

Share with your classmates a time when you cared for a patient at the end of their life. This may be a time when you assisted the patient (or their support system) with decisions related to end of life care; or a time when you were present for the death of a patient.

- **What were your observations related to this experience?**
- **Do you believe it was a peaceful death?**
- **What went well?**
- **Can you think of anything that could have made the experience better for the patient and/or family?**

Answer:

I had the honor and privilege of taking care of LT. Col. Wright, Lead Navigator for what was then the 5th Airforce airwing during World War II before it was retired. It is so amazing during the end-of- life cycle as to what is shared between the caregiver and veteran [patient] as well as the bond that we had forged. He shared all the good times and bad times he had throughout life with me. The time he led his airwing in WWII across enemy lines and his bomber took fire and he was able to help the pilots navigate to an island behind enemy lines and land staying safe till help could arrive for his crew. As time passed, I could see him losing more weight, want to eat less and his aches and pains become more and more. Eventually he could barely move away from his bed to his recliner. His now and skinny body at this point started to mottle in his lower legs, and his breathing became a bit shallower and more labored. He all the while kept positive and motivated, always speaking of things about his grandkids and family. As his time grew closer, he knew it and kept saying he had no regrets and how he missed his wife who passed before him and couldn't wait to see her once again. This highly decorated combat veteran was a big inspiration to me and shared more with me in the noticeably short time we knew each other than others he had spent a lifetime with. It has been close to twenty years or more since he passed, and I still find my mind drifting back to him and spending time talking while helping him do things.