



2024 NATIONAL CONVENTION

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

Convention Highlights

Sunday, July 28, 2024
Memorial Service

Memorial Speaker Shares a 'Forever Memory'

Retired Kentucky Army National Guard Col. Chaplain J. Roger Dill delivered the address during this morning's Memorial Service. He began by paying tribute to his WWI Navy veteran grandfather and WWII Army veteran father. He wore a stole from a WWII chaplain's kit with his grandfather's and father's rank on it.

Dill noted that the state of Kentucky has numerous veteran cemeteries and memorials. One such memorial is in Elizabethtown. It is an 80 percent replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, located in the nation's capital. Dill added that the National Guard Armory unit in Elizabethtown lost many sons in Vietnam in a heavy night attack.

Chaplain Dill said he cherished his time in the Kentucky Army National Guard and spoke of his time as chaplain at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. "I related to my ministry in uniform more strongly than I do my time in church pastoral roles," he said. "As one of the hospital chaplains, I talked to hundreds of service men and women. I saw many battle scars and sensed some that would last a lifetime as memories, etched deep."

Dill shared an emotional story from his time as a Methodist pastor on Hatteras Island, N.C. While there, he befriended a Vietnam veteran suffering from PTSD. "When we met, he talked, I listened," Dill said. "When we would depart from one of his visits, my parting comment was 'Charlie Mike.' For a few of you that have not heard the term, it is military radio talk for 'Continue the Mission.' Sadly, I lost contact when I left the island. People at the church did not know the depth of our 'old soldier' talks, thus no one called regarding his death. He is one of my forever memories I will remember and honor."

Dill closed by sharing a poem he wrote for his first military funeral in 1975. It is based on *Matthew 5:9*. He still uses the poem today for the funerals of non-combat veterans of any service.

Led by VFW Commander-in-Chief Duane Sarmiento and VFW Auxiliary National President Carla Martinez, national VFW and Auxiliary leaders preformed the honorary traditional rituals to honor all deceased veterans.

Past National VFW Auxiliary President Patricia Jankowski and Janice Criswell were remembered. Jankowski was president from 2000-2001 and passed away on March 3. Criswell, who had been an Auxiliary member for more than 45 years and worked for 22 years at VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters in Kansas City, Mo., died on May 22.

The Thoroughbreds, a men's acapella chorus from Jeffersontown, Ky., performed moving renditions of "Nearer, My God to Thee" and "Follow the Flag," while the VFW Auxiliary National Soloist Willa Watts sang the national anthem and "It Is Well With My Soul." Deborah Halter, past VFW national chaplain, offered the benediction and Associate Track Bugler for Churchill Downs Will Lovan performed Taps to conclude the ceremony.

-The End-



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