



Charlie's Story

After retiring from a long career as the respected police chief of a small town in Illinois, Charlie and his wife and best friend, Sue, were planning lots of travel. An ALS diagnosis changed their lives.

Charlie put all of his affairs in order, giving Sue his Medical Power of Attorney.

Charlie's health deteriorated rapidly, and though he was eligible for VA long-term care only a few miles away, Sue insisted on caring for him, herself, with the help of home health agencies.

ALS is a cruel disease and ambulances were frequently dispatched to their home, leaving each time with Charlie, Sue by his side and DNR papers in hand. He was ready and at peace with the possibility of transitioning out of life with each crisis.

Inevitably, Charlie's heart stopped beating soon after an emergency admission for VA care and his doctors were about to call time of death... until Sue, heartbroken and hysterical, jumped on a chair and screamed at the top of her lungs:

"I'm not ready. I'm not ready. You can't let him go"

"I'll sue you. You can't let him die."

(And more like this.)

Sue's screams rang up and down the hospital floor, distressing patients and staff. Finally, Charlie's doctors relented and resuscitated him. Against Charlie's wishes. Sue's wishes prevailed, instead.

Charlie returned home. We heard he was very depressed and lived for several more months. He died at the VA *when Sue was ready*.