

Why I Care About Our Veterans

My experience with Veterans started at a very young age. As a child I didn't know what military, soldiers or war meant. The only memory I have was my father telling us stories about the army and the Korean War and how he was taken overseas and when he got there, there was a declaration "the war was over". He was a handsome young man, with little life experiences; he was drafted and taken away from his life as he knew it, he was a young farmer trying to help his family to survive, what a shock for him! In the military he always prayed and kept the faith that he would return home someday to his parents. He would sometimes take out his uniform to show his children what it looked like and then place it safely in his box of memories. It wasn't until I became an adult and realized just what a special man my father was to have been a part of American history; with pride and dignity he raised his family with the same outlook in life he adopted as a soldier, "freedom is not given to us, it is fought for...always take pride in being an American...never leave anyone behind...and always stick together". My father met his best friend in the army, and they remained friends and comrades with an emphasis on a solid friendship. My father visited friends that were Veterans here at the NMVAHCS. As soon as he would find out someone was sick, he would jump on his red scooter and go to many floors, 4D, MICU, SICU, 3A, 5A to give his friends a visit, offer a good cheer, a smile and a boost; he would often say "keep your chin up... don't give up the fight, you better have faith". Well, this year my father was admitted to the NMVAHCS, twice, and as expected many of his Veteran friends visited him during his illness. My father never gave up the fight for life, but his body could not survive his disease processes and he passed away at the NMVAHCS in June 2009. Why do I care about Veterans; it is simple, these men and women gave up their lives to protect our freedom in this country, and as a nurse I feel I want to take care of them with dignity and respect. It is my job to show them my appreciation for all they have done for me, my family and this country. It is an honor to be part of the Veteran's life, although, it is only for a moment in time during their hospitalization, they will always be treated as my father was during his time at the NMVAHS-with dignity, respect and admiration. All Veterans have their own personnel story to tell. They all have families with similar experiences. I am proud to be a daughter, sister and aunt of my family in the military. When I visit my father at the Santa Fe National Cemetery, I salute all Veterans for their unselfishness, generosity, pride and humility.

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