

Veteran Receives Final Justice

Nov 03, 2009

“It won’t happen in my lifetime,” Bob Shearer said as he added his name to the registry of Vietnam veterans diagnosed with ALS, also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease. Shearer was exposed to Agent Orange but never thought service connection to the disease would pass in time.

His wife kept pushing though. Bob and Brenda Shearer lived on the small retirement he had from a government job. She owned a little antiques shop. When the ALS started to get really bad, times got hard for the Shearers.

“I had to give up my shop to care for him,” Brenda said. “We didn’t know how we would even pay our bills.”

When they needed durable medical equipment so Bob could live comfortably at home, they went to visit Dave Nielsen, VFW State Service Officer, Ohio. He jumped on the case right away.

“They didn’t even ask for help with Bob’s claim,” said Nielsen. “They were just looking to get by. I thought we could do more than that.”

Nielsen was right. In July, he filed for service-connection for the ALS, but Bob’s claim was denied. Nielsen was on top of it though. The claim was denied one day after the VA acknowledged a presumptive service connection between ALS and military service.

“I shot a missile right back at them,” said Nielsen. “I gave them the details of Bob’s case—he didn’t have much longer to live, and I know it meant more than anything else to him to know that Brenda would be taken care of after he was gone.”

Bob got his wish. On the day of his death, his claim came through. He passed away knowing Brenda would be OK because she could get benefits for the rest of her life.

In the year before he died, Bob and Brenda had become part of the “VFW family.”

Brenda rented the local VFW hall for Bob’s final birthday party and his last days were spent at home with his family—not in a hospital. His two grandchildren, who called him “Pop Pop

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE

200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719

info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

Choo Choo” because of Bob’s love of trains, and the Shearers’ kids were grateful to have him close and comfortable.

“Our VFW service officer was wonderful,” Brenda shared. “He was truthful and to the point, and he knew which questions to ask me so I could give him the facts he needed to best help us.

“Veterans have earned the right to this kind of compensation,” Brenda said. “I’m glad the VFW was there to help Bob and me. I’ll never forget it.”