

Wreaths Across America speech

Thank you to the dignitaries and to you all for being here to honor and remember the heroes and their spouses whose final resting place is at this beautiful cemetery.

I am Kathy Prout and I am a Gold Star Widow. My husband, Rear Admiral James G Prout III, U S Navy is buried here. He died on active duty when the F/18 Hornet he was riding in crashed. I received 3 knocks on my door. The first was to tell me that the jet had disappeared off the radar and was missing. I was in shock. My husband was a Surface Warfare Officer not an aviator. How could he be missing? They told me the black box was not relaying messages but I did not comprehend the meaning. Our children were in school and came home to a nightmare. We hoped and prayed and cried and waited while

Our home filled up with friends. The Navy arranged for my parents to fly out and told them it was bad. I did not give up hope. By the time they got here, I had gotten the third knock to tell me there were no survivors. The next day, I got the second knock. This was to tell me that the plane had been found in a remote area on a mountain near Albuquerque, NM but they had no more information. A few hours after that the final knock happened with the word that there were no survivors. The Navy arranged for my parents to fly out and told them it was bad. I did not give up hope. By the time they got here, I had gotten the third knock to tell me there were no survivors. May 17, 1995 was the day my life shattered.

My husband was a great Naval Officer. He had graduated from the prestigious Phillips Exeter Academy, the US Naval Academy, and Harvard. He was funny, caring and spent the extra effort to teach his junior officers and his sailors how to excel. At the time of his tragic death he was one of the most highly decorated Naval Officers in the Navy. He was awarded the Purple Heart and Bronze Star with V for Valor for his heroism in Vietnam where he worked with Navy UDT and SEAL team One and the Distinguished Service Award among his other many medals. But he was so much more. He was my husband, my best friend. He was the father to our 3 children. Our oldest, Brendan, is here today. Brendan was 21 when his Dad was killed. Our middle child was about to graduate from Coronado High School, and our youngest was just 10.

Jay had a wonderful sense of humor, a big laugh, and was so smart. He had blue eyes and dark hair and loved us so much. I didn't think I could live without him. With all that love also came resilience, strength to go on. I learned the hard way about all the problems with military survivor benefits and worked with other surviving spouses to get laws changed to improve the lives of new Gold Star Surviving Spouses. We have surviving men.

When you place a wreath today and say their name, know that the freedoms we enjoy come at a cost. "May we live in a way that honors their sacrifice.] May we never forget the cost.

"That all that watch this game might be inspired by the example of these teams who battle like gladiators on the football field, but in love of their country and defense of freedom, they are united as one."

Key Themes in Gold Star Widow Speeches

- **The Hero's Character & Love:** Sharing personal, intimate memories of their husband as a person—a role model, best friend, and hero—who loved his country deeply and sought to serve it well.
- **The Ultimate Sacrifice:** Acknowledging that their loved ones gave their futures so others could live theirs, paying the "last full measure of devotion".
- **Enduring Love & Pain:** Speaking to the ongoing journey of grief, the "maze of doubt, guilt, regret, fear, and pain," but also finding strength through faith and community.
- **Living a Life of Purpose:** Urging veterans and the community to honor the fallen by living lives worthy of their sacrifice, embracing freedom, and continuing their legacy through service and outreach.
- **Gratitude & Remembrance:** Expressing deep thanks to those who serve and remember, and ensuring the fallen's names are spoken and stories told.

Example Snippets & Feelings (Inspired by Actual Speeches)

- "He wasn't just my husband; he was my other half, my hero... He told me with sparkles in his eyes that his training was going to pay off, that he was going to do something special for this country and for his team" (paraphrased from Maria Dietz).
- "This world will never be normal... but I want you to know that I cry for you, I care for you, and the fallen are in a better place" (paraphrased from a message to veterans).
- "The weight of sacrifice doesn't end on the battlefield; it follows everyone home... but remembrance can build you back up and provide a purpose".

- "May we live in a way that honors it [freedom]... May we never forget the cost" (from a FLOTUS message honoring Gold Star families).

Fort Rosecrans & Wreaths Across America

At places like Fort Rosecrans, these messages resonate deeply as wreaths are placed on graves, ensuring these heroes and their families' sacrifices are seen, honored, and never forgotten during the solemn ceremony. The event connects the community, veterans, and Gold Star families in a shared mission of remembrance and gratitude, as seen in events where families are honored and candles lit for each fallen service member.

- Honoring the Fallen: Gold Star Spouse Kimberly Hazelgrove ...
Sep 24, 2025 — and a member of this incredible VFW family i am grateful to have two of my family members with me here today our young...



- Last night, we honored the Gold Star families and the fallen heroes ...
Sep 30, 2025 — Today, we pause to honor the brave men and women who laid down their lives in service to our nation. These heroes did ...



- It is with great honor to announce that Gold Star Mother Cindy Dietz- ...
Feb 26, 2021 — It was the worst single combat loss for the SEALs in SEAL history. Dietz's wife, Maria L. Dietz, said in a statement t...



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