VA Launches Veterans Legacy Memorial's Next Phase for Memorial Day

The VLM platform is a digital tribute to remember the legacies of veterans and service members interred at a VA national cemetery.

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Michael Heisey

The Department of Veterans Affairs rolled out a new feature on its digital, interactive virtual profiles for service members and veterans interred at VA cemeteries May 14 to begin the observance of Memorial Day. Now the public may leave comments or other messages of tribute on each veterans' profiles through the Veterans Legacy Memorial program.

“This year, by necessity, will be different from past Memorial Day observances,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “While the department can’t hold large public
ceremonies, VA will still honor veterans and service members with the solemn dignity and respect they have earned through their service and sacrifice.”

The VLM platform from the VA harnesses existing data of 3.7 million veterans from the National Cemetery Administration to create interactive virtual profiles that the public can view to memorialize veterans digitally.

VLM allows veterans' family members, like Michael Heisey, to share memories about their loved ones on a widely viewed digital platform.

"We didn't even know he was awarded air medals, or the bronze star, until he died," Heisey said. Her son, Matt Heisey, has been interred at Quantico National Cemetery in Virginia since 2017.

Heisey talked about Matt's story and the importance of a digital platform to remember Matt's legacy.

"A digital platform would put a name and a face," she said. "We will never ever stop grieving him, and my biggest fear is people will stop saying his name."

The new features on VLM allow the public to leave tributes in three ways: as a direct entry on a veteran's profile, as a reply to someone else's tribute, or as a direct entry to a memento or photos.

“Online memorialization becomes more prominent these days, allowing people to remotely honor the service and sacrifice of our veterans,” said Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs Randy Reeves. “The increased capabilities of VLM are in place at a critical time to ensure 'no veteran ever dies' by telling their stories to a larger audience through an enhanced digital platform. In addition, VLM allows people to express their appreciation and gratitude for the dedicated service of our nation’s heroes.”

The VA recognized the platform during a nationwide National Day of Volunteering event aimed at beautifying the grave sites at veteran cemeteries in September 2019.
VA leadership has recognized how VLM allows the public to be “storytellers ... when talking about veterans,” Reeves said. “The Veterans Legacy Memorial is an ideal way to tell the story ... and we do it in such a format that anyone, anywhere can access that information.”