considered. More than ever, the voices of hope, courage, service and patriotism need to be heard."

Naylor, who holds dual citizenship in Australia and the United States, also honored the memories of his grandfather, who served in WWI, and his father, who served in WWII. Naylor, who said their service "shaped" his family, recited his father's first-hand accounts as a tanker with the Royal Armored Corps in Europe. He concluded by encouraging convention attendees to visit the WWI Museum, located one mile south of the convention center.

With more than 25 years of nonprofit leadership experience, Naylor coordinated an outdoor exhibit of the museum's artifacts in the United Kingdom and several national WWI centennial commemoration events in Kansas City. Under his leadership, museum visitors have increased more than 63 percent and its social media platforms have seen upwards of 6 billion impressions and followers. He sits on the United States World War I Centennial Commission and serves on various boards and committees for civic and educational initiatives. VFW Quartermaster General Debra Anderson also is a member of the WWI commission.

VFW Auxiliary National Chaplain Sandra Onstwedder provided the invocation, while past VFW National Chaplain Rev. Peter R. Hook delivered the benediction. Led by VFW National Chaplain James W. "Jim" Gray, VFW and Auxiliary national officers carried out the memorial ritual and symbolic tributes.

Other featured performers included VFW Auxiliary National Soloist Carolyn Grusse, Celebration Choir of Saint Thomas More, of Kansas City, Mo., and Sailor Jerri, a Navy veteran who served as an aviation mechanic on F/A18s with Strike Fighter Squadron 83 based at Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia. Originally from Minnesota, Jerri performed her rendition of "Hallelujah" (veterans version) during a slideshow featuring photos of deployed troops from various generations. Sam Gibbons, a life member of VFW Post 1894 in Clinton, Mo., performed Taps. VFW national sergeants-at-arms escorted Gold Star parents and wives before the ceremony.

-The End-