

**News for widows
of vets with ALS**

DEAR ABBY
JULY 18, 2009
PLAIN DEALER

Dear Abby: In May 2001, you printed my letter alerting former prisoners of war and their widows to the special veterans benefits available to them from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The response was great; many former POWs and their dependents now have their VA benefits because of that column. Now, as chairman of VA outreach for American Ex-Prisoners of War, I write to alert all veterans (not just former POWs) of a recent VA ruling. On Sept. 23, 2008, Lou Gehrig's disease (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) was made a presumptive condition for all veterans who served in our armed forces for at least 90 days. This means that the widows of those veterans who died of Lou Gehrig's disease in years past are eligible for the VA widows' monthly benefit, which is very substantial. Many people are not aware that a veteran's death due to this disease is now considered service-connected. One claim I handled recently involved an ALS death 46 years ago, in 1963. Thank you for your help in getting the word out, Abby. — *Fred Campbell, American ex-prisoner of war*