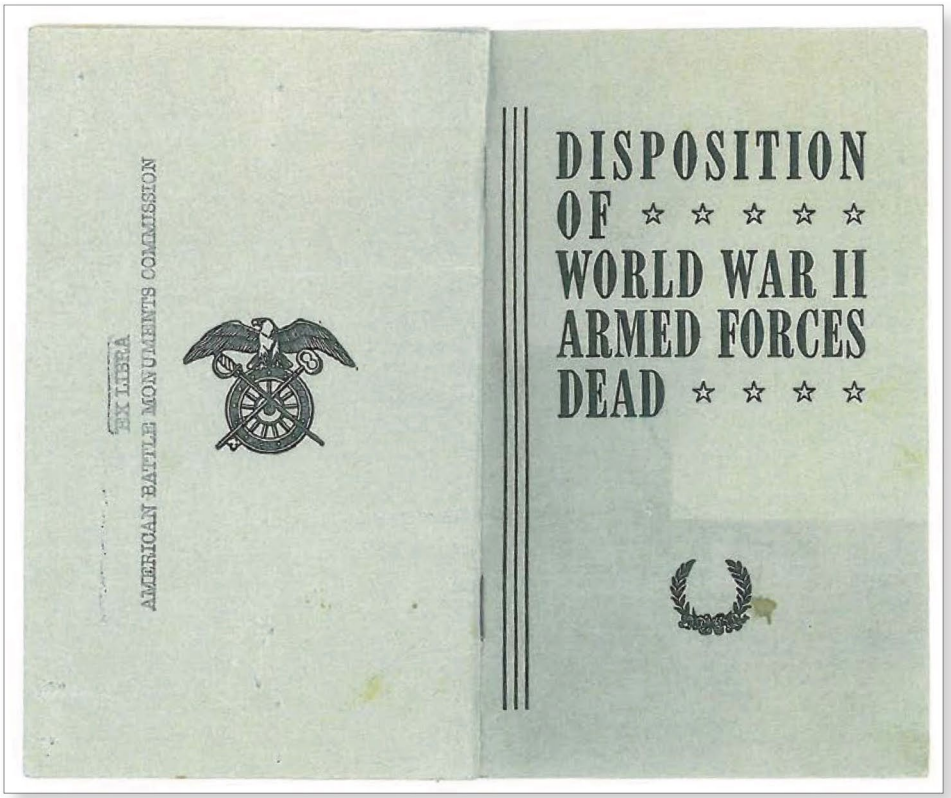
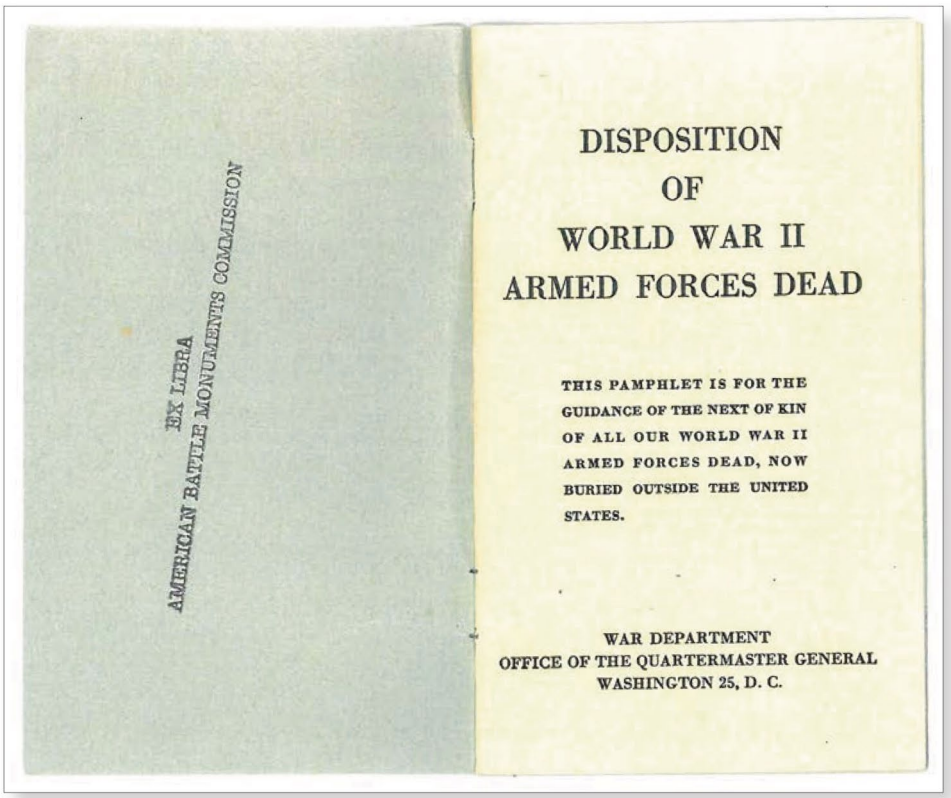
Group C: Homefront Experience Materials

