

Sunday, Aug. 16, 2009
Memorial Service

SACRIFICE ESSENCE OF MEMORIAL SERVICE

Capt. Richard A. Tatum, a Protestant chaplain at Luke Air Force Base in Glendale, Ariz., delivered the memorial address. Using sacrifice as his theme, he stressed values such as pride, duty, honor and responsibility. Tatum, an Iraq War vet and VFW member, focused on two fellow airmen from Luke who also served in the Iraq War. Maj. Troy Lee Gilbert was serving with the 309th Fighter Squadron when he died on Nov. 27, 2006, near Fallujah. "He believed in his mission with all his heart," Tatum said.

Staff Sgt. Matt Slayton of the 56th Engineer Support Squadron was an explosive ordnance disposal specialist in 2007 in Kirkuk when an improvised explosive device exploded as he was trying to disarm it. Slayton "lost many body parts," according to Tatum, but "like many others, he would say he was just doing his job." Tatum noted that only 1% of the American population serve in the military. "Let this be a call to action so their sacrifice is not in vain," he concluded.

Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist Juanita Bohlman sang the "Star-Spangled Banner" and "The Lord's Prayer." Michael J. DeMik of the U.S. Border Patrol played "America the Beautiful" on bagpipes. David Geffen, Arizona state director for Bugles Across America, performed "Taps." Buddy Reynolds, Arizona VFW's assistant state chaplain and soloist, sang "Sleep Soldier Boy" and "Another Soldier's Coming Home."

Past commanders-in-chief Clyde A. Lewis (1949-50) and Cooper T. Holt (1956-57) were remembered. Members of both families were honored during the service. Lewis died Feb. 4, 2009. A member of Post 125 in Plattsburgh, N.Y., Lewis served in the European Theater of WWII with the 401st Bombardment Group, 8th Air Force. He logged two tours of duty before V-E Day. Holt died May 1, 2009. For 26 years, he led VFW's Washington Office and was a member of Post 1289 in Chattanooga, Tenn. Holt served in the Pacific during WWII with Company L, 164th Infantry, Americal Division.

VFW National Chaplain Theodore Bowers delivered the invocation and Chaplain Arnold Bulick of the Assembly of God Church in Wellton, Ariz., gave the benediction. VFW and Ladies Auxiliary national officers performed the memorial ritual, led by Bowers, and the symbolic tribute. VFW national sergeants-at-arms escorted 40 Gold Star parents, wives and family members before and after the ceremony.

-The End-