

# Als and the Military

Health care providers face many challenges in meeting the ongoing care requirements of patients with a progressive degenerative disease and, at the same time, providing an environment where that individual can experience quality of life. The key is blending the clinical expertise, high staff-to-patient ratio and the least restrictive setting which allows these residents to thrive both socially and psychologically. This is difficult, if not impossible, to produce in a traditional institutional care facility.

In the advanced stages of these diseases, many patients frequently have specialized and complex medical needs such as ventilator and mobility care, and often require communication devices. At CareMeridian, we have developed a unique non-institutional care model that addresses both the clinical and psychosocial needs of these patients and have partnered with families to help their loved ones achieve the greatest level of independence possible.

According to a report released in May 2011 by the ALS Association, military veterans are at a nearly 60 percent greater risk of acquiring ALS, (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis – the progressive disease often referred to as “Lou Gehrig’s disease”) than men and women who did not serve in the military.

**Ron Nakai** served in the US Army 18th Engineer Brigade in Vietnam from November 1968 through January 1970. Following his service, Ron worked for the airlines and the U.S. Postal Service until he began experiencing symptoms related to ALS in 2006.

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In March 2008, Ron age 66, was diagnosed with ALS while at the San Francisco VA Medical Center. After a prolonged hospital stay, in September 2009, Ron was transferred to CareMeridian Fairfax in Marin County, California. Ron regained new hope and greatly benefited from our homelike environment and individualized care

plan executed by highly trained staff. Our less restrictive environment fostered greater visitation #exibility allowing Ron to socialize as if it were his own home. "CareMeridian makes you feel that it's not a care facility, but a dorm with a celebratory atmosphere. They really understand ALS patients and their needs," he says.

Ron received one-to-one rehabilitation from a multi-disciplined team of licensed therapists. The team worked with him to maximize his assisted technology device and quickly taught him to use his eyes as a keyboard and foot as a mouse. Ron, who had never used a computer prior to his illness, is now able to communicate with the outside world and control other devices throughout his room such as his TV. "This computer has restored my faith that life is still good," he says.

For those veterans who are service connected, we have short, long-term and respite care options. If you would like more information about CareMeridian or any of these options, please phone: 1-800-852-1256.