Disposition of World War II Armed Forces Dead, 1946

United States Department of War





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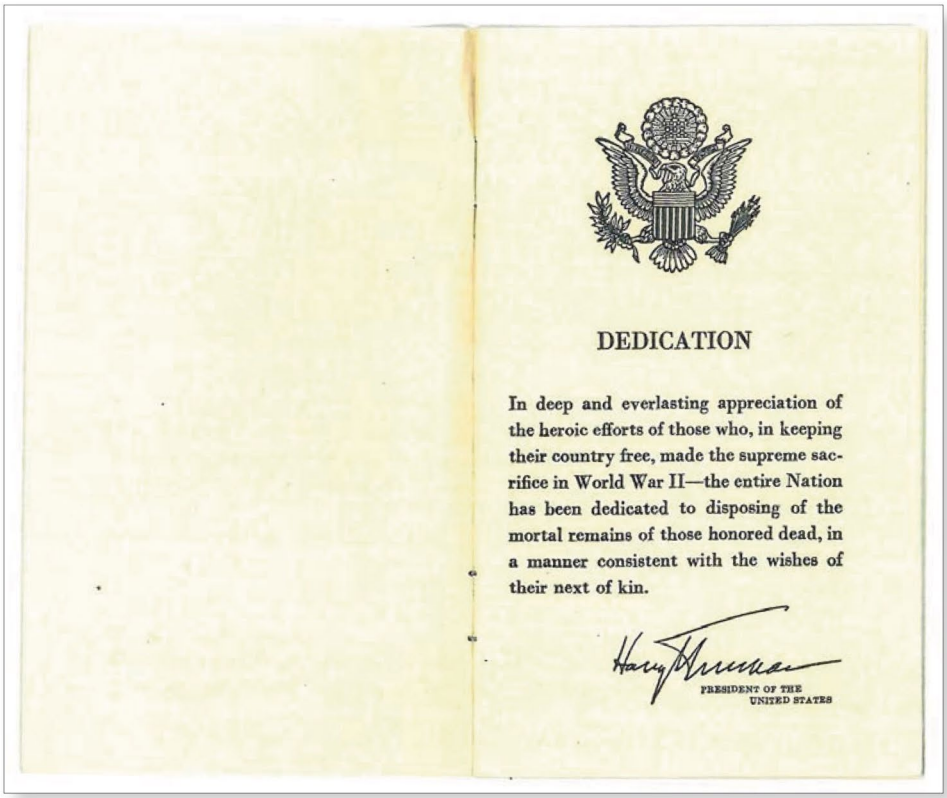
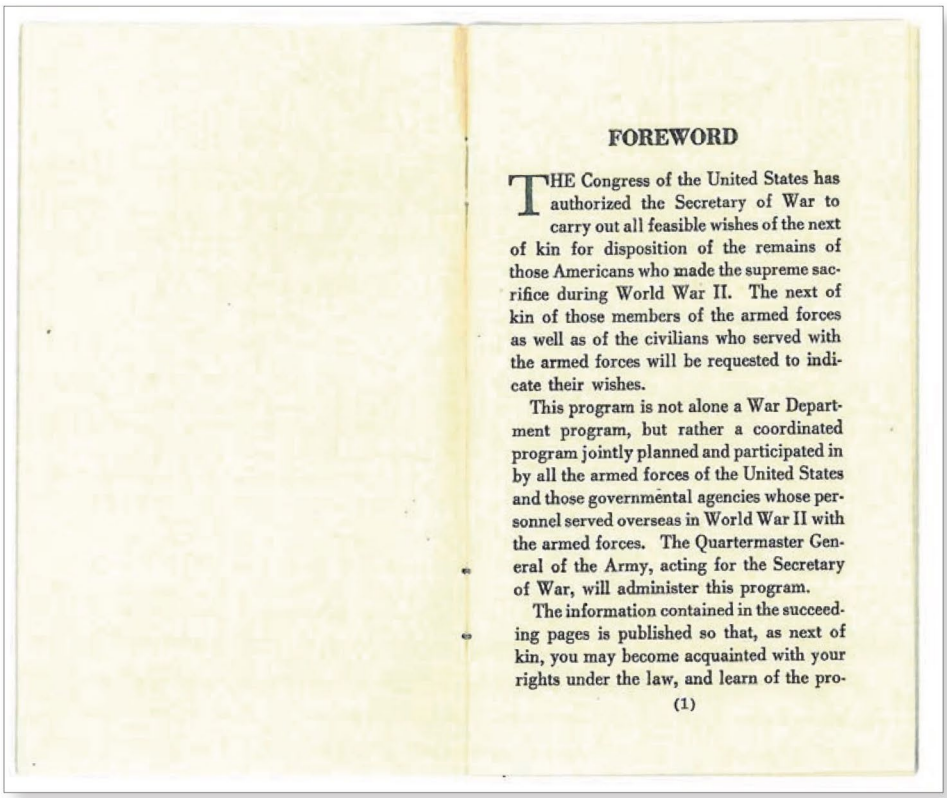


