

Accordionist and composer, Guy Klucevsek, has “an experience of a lifetime”

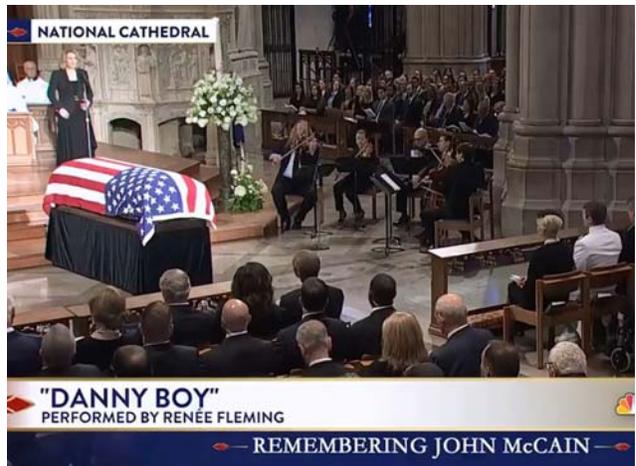
By Joan Grauman, AAA Historian

A touching, extraordinary memorial service for the late, great Senator John McCain took place at the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, DC on Saturday, September 1, 2018. It was a moving service from beginning to end. There were tributes by family members, former Senator Joseph Lieberman, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush, and there were lovely musical tributes – all carefully selected by John McCain.

One of McCain’s musical requests was that world-renowned soprano, Renée Fleming, perform the universally loved Irish ballad “Danny Boy.” Ms. Fleming did so, beautifully, accompanied by the Diderot String Quartet, which is in residence at the cathedral. One of the newscasters said that hearing Danny Boy was “the most moving moment of the entire service”. *It surely was for me, too* – not just for its heart-rending lyrics and melody, but also because one of my favorite musicians, celebrated accordionist and composer Guy Klucevsek, was chosen to join this stellar group! The soft, sweet sounds of Guy’s reeds so flawlessly blended with Fleming’s beautiful voice and the quartet’s stirring harmonies.

John McCain passed away on Saturday, August 25. That evening, Guy received a call from a musician friend of his saying, “You won’t believe the conversation I just had with Renée Fleming! She said she was doing *something* later this week for which an accordion might fit perfectly, and I told her that would be a great idea, and that I had the perfect accordionist for her!”

The following Monday, Guy received an e-mail asking him to call Mike McCarthy, the music director for the Washington National Cathedral. He was stunned and touched to be



given the opportunity to play at this memorial service, and to accompany Renée Fleming. Guy and his wife Jan immediately postponed their vacation to Cape Cod and were on their way to Washington, DC.

For Guy, who has been described by the Seattle Weekly as “one of the world’s most versatile and highly-respected accordionists”, this was an “experience of a lifetime!” He spoke with me about the atmosphere in the

cathedral: “I looked out and saw, directly in front of us, Cindy McCain, who cried on her son’s shoulder as we played, and there were the Obamas, the Bushes, the Clintons, and McCain’s casket. It felt unreal and deeply moving.”

Guy enjoyed playing with the young, highly professional members of the Diderot String Quartet. They played on “gut” strings (Baroque instruments), which are normally tuned to A=415, and though they were not-at-all accustomed to tuning to a “sharp” accordion (A=442), they adapted to it quickly and with great precision. “It was a joy to rehearse and perform with them,” Guy remarked, “and, of course, with Renée, who possesses a voice for the ages!”