

## *Meeting the Troops*

Colin Powell resigned last week as Secretary of State in President George W. Bush's administration. As such, he traveled the world representing the interests of the United States. He has served our nation admirably in a variety of leadership positions.

In the summer of 1993, Powell, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited American troops serving in Somalia. On one day, he made a grueling 23 stops in 20 hours. "Meeting the troops," Powell said in a *Life* magazine profile, "that's what it's all about."

At one base, Powell shook hands with 400 GIs and posed with them for photographs. A picture accompanying the *Life* article shows one such scene. Surrounded by a sea of troops, Powell has his arms around two soldiers as one of them holds his own camera at arm's length to take the shot.

Why did Powell take time for this in the middle of his heavy schedule? Because he couldn't forget what happened on one visit to the Old Soldiers Home in Washington, D.C. As he went from room to room in the hospital, veterans proudly showed him their faded snapshots taken with their commanding officers. Powell said, "That picture they had taken 40 years ago with their general was the high point of their lives."

It is important for those of us who have leadership positions in Life Care, American Lifestyles and Life Care at Home to understand the lesson that hit home with Powell. We cannot effectively lead if we do not spend personal time with our associates -- to know about their families, their dreams and the crises that come their way -- and to work alongside them, shoulder to shoulder, in the mission to which we are called.

--Beecher Hunter