DEDICATION

In deep and everlasting appreciation of the heroic efforts of those who, in keeping their country free, made the supreme sacrifice in World War II—the entire Nation has been dedicated to disposing of the mortal remains of those honored dead, in a manner consistent with the wishes of their next of kin.

Harry Truman

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES



FOREWORD

THE Congress of the United States has authorized the Secretary of War to carry out all feasible wishes of the next of kin for disposition of the remains of those Americans who made the supreme sacrifice during World War II. The next of kin of those members of the armed forces as well as of the civilians who served with the armed forces will be requested to indicate their wishes.

This program is not alone a War Department program, but rather a coordinated program jointly planned and participated in by all the armed forces of the United States and those governmental agencies whose personnel served overseas in World War II with the armed forces. The Quartermaster General of the Army, acting for the Secretary of War, will administer this program.

The information contained in the succeeding pages is published so that, as next of kin, you may become acquainted with your rights under the law, and learn of the pro-

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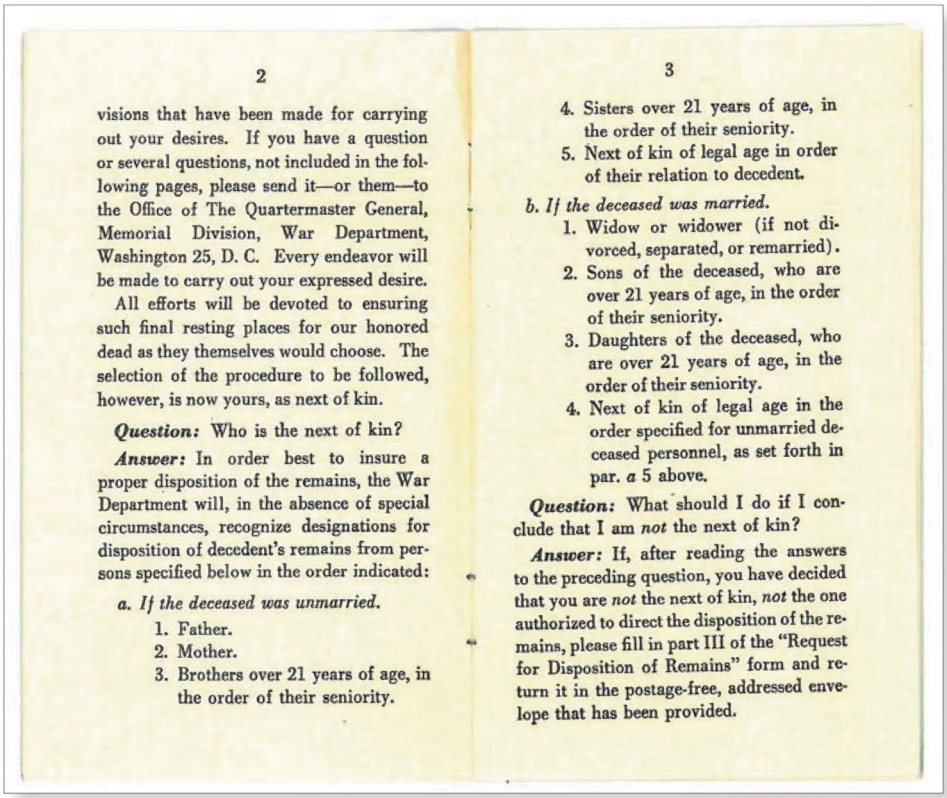

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visions that have been made for carrying out your desires. If you have a question or several questions, not included in the following pages, please send it—or them—to the Office of The Quartermaster General, Memorial Division, War Department, Washington 25, D. C. Every endeavor will be made to carry out your expressed desire.

All efforts will be devoted to ensuring such final resting places for our honored dead as they themselves would choose. The selection of the procedure to be followed, however, is now yours, as next of kin.

Question: Who is the next of kin?

Answer: In order best to insure a proper disposition of the remains, the War Department will, in the absence of special circumstances, recognize designations for disposition of decedent's remains from persons specified below in the order indicated:

a. If the deceased was unmarried.

