



124TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS

Convention Highlights

Sunday, July 23, 2023
Memorial Service

Memorial Speaker Reminds Attendees of ‘Our Debt’ to the Fallen

The Honorable William G. Montgomery, Justice, Arizona Supreme Court, delivered today’s memorial address. Montgomery, a veteran of operations *Desert Storm* and *Desert Shield*, spoke and reminded memorial service attendees about the debt Americans owe to troops, veterans and their families.

“I use the term ‘our debt’ because we do carry a charge to ensure that the sacrifice of our brothers and sisters is never in vain,” Montgomery said. “It is essential that we keep in our present collective consciousness the recognition that freedom is not free, and that we cannot remain free without such selfless service.”

A West Point graduate, Montgomery referenced the moment he sat down to write his Memorial Service message. The veteran of D Co., 3rd Bn., 32nd Armor, 1st Cav Div., explained that he wrote the address on Memorial Day.

“I remembered the sacrifices of so many who have fallen under our flag as well as my own remembrances of fallen friends.” Montgomery said. “I saw numerous photos and videos of cemeteries at home and in foreign lands with white crosses, Stars of David and simple headstones in rows, upon rows, upon rows.”

During the service, four national leaders who died this past year were honored. Those remembered were:

- Past VFW Commander-in-Chief Clifford G. “Cliff” Olson Jr. (1983-84), who died on July 13, 2022.
- Past VFW Commander-in-Chief Thomas J. “Tommy” Tradewell (2009-10), who died on Aug. 2, 2022.
- Past National Auxiliary President Sandy Germany (2005-06), who died on Nov. 15, 2022.
- Past National Auxiliary President Helen Harsh (1994-95), who died on May 25, 2023.

Led by VFW Commander-in-Chief Timothy Borland and VFW Auxiliary National President Jane Reape, national VFW and Auxiliary leaders preformed the honorary traditional rituals to honor all deceased veterans.

The Phoenix Boys Choir performed moving renditions of “American the Beautiful” and “My Country Tis of Thee,” while the VFW Auxiliary National Soloist Mary Touve Kackman sang the national anthem and the veterans version of “Hallelujah.” Rev. Peter R. Hook, a past VFW national chaplain, offered the benediction and VFW Auxiliary member Mark G. Scott preformed Taps to conclude the ceremony.

-The End-