

AMERICA SALUTES ITS VETERANS

VA Expands National Cemeteries, Old And New

(NAPSA)—America's "old soldiers" are not forgotten by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). As many as 1,800 veterans are laid to rest each day, most are World War II veterans well over 70, and growing numbers are choosing to be buried in a VA National Cemetery.

Any honorably discharged veteran of military service is entitled to burial in a national cemetery and the VA has a comprehensive approach to meeting the burial needs of America's veterans.

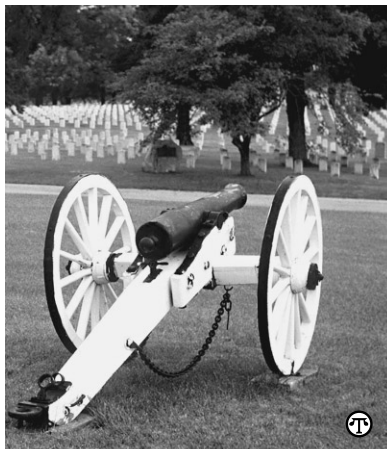
New National Cemeteries—The new Ft. Sill National Cemetery will soon open in Oklahoma and VA plans to open five more new national cemeteries in the next five years.

State Cemeteries—A VA grant program pays for building and equipping new state veterans cemeteries. Fifty state cemeteries have been built with VA grants.

Expansion—VA continues to expand existing national cemeteries. VA may purchase land next to cemeteries that are nearing capacity. Sometimes other agencies transfer surplus land to VA. Citizens may purchase property and donate it for cemetery expansion.

With five VA cemeteries built in the last four years, one ready to open and five on the drawing board, and VA-grant cemeteries planned by states, burial services will be within commuting distances of 80 percent of America's veterans by 2003.

Some of the oldest national cemeteries developed at Civil War battlefields and prison camps are



Historic national cemeteries have found different ways to expand to meet a growing need.

historic landmarks. Yet, they too are expanding to meet today's needs.

A Confederate prison at Salisbury, N.C., that held 10,000 Union soldiers became a death camp for more than 8,000 men due to shortages of food, clothing and medicine. The Salisbury National Cemetery, established in 1863, ran out of grave space and a nearby VA medical center transferred 50 surplus acres for its use.

The Fort Scott Kansas National Cemetery began as part of a western frontier Army fort built in 1842. The 10.5-acre cemetery was approaching its burial limit when local veterans took out a loan and bought adjacent acreage.

To learn more about VA burial benefits for veterans, call 1-800-827-1000 or visit the VA National Cemetery Administration at www.cem.va.gov.