1. Father.
2. Mother.
3. Brothers over 21 years of age, in the order of their seniority.

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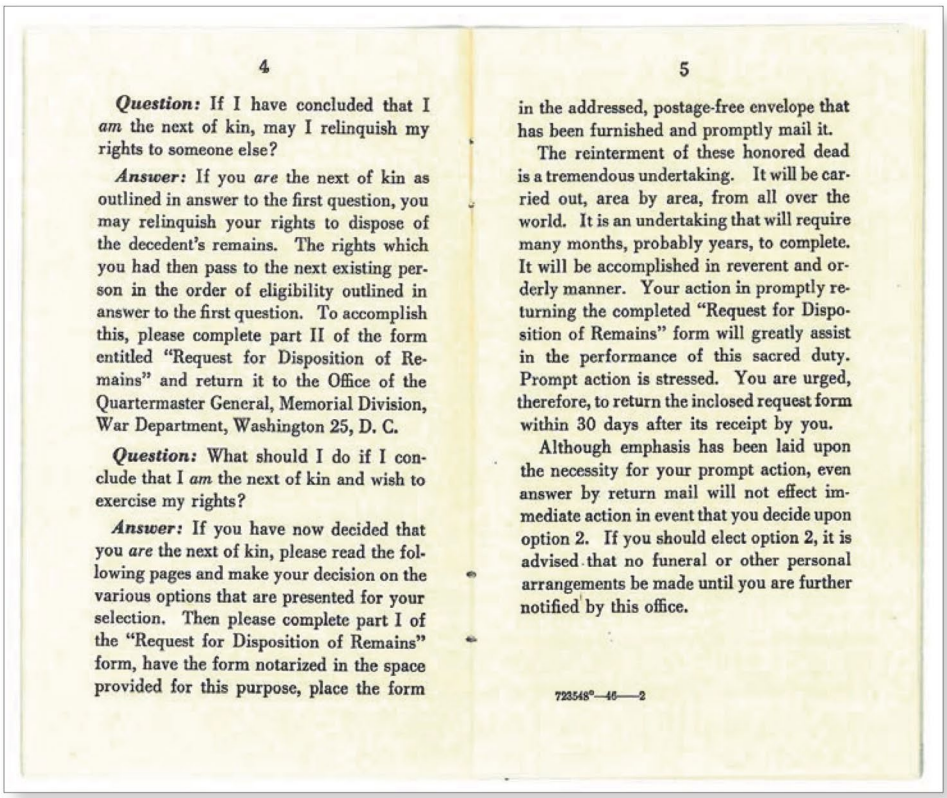
4. Sisters over 21 years of age, in the order of their seniority.
5. Next of kin of legal age in order of their relation to decedent.

b. If the deceased was married.

1. Widow or widower (if not divorced, separated, or remarried).
2. Sons of the deceased, who are over 21 years of age, in the order of their seniority.
3. Daughters of the deceased, who are over 21 years of age, in the order of their seniority.
4. Next of kin of legal age in the order specified for unmarried deceased personnel, as set forth in par. *a* 5 above.

Question: What should I do if I conclude that I am *not* the next of kin?

Answer: If, after reading the answers to the preceding question, you have decided that you are *not* the next of kin, *not* the one authorized to direct the disposition of the remains, please fill in part III of the "Request for Disposition of Remains" form and return it in the postage-free, addressed envelope that has been provided.



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Question: If I have concluded that I *am* the next of kin, may I relinquish my rights to someone else?

Answer: If you *are* the next of kin as outlined in answer to the first question, you may relinquish your rights to dispose of the decedent's remains. The rights which you had then pass to the next existing person in the order of eligibility outlined in answer to the first question. To accomplish this, please complete part II of the form entitled "Request for Disposition of Remains" and return it to the Office of the Quartermaster General, Memorial Division, War Department, Washington 25, D. C.

Question: What should I do if I conclude that I *am* the next of kin and wish to exercise my rights?

Answer: If you have now decided that you *are* the next of kin, please read the following pages and make your decision on the various options that are presented for your selection. Then please complete part I of the "Request for Disposition of Remains" form, have the form notarized in the space provided for this purpose, place the form

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in the addressed, postage-free envelope that has been furnished and promptly mail it.

The reinterment of these honored dead is a tremendous undertaking. It will be carried out, area by area, from all over the world. It is an undertaking that will require many months, probably years, to complete. It will be accomplished in reverent and orderly manner. Your action in promptly returning the completed "Request for Disposition of Remains" form will greatly assist in the performance of this sacred duty. Prompt action is stressed. You are urged, therefore, to return the inclosed request form within 30 days after its receipt by you.

Although emphasis has been laid upon the necessity for your prompt action, even answer by return mail will not effect immediate action in event that you decide upon option 2. If you should elect option 2, it is advised that no funeral or other personal arrangements be made until you are further notified by this office.

