

RICHARD H. CESLER

Professional Biography

Richard H. Cesler Sr. was selected as Veterans Cemetery Administrator for the Washington State Veterans Cemetery, located in Medical Lake, Washington. He started his new appointment on September 17, 2007.

Mr. Cesler was a natural choice for this position, as he had served as the Director of the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery (2005 – 2007), where he entered the position only six months after the cemetery opened. He managed and controlled 76.5 acres of land, facilities, and grounds maintenance, and oversaw pre-registration requirements including evaluating eligibility for interment. Moreover, he coordinated military funeral honors and arranged and scheduled internment with funeral directors. That cemetery interred over 1,200 in that short period of time. The Idaho and Washington State Veterans Cemeteries maintain a shrine-like appearance.

Furthermore, Mr. Cesler in 2005 designed and implemented a prescient-setting National initiative in Idaho now active in 30 states, the “Missing-in-America” project, to locate veterans abandoned in funeral homes in Idaho and Washington, and ensure they receive proper burial in the Washington State Veterans Cemetery, epitomizing one of the Veteran Administration’s objectives, *“Honor and serve vets in life and memorialize them in death for their sacrifices on behalf of the nation.”*

He orchestrated the first-ever Missing-in-America project service at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery, on November 9, 2006, with an 150 in attendance, where 21 veterans and one spouse located in Funeral Homes in Idaho, were laid to rest with military honors. The event included a fly-over by the Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopters. This project has been adopted by the Patriot Guard Riders and the MIAP, for consideration as a National search for forgotten veterans. Mr. Cesler has carried this initiative to Washington State. To date 67 veterans and two spouses have been recovered and placed in the Washington State Veterans Cemetery.

As an innovative program developer and savvy fund raiser, Mr. Cesler initiated various efforts, i.e., he launched the Memorial Brick Walk sponsorship program for indigent veterans; he oversaw the closeout of a Veterans Administration grant for construction of a visitor’s center, and managed the construction project; he administered two grants to the National Cemetery Administration to secure funds for facilities, cemetery expansion, and an additional State Veterans Cemetery in Idaho and Washington; and he delivers seminars to stakeholders throughout Washington and Idaho (political officials, senators, National Park Service, Department of Interior and Bureau of Land Management officials, and other state land stakeholders), to petition for land and funds for the Idaho and Washington State Veterans Cemeteries.

Mr. Celser completed leadership education for Cemetery Directors at the National Cemetery Administration Training Center, and delivered instruction to colleagues about Pensions, Veterans Relief, and an overview of the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery.

Mr. Cesler commenced his career as the Director of the Idaho Veterans Cemetery after moving from an assignment as a Veterans Service Officer at the Idaho State Office of Veterans Advocacy in Boise, Idaho (2001 – 2005). There he counseled veterans and their families in obtaining entitled veteran benefits.

Before joining the Idaho Division of Veterans Services, Mr. Cesler completed an 18-year career as a Senior Customer Service Supervisor for the Delta Airlines Air Freight Facility in Boise, Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. He also beta tested computer programs for Delta Airlines and taught the VISION program before retirement in 2001.

Mr. Cesler has a passion for the military and its veterans. He served honorably in the United States Air Force (1966 – 1970) obtaining the rank of Sergeant and was discharged as a disabled Vietnam Veteran. He holds myriad memberships and management posts in the community including Current Department of Idaho Senior Vice Commander, past State Judge Advocate Veterans of Foreign Wars (4 years), (VFW) – Post Commander VFW Post 889 (4 years), Legacy Life Member and Commander VFW Post 63 (2006 – 2007), Boise, Idaho, the eighth largest VFW in the world with over 1,800 members he was awarded the prestigious *All American Commander* status for 2006 - 2007; AmVets, Past VFW District 5 Commander; Disabled American Veterans; American Legion; Vietnam Veterans of America, Military Order Purple Heart and POW/MIA. He also created a compelling PowerPoint presentation that he delivers to both military and non-military organizations throughout Washington and Idaho to promote the Veterans Cemetery.

Born and raised in Portsmouth, Virginia, Mr. Cesler and his wife Joyce married 38 years, have six children (Michelle, Marya, Ted, Richard, Susan, and Toni), 17 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. Together, he and Joyce traveled the world for business and pleasure and enjoy diverse cultures (Japan, South America, Guam, Europe, Ireland, Canada, Mexico, and Vietnam). Mr. Cesler believes, *“Nothing good ever comes from seeking gain for ones self, however by giving to others the rewards are immediate and greater than imagined.”*

