

The Death of a Veteran

The loss of a spouse or parent is one of the most traumatic emotional experiences one can face. In addition to facing the reality of the loss of a loved one and the loneliness that result, there is the immediate need to deal with practical things that can appear overwhelming. For the spouse or child of one of our classmates there are some helpful things to know about benefits available to veterans. The following is by no means a complete list but simply a place to start.

If the funeral home chosen is not able to answer your questions, you may want to call the Veterans Affairs number 1-800 827 1000 to check on available benefits. For example, if your loved one is to be buried in a private or national cemetery, you can be provided a headstone or columbarium plaque. The VA will pay up to \$300 toward burial and funeral, and a \$300 plot-interment allowance. Also, a vet is entitled to a flag and a Presidential Memorial Certificate. Burial Honors may be arranged through a nearby military installation or through a local veteran's organization like the VFW. There are special benefits for veterans who pass away under VA-contracted care.

Burial in a national cemetery is always an option. There is no cost for a gravesite, headstone or marker in national cemeteries. Perpetual care is provided. Contact the VA or your local funeral home for the national cemetery nearest you. Information about burial at Arlington national Cemetery including inurnment of ashes may be obtained by calling 1 877 907 8585. More columbarium space is available recently. You can also log on to www.arlingtoncemetery.mil for general information. All USNA graduates and spouses can be inurned in the Naval Academy Columbarium. To be buried in a cemetery plot at USNA you must be a USNA graduate who made flag rank on active duty or be on active duty stationed at USNA at the time of death. For information contact Sharon Moffatt at the Academy (410 293 1101 or email Moffatt@usna.edu)

It is helpful if you have the vets Form DD-214 (Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Service) available, but if you do not, the VA can provide a certificate of service for you. You can also review burial benefits by going online at www.va.gov and clicking on "Burial Benefits."

If your loved one is receiving pension benefits, you need to contact the Defense Finance number 1 800 321 1080. If, as most

USNA grads do, your loved one had Navy Mutual Aid, call them at 1 800 628 6011. Many classmates have important documents on file with them. Social Security, 1800 772 1213, should also be notified. A spouse's social security should increase as a result of the death of a classmate. A lump sum death benefit of \$255 may be authorized.

Medical benefits continue for the spouse enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). Call 1-800-538-9552 to verify benefits. TRICARE for Life benefits (TFL) will be of great value to those eligible! In most cases TFL beneficiaries derive no advantage from purchasing Medicare Part B coverage. Use of the TRICARE retail and mail-order pharmacy program may be particularly beneficial. Call 1 877 363 1303 for information.