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OPTIONS TO BE GIVEN NEXT OF KIN

Option 1—

The remains be interred in a permanent American military cemetery overseas.

The establishment of permanent American military cemeteries overseas in the various areas in which American forces served is contemplated.

Option 2—

The remains be returned to the United States, or any possession or territory thereof, for interment by next of kin in a private cemetery.

Shipment will be made to the city or town designated by the next of kin.

Option 3—

The remains be shipped within, or returned to a foreign country, the homeland of the deceased or next of kin, for interment by next of kin in a private cemetery.

Shipment to a foreign country is dependent upon the ability of the

United States Government to obtain entry and reinterment authority therein. If authority can be obtained, shipment will be made to the city or town designated by the next of kin.

Option 4—

The remains be returned to the United States for final interment in a national cemetery.

When this option is desired, the remains will be transported to the continental United States and interred in a national cemetery selected by the next of kin. Burial in the national cemetery desired is subject to availability of space therein.

Alternate Choice

If the options described above do not provide for your wish, it is suggested you submit your specific desire to the Office of The Quartermaster General for final decision by the War Department as to its legality and practicability.

Cremation

If cremation of the remains is desired, specific request that the remains be cremated should be made on page 2 of the Form "Request for Disposition of Remains," in the block titled, "Remarks and Additional Instructions." The request should include a statement as to whether the next of kin desires to arrange for private cremation services or wishes the Government to make necessary cremation arrangements. Upon receipt of this request a letter pertaining to the Government procedure to carry out the wishes of the next of kin in this respect will be forwarded to the next of kin from the Office of The Quartermaster General.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON OPTIONS GIVEN ABOVE

All Options

On all options, all costs of exhumation, preparation of remains, casketing, and shipment to the city or town designated by next of kin, or his duly authorized representative, will be borne by the Government

of the United States. In all cases the Government will provide a flag of the United States to be used for proper draping of the casket during interment services. If next of kin of the deceased, or authorized representative, is present at the time of final interment, this burial flag will be presented. Otherwise, this burial flag will be forwarded to next of kin.

Option 1—Permanent American Military Cemetery Overseas

The establishment of permanent American military cemeteries overseas, in the various areas in which American Forces served, is contemplated. These cemeteries will be beautified, maintained, and permanently cared for by the United States Government. To assist the next of kin in determining the place of final interment, a pamphlet describing permanent American military cemeteries abroad, and national cemeteries in the United States, is inclosed. All expenses incident to burial in permanent American military cemeteries will be paid by the Government. When the next of kin

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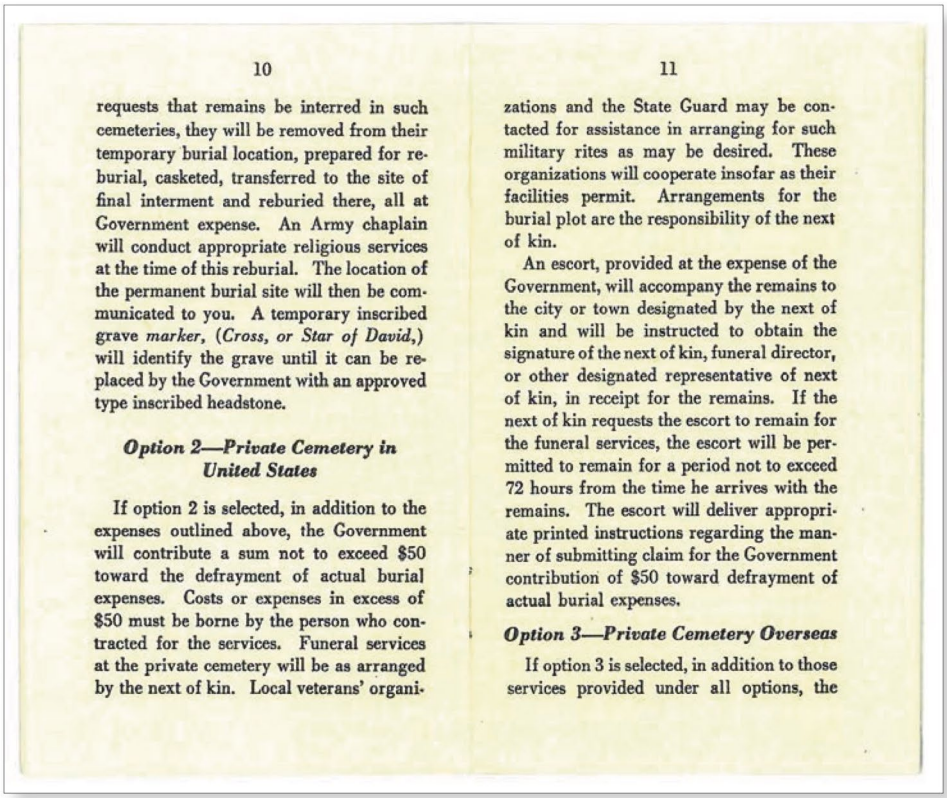

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requests that remains be interred in such cemeteries, they will be removed from their temporary burial location, prepared for reburial, casketed, transferred to the site of final interment and reburied there, all at Government expense. An Army chaplain will conduct appropriate religious services at the time of this reburial. The location of the permanent burial site will then be communicated to you. A temporary inscribed grave *marker, (Cross, or Star of David,)* will identify the grave until it can be replaced by the Government with an approved type inscribed headstone.

