

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION BURIAL BENEFITS

This is a somber topic but it is something we need to think about since it is going to happen to all of us. If you qualify for these benefits, you, and your spouse, are provided not only with a well-maintained burial space but this is done at very little expense to you. In addition, the veteran is provided a place where he or she will be honored in perpetuity.

The Veterans Administration (VA) can provide burial space in a National Cemetery as well as a headstone or marker and a flag for all deceased veterans. Burial space is also made available for your spouse. If your spouse passes on before you, burial space and a headstone are still provided. If the burial takes place in a private cemetery, the VA can still provide a headstone free of charge.

The many VA definitions of a Veteran includes: "A Reservist or a National Guard member who is entitled to retired pay under Chapter 1223, title 10, United States Code, or would have been entitled, but for being under the age of 60". It makes no difference if you served in wartime or two years of active duty or not. Just collecting military retired pay or eligible for that pay had you reached age 60 qualifies you for this benefit.

In addition, Guardsman and Reservists who were mobilized and who served the full mobilization time period are also considered veterans and are eligible for burial in a National Cemetery. The VA has additional definitions of veterans and these are available on their website at www.cem.va.gov/

In Oregon there are National Cemeteries in Eagle Point, Roseburg, and Portland. Due to space limitations, the Roseburg National Cemetery will only accept cremated remains for burial.

Contacting the VA at their website will give you a lot of information on the burial program but it will not get you a burial space or a headstone. The very best way to take advantage of this benefit is to have the funeral home make the arrangements. Having a record of the military service such as a DD Form 214 is required. The funeral home should also be able to provide the next of kin with a flag. If an Honor Guard is desired for the burial service the funeral home can also contact the various groups able to do this.