# **The Nightingale Tribute Ceremony**

The Society of Air Force Nurses (SAFN) is an incorporated 501 (c) (19) Veterans organization with approximately 1500 members. Membership includes Registered Nurses who currently serve or who have served for any length of time either in the USAF Nurse Corps (Active Duty/AF Reserve/Air National Guard) or as WW II USA Air Corps Flight Nurses. There are seven regions that include members in the United States and around the world. The East Central Region (ECR) tries to attend the burial service of any former Air Force nurse or WW II USA Flight Nurse at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC).

The Nightingale Tribute was designed and developed by two members of the Kansas State Nurses Association in 2003 to be used to honor deceased nurses. Janice Jones MN, RN, APRN – CNS developed the program. *“She/He Was There”* was copyrighted by Duane Jaeger, MSN, RN in 2004 as the author of the poem. Any part or all of the Nightingale Tribute may be used during the ceremony.

The Nightingale Tribute Ceremony begins with a short synopsis of the nurse’s career to include their military and civilian nursing experiences (if that information is available to us); it is usually no longer than five minutes in length. This includes the creative reading of the poem, “She/He Was There,” by the nurses in attendance. White flowers are placed on the casket If not flag draped) or next to the urn after the reading of the poem.

 In 2013, the National Capital Chapter of the East Central Region of SAFN starting using the Nightingale Tribute Ceremony at the graveside service for Air Force nurses being interred at Arlington National Cemetery. In 2016, the other six regions of the Society started using the Nightingale Tribute at graveside or memorial services for deceased Air Force nurses in their regions in recognition for their years of service to their country. Today the Nightingale Tribute is used around the world to recognize and remember a nurse colleague when he or she passes on.

The Nightingale Tribute Ceremony Template

Sample Introductory Remarks

Good Morning/Afternoon, I am (retired/former rank), \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, a member of the Society of Air Force Nurses as was (rank/name of the deceased nurse) \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. I am the (Regional Director, former Chapter Coordinator, etc.) of the Society of Air Force Nurses. The Society is a nonprofit Veterans Organization comprising current, former, and retired Air Force nurses whose purpose it is to provide support and social opportunities for its members by sharing with, and caring for, each other.

Joining us today to pay their respects and to help conduct the Nightingale Tribute Ceremony are retired/former \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (rank and names; also names of RN/LPN friends as well as RN/LPN family members who participate). The current SAFN president and the four living past presidents as well as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(deceased name) many friends from the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Region/Chapter) of the Society and her friends and colleagues from across the nation are with us in spirit today.

The Nightingale Tribute was designed and developed by the Kansas State Nurses Association in 2003, and it is used by the Society of Air Force Nurses to recognize any former United States Air Force Registered Nurse or any US Army Air Corps WWII Flight Nurse for their years of service to the public and to their country.

Both the Profession of Nursing and the Profession of Arms are a calling and a way of life. Nursing is a service profession that cannot be practiced in isolation. Nurses rely on each other for the synergistic effect of teamwork in our efforts to give care, as do military service members in their efforts to defend our nation. And it is appropriate that we honor our colleagues and friends, not only during their careers, but also at the end of life’s journey.

(If a professional eulogy or words of remembrance is also being done, insert those comments here and end with the following paragraph:

In closing, let me say that by any yardstick one would use to measure success, (name/ rank of deceased) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was an extraordinary officer and nurse. During her nursing career, which spanned almost (number) \_\_\_ years of varied practice in unique and interesting roles and settings, (first name) \_\_\_\_\_ exemplified the care, the compassion, and the trust that are associated with the profession of nursing, both here and around the world. ( First name of deceased) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will be missed, and she will not be forgotten …

The Nightingale Tribute

Nursing is a calling, a lifestyle, a way of living. Today, we honor our United States Air Force Nurse Corps colleague and friend, (name and rank) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Her life as a nurse is not remembered for her years as a nurse, but rather for the difference she made by

 stepping into people’s lives … at special moments.

“She Was There”© by Duane Jaeger, MSN, RN

Kansas State Nurses Association

When a calming, quiet presence was all that was needed,

(deceased name and rank) was there.

In the excitement and miracle of birth or in the mystery and loss of life,

(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) was there.

When a silent glance could uplift a patient, family member or friend,

(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) was there.

At those times when the unexplained needed to be explained,

(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) was there.

When the situation demanded a swift foot and sharp mind,

(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) was there.

When a gentle touch, a firm push, or an encouraging word was needed,

(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) was there.

In choosing the best one from a family’s “Thank You” box of chocolates,

(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) was there.

To witness humanity --- its beauty, in good times and bad, without judgment,

(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) was there.

To embrace the woes of the world, willingly, and offer hope,

(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) was there.

And now, that it is time to be at the Greater One’s side,

(\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) is there.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(deceased name and rank), United States Air Force Nurse Corps, we honor you this day, (Day/Month/Year) and give you white flowers to symbolize our respect and appreciation for you, our nursing and military colleague.