Option 2—Private Cemetery in United States

If option 2 is selected, in addition to the expenses outlined above, the Government will contribute a sum not to exceed $50 toward the defrayment of actual burial expenses. Costs or expenses in excess of $50 must be borne by the person who contracted for the services. Funeral services at the private cemetery will be as arranged by the next of kin. Local veterans' organi-

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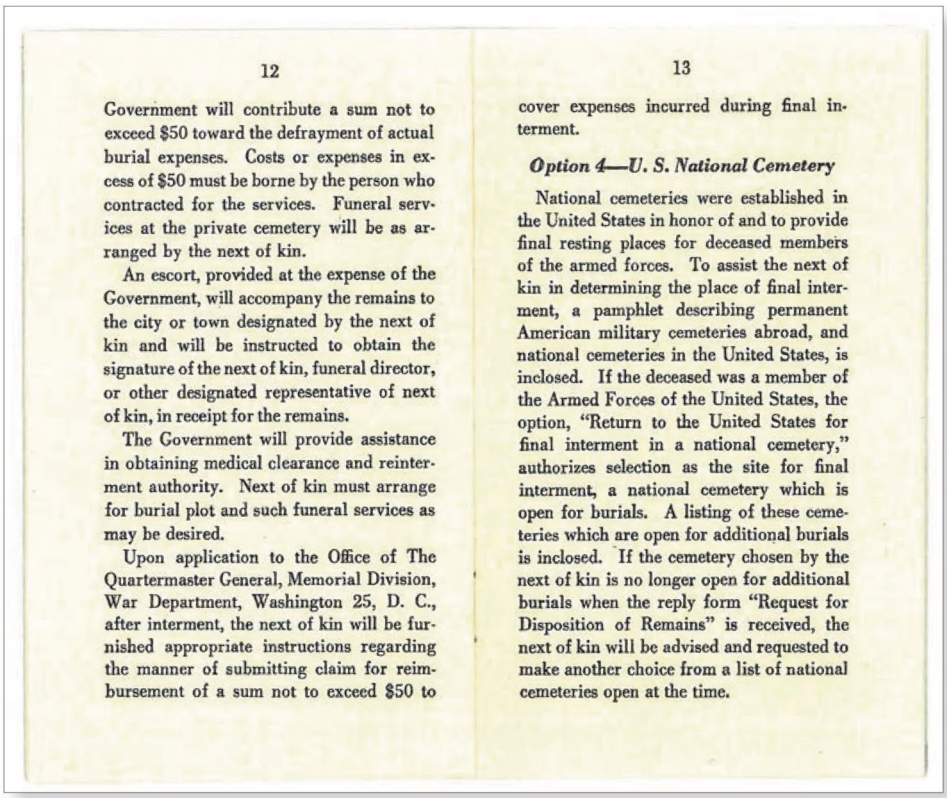
zations and the State Guard may be contacted for assistance in arranging for such military rites as may be desired. These organizations will cooperate insofar as their facilities permit. Arrangements for the burial plot are the responsibility of the next of kin.

An escort, provided at the expense of the Government, will accompany the remains to the city or town designated by the next of kin and will be instructed to obtain the signature of the next of kin, funeral director, or other designated representative of next of kin, in receipt for the remains. If the next of kin requests the escort to remain for the funeral services, the escort will be permitted to remain for a period not to exceed 72 hours from the time he arrives with the remains. The escort will deliver appropriate printed instructions regarding the manner of submitting claim for the Government contribution of $50 toward defrayment of actual burial expenses.

Option 3—Private Cemetery Overseas

If option 3 is selected, in addition to those services provided under all options, the



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Government will contribute a sum not to exceed $50 toward the defrayment of actual burial expenses. Costs or expenses in excess of $50 must be borne by the person who contracted for the services. Funeral services at the private cemetery will be as arranged by the next of kin.

An escort, provided at the expense of the Government, will accompany the remains to the city or town designated by the next of kin and will be instructed to obtain the signature of the next of kin, funeral director, or other designated representative of next of kin, in receipt for the remains.

