



## The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services

**Michelle Lujan Grisham**  
*Governor*

**Sonya L. Smith**  
*Cabinet Secretary*

### **Cremated Remains of 29 Unclaimed Deceased Veterans Laid to Rest in Today's 2022 Forgotten Heroes Funeral**

**(Santa Fe)**— The cremated remains of twenty-nine deceased veterans were laid to rest at today's 2022 Forgotten Heroes Funeral at the Santa Fe National Cemetery.

The 26 men and three women were interred courtesy of the state's Forgotten Heroes Burial Program established in 2009 by the New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS), the New Mexico National Guard, and Bernalillo County to provide a military funeral at the cemetery for any honorably discharged deceased veteran who, upon their death, is unclaimed by family or friends. Veterans and members of the public attending the funeral serve as "family."

The program now includes participation from all 33 counties in the state.

Director's Choice Mortuary Services of Albuquerque provided the cremation, and AARP New Mexico donated the urns. Members of the Albuquerque Police Department, Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office, New Mexico State Police, the Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office, the Santa Fe Police Department, and the American Legion Riders provided a motorcycle escort for the hearse from the Strong-Thorne Mortuary in Albuquerque to the cemetery.

At the cemetery, the American Legion Riders and members of the Santa Fe High School JROTC program brought the urns from the hearse to the gravesite ceremony site. Santa Fe National Cemetery Director Victor Vasquez led the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the national anthem sung by Marisol Herrera, and an Opening Prayer by the Reverend Jim Hay.

DVS Cabinet Secretary Sonya Smith gave the eulogy at a brief gravesite memorial service. She said she was heartened to see the turnout of people in attendance, making sure that the fallen veterans were not forgotten in the end.

“Even though we may not know the history of these men and women, what we do know is that they also served our country,” said Secretary Smith. “I ask that you just take a moment, in your own personal way, to recognize them—and more importantly, to remember them for their service.”

Following the eulogy, New Mexico Army National Guard Brig. General Miguel Aguilar, the adjutant general of New Mexico, read the names of the 29 fallen veterans. New Mexico Gold Star Mothers member Becky Christmas rang the cemetery’s memorial bell once after each name was read.

The flag-fold ceremony was performed by the New Mexico National Guard Honor Guard, with a rifle volley by the honor guard from American Legion Post 12 from Santa Fe. Russ McDuffie from Buglers Across America performed Taps. The folded flag was then presented by General Aguilar to Secretary Smith, who accepted it on behalf of the citizens of New Mexico. Mike Henry concluded the gravesite service with a bagpipe rendition of Amazing Grace.

The cremated remains of the following 24 veterans from Bernalillo County were interred with full military honors: U.S. Army veteran (rank unverified) Albert Ray Nevarez (date of death: 7/20/2020), Navy Petty Officer-3 Donald Burlin Pease (6/23/2020), Navy veteran Drew Dean Jordan (5/28/2020), Army Spec-4 Edward Dougherty (11/26/2019), Army Sgt. Horace Edward Gurkin II (10/01/2020), Army Pvt. 1st Class Jeffrey Holger Wade (4/8/2020), Army Spec-4 Jeffrey Owen Seymour (12/15/2020), Navy Yeoman-3 Jerry Bob Moseley (10/18/2020), USAF Airman 1st Class Jerry Bruce Lail (7/24/2020), Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Jon Parlener (11/04/2012), USAF Airman Keith Allen Mager (1/8/2021), Navy Seaman Recruit Kenneth Wayne Davis (12/2/2020), Army Pvt. 1st Class Marie Ann Attwood (8/22/2020), Army veteran Nicholas Bartolotta (10/14/2020), Navy Seaman Recruit Patrick Ernest Murphy (11/24/2020), USAF Sr. Airman Rex Neal Intchauspe (11/25/2020), Army Pvt. 1<sup>st</sup> Class Richard Michael McFadden (11/16/2019), USMC Cpl. Richard Allen Shirk (9/16/2020), Navy Aviation Tech Russell Joel Kruppe (5/2/2020), Army Sgt. Sean William Kelly (3/26/2020), Navy Seaman Apprentice Stephen James Goff, Jr. (6/16/2020), Army Spec-4 Thomas Charles Leigh (7/14/2019), USMC Sgt. Victor Baldonado (8/21/2020), and Army Spec. Jerry Michael Williamson (1/7/2020).

Laid to rest were three veterans from Doña Ana County: Army veteran James Williams Connelli (6/25/2021), USAF veteran John Cameron Mockbee (7/9/2019), and Army veteran Yvonne Renee Brown (10/3/2021).

The following two veterans laid to rest were from Otero County: Army veteran Joan Leslie Bennet (rank unverified)(5/1/2020), and Army veteran Joe Michael Jones (rank unverified) (10/15/2019).

### **The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services**

The New Mexico Department of Veterans Services (DVS) provides support and services to New Mexico’s 148,000 veterans and their families. DVS treats every

veteran, regardless of their rank achieved during military service, with the respect and gratitude befitting someone who has served our country. We strive every day to live up to our agency's official motto: *Serving Those Who Served*

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