

Barrancas National Cemetery is a beautiful, tranquil spot. A fitting final resting place for the brave men and women who fought, and too often died, for the freedoms we all enjoy.

As Pensacolans we have a special affinity for our service men and women, whether retired or active duty. We've all watched in awe as the Blue Angels performed seemingly impossible aerobatics. We've marveled at the exhibits in the Naval Air Museum, a world class facility. The majority of us know, work with, are related to, or are veterans of the United States Armed Forces. We understand the sacrifices that were made for this great country because Pensacola is inexorably tied to the United States Military.

On the surface it seems as though we've got our veterans covered. After all we're a proud, historic military town and NAS Pensacola is home to perhaps the nicest National Cemetery in the country. Unfortunately, that's not often the case as there are many misconceptions surrounding VA burial benefits.

A recent survey shows that 60% of veterans mistakenly believe the VA pays funeral, cremation and cemetery expenses for all veterans. In truth, reimbursement of funeral or cremation services is limited and only apply to those meeting strict guidelines.

While the VA does provide burial in a national cemetery for any member of the Armed Forces who dies while on active duty or any veteran who was honorably discharged, in most cases they do not cover funeral or cremation costs. Not even the casket. Furthermore, qualifying for VA benefits does not mean they come automatically. In order to receive veteran burial benefits, they must be requested, generally in writing, and this can take considerable time and effort.

Over 1,700 veterans pass away each day so it's important for us to understand the facts about VA burial benefits. We at Oak Lawn Funeral Home encourage all veterans to take advantage of the unique benefits and extraordinary savings offered by us through Dignity Memorial.

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