The Government will provide assistance in obtaining medical clearance and reinterment authority. Next of kin must arrange for burial plot and such funeral services as may be desired.

Upon application to the Office of The Quartermaster General, Memorial Division, War Department, Washington 25, D. C., after interment, the next of kin will be furnished appropriate instructions regarding the manner of submitting claim for reimbursement of a sum not to exceed $50 to

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cover expenses incurred during final interment.

Option 4—U. S. National Cemetery

National cemeteries were established in the United States in honor of and to provide final resting places for deceased members of the armed forces. To assist the next of kin in determining the place of final interment, a pamphlet describing permanent American military cemeteries abroad, and national cemeteries in the United States, is inclosed. If the deceased was a member of the Armed Forces of the United States, the option, "Return to the United States for final interment in a national cemetery," authorizes selection as the site for final interment, a national cemetery which is open for burials. A listing of these cemeteries which are open for additional burials is inclosed. If the cemetery chosen by the next of kin is no longer open for additional burials when the reply form "Request for Disposition of Remains" is received, the next of kin will be advised and requested to make another choice from a list of national cemeteries open at the time.

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Remains may be shipped directly to the selected national cemetery for interment and funeral services; or, remains may be shipped to the place designated by you and thence to a national cemetery for interment. In the latter case, the Government will be responsible for transportation cost in an amount not to exceed the travel expense otherwise necessary to move the remains to the national cemetery by a direct route from the Distribution Center.

An escort, provided at the expense of the Government, will accompany the remains to the national cemetery selected, or the city or town designated by the next of kin if it is desired that the remains be shipped to a designated city or town for religious services prior to interment in the selected national cemetery. In the latter case, the escort, if so requested by the next of kin, will be permitted to remain for the services for a period not to exceed 72 hours from the time he arrives with the remains. The escort will be instructed to obtain signature of next of kin, funeral director or other designated representative of the next of kin, in receipt for the remains. Provision for

services of an attendant to accompany the remains from the place where services were held to the selected national cemetery is an obligation of the next of kin.

When interment in a national cemetery is your choice, there will be no cost to you for the grave site, the opening of the grave or the actual interment and closing of the grave. Also as stated previously, the Government approved type of inscribed headstone will be provided automatically at no cost to you.

Identity of Deceased

Prior to the registering of a grave overseas as containing the remains of a designated (by name) member of the armed forces of the United States, every means possible was employed and every known method was pursued to established definitely and positively the identity of the deceased. In this respect, no effort was considered to be too great and meticulous attention was given to smallest details. Identity having been thus established, evidence of identity was buried with the re-

mains and indicated on the grave marker. If removal and reburial elsewhere become necessary, all records will again be checked and all evidence of identity again examined. Military personnel especially trained in the procedure supervise and directly control these operations. Also, from the time of exhumation of the remains until their reception by next of kin, they will be under constant protection of military escorts. Thus, when the next of kin is requested to indicate his desires in the manner of final disposition of the remains of a certain member of the Armed Forces of the United States, he and all others may rest assured that the identity of the remains has been definitely established.

INQUIRIES CONCERNING THE DECEASED

When information on any of the following listed subjects, with respect to the personnel indicated is desired, the inquiry should be addressed to the office that is listed below:

Army, State Department, Merchant Marine, U. S. Employment Service, Red Cross, and War Correspondent Personnel:

Death (circumstances surrounding death) and missing personnel—
The Adjutant General,
Casualty Branch,
Munitions Building,
Washington 25, D. C.

Cemeterial and Burial Information—
Office of The Quartermaster General,
Memorial Division, War Department,
Washington 25, D. C.

Personal Effects—
Army Effects Bureau,
Kansas City Quartermaster Depot,
601 Hardesty Avenue,
Kansas City 1, Mo.

Religious Matters—
War Department,
Office, Chief of Chaplains,
Washington 25, D. C.

