

VFW National Convention - Memorial Service: 'Fallen Here in Spirit'

Aug 16, 2008

ORLANDO, Fla. — Army Reserve Brig. Gen. Daniel Ivan Schultz, keynote speaker at today's memorial service, touched on the common thread that binds all veterans together—wearing a military uniform and patriotism. Schultz, commander of the 143rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), based in Orlando, Fla., said it is our duty to remember the fallen in war. He emphasized that it is their “unspoken expectation” that we will do so. “The fallen are here in spirit with us today,” said the VFW member, who served in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

To illustrate his point about the heroism inherent in service, the general cited several examples of Americans making the supreme sacrifice in military actions such as Somalia and Iraq. For instance, he mentioned Army Delta Force operators Master Sgt. Gary Gordon and Sgt. 1st Class Randall Shughart, who were awarded Medals of Honor posthumously for Somalia, October 1993. He also honored Sgt. 1st Class Paul Smith from Tampa, Fla., who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor after being killed in Iraq in April 2003. Lastly, he told the story of Army Reservist Staff Sgt. Todd Cornell, who extended his tour in Fallujah, Iraq, to be with the men he trained and was killed on Nov. 9, 2004.

“We do not forget those who gave their lives for our country,” said Schultz, who also served a tour in Hungary supporting operations in the Balkans in 1997. “We must exercise the freedoms given to us by those who gave their lives.”

The Liberty Voices of Winter Garden, Fla., sang the “Star-Spangled Banner,” “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” “America the Beautiful” and “God Bless America.” Liberty Voices is an eight-person group that regularly performs at Disney World. They have also performed for U.S. presidents.

Ladies Auxiliary National Soloist Juanita Bohlman sang the official VFW memorial song, “Sleep Soldier Boy.” She also performed “Blades of Grass and Pure White Stones,” which included a video of VFW Commander-in-Chief George Lisicki and Ladies Auxiliary President Virginia Carman presenting a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

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Past VFW Commander-in-Chief Ray Sisk, who died July 6, 2008, was remembered. His daughters were on hand to receive red roses in honor of their father. A Navy veteran of the Taiwan Straits, Sisk was commander-in-chief in 2002-03 and was a life member of Post 9791 in Frazier Park, Calif.

Army Reserve Chaplain Col. Stanley Puckett of the 143rd Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) provided the invocation and delivered the benediction. VFW and Ladies Auxiliary national officers performed the memorial ritual, led by VFW National Chaplain Thomas E. Darling, and symbolic tribute. VFW national sergeants-in-arms escorted Gold Star parents and wives before and after the ceremony.