

Plan Your Own Funeral

By Ellen Kozel

I know your probably saying, “what kind of topic is this”? On Memorial Day of this year, my brother was killed in a motorcycle accident. He was a veteran. The family ran around trying to find out what to do for his funeral since he was military retired. Since they were half way across the country I only found out about it too late to help.

I decided to go to the Detail Office at the VA Medical Center and find out how one could plan their funeral in advance so the family wouldn't have to run around in case of my death. If you have everything packaged together and ready to go with all your wishes then tell the family where it is and leave instructions, you will save them tons of time while they are disoriented by your departure. Sounds like something like you wouldn't think of, but it's something that if you prepare now will help your family in a time of sorry.

First thing you want to put in your package is a copy of your DD-214. As a veteran, you're allowed a burial allowance of \$300.00 and a plot allowance of \$300.00 towards the plot. However, if the vet is buried in a state cemetery, or if the burial plot is older than 2 years old, those funds would not be available. If you select to be buried in a state cemetery the funds will be paid directly to that cemetery. You need to file a VA Form 21-530, Application for Burial Benefits. You can fill in all the information and leave blank the information that will be needed to be filled in at time of death.

Next you can apply for a burial flag by filling out a VA Form 21-2008. Fill in the information about the deceased veteran and place that in your package.

You can also select the type of headstone or marker you would like and what you would like placed on it. To do this, fill out VA Form 40-1330 Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker.

You are also entitled to a Presidential Memorial Certificate. This will be sent to family members in remembrance of your service from the President of the United States. This is Form VA 40-0247.

You can also pre-register for state cemetery interment. These applications may vary from state to state you should check with your detail clerk for the proper form to apply for state plots. Also, you can arrange for military honors, this will also vary from state to state as well and should be addressed through your detail clerk.

You should also include a note in the package that they will need a certified copy of the death certificate from the funeral home and a bill from the funeral home when applying.