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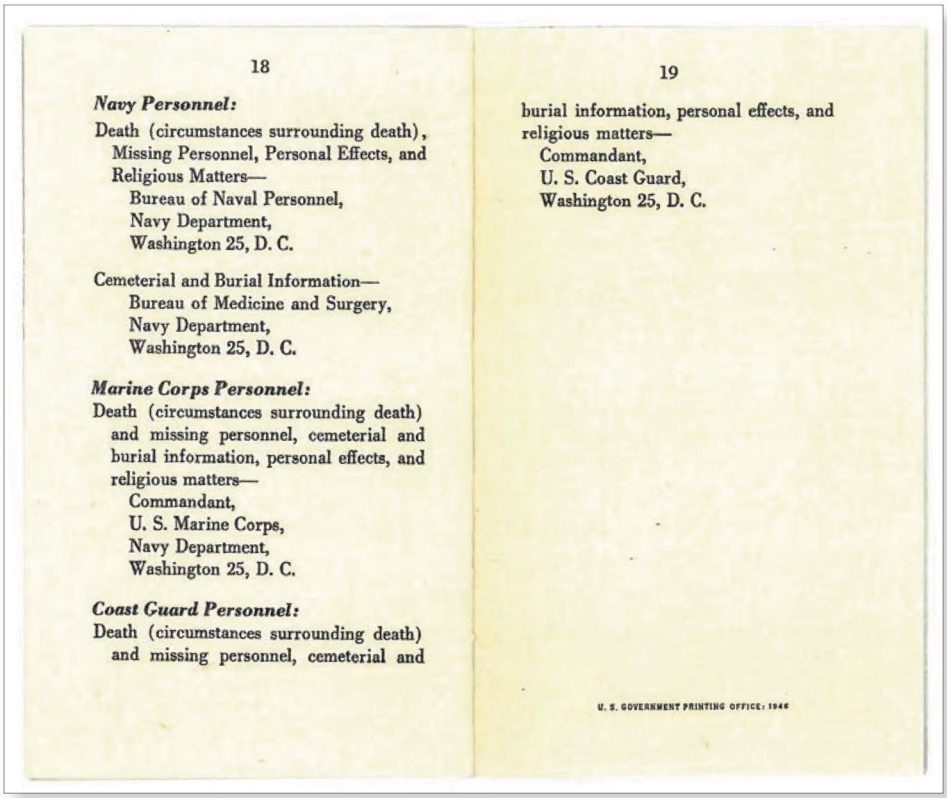

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Navy Personnel:

Death (circumstances surrounding death), Missing Personnel, Personal Effects, and Religious Matters—
Bureau of Naval Personnel,
Navy Department,
Washington 25, D. C.

Cemeterial and Burial Information—
Bureau of Medicine and Surgery,
Navy Department,
Washington 25, D. C.

Marine Corps Personnel:

Death (circumstances surrounding death) and missing personnel, cemeterial and burial information, personal effects, and religious matters—
Commandant,
U. S. Marine Corps,
Navy Department,
Washington 25, D. C.

Coast Guard Personnel:

Death (circumstances surrounding death) and missing personnel, cemeterial and

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burial information, personal effects, and religious matters—
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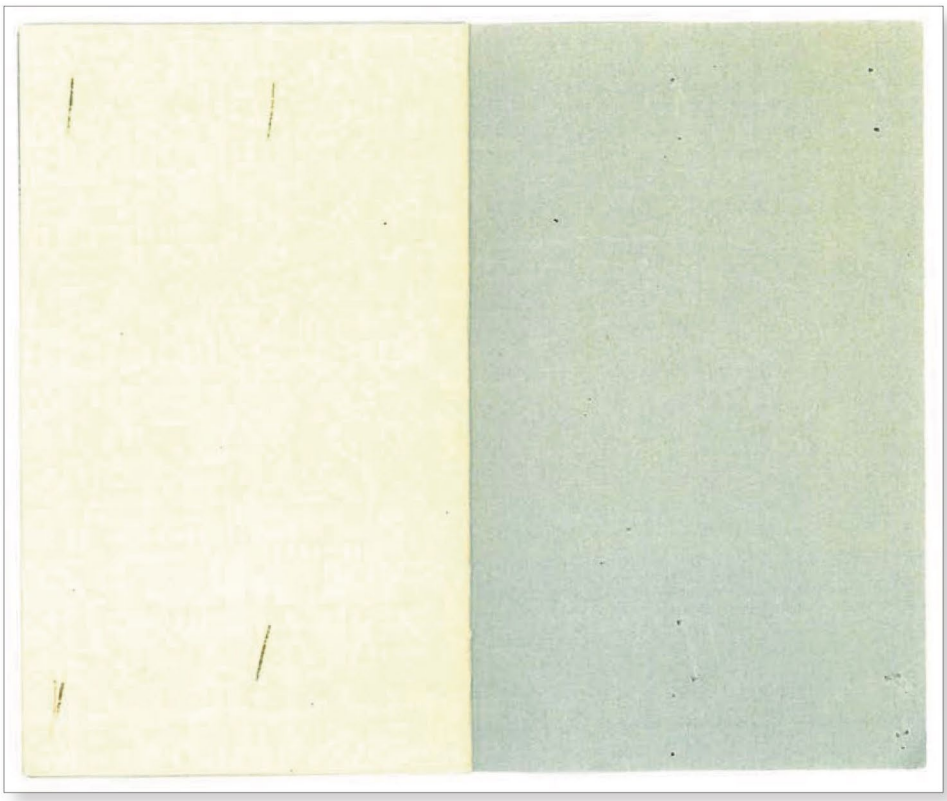
U. S. Coast Guard,
Washington 25, D. C.

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