

Chapter Two

Can He Take Any More

In the MediVac copter, every care was given, with a saline Intravenous drip inserted in his good arm with morphine infused for pain relief. At last, he could finally breathe easier as the pain lifted. His eyes closed, and rest from the medication worked to lull him into a fitful delusional sleep.

Ray didn't care where he was; nothing felt better than being out of the jungle and agonizing about a surprise Viet Cong attack. Yet occasionally, Ray forced himself to arouse from slumber, believing to be still in the jungle and fearing another enemy assault; his nerves were constantly on-guard.

Gradually he was calmed by a Paramedic, plus with the soothing whirl of copter blades, he drifted back into sleep.

Time stood still for Ray without him knowing the day, hour, or how long it took him to be transported

to Japan. He woke up lying in a long ward of beds in Yokosuka Naval Hospital. At first, he panicked, thinking he was in a Vietnamese Hospital and fearing it unsafe, yet a nurse spoke soothingly to put him at ease, reassuring him that he was in Japan.

Then the prolonged episodes of medical treatment began. Not long after admission, Ray's wound received initial cleaning and dressing. Staff was busy with many war injured and failed to attend to Ray's injury again until one week later. With excruciating pain and his temperature sky-high, his wound had become staph infected.

In 1969 it was believed that ice baths were best to reduce a temperature, so Ray was placed in these baths repeatedly. They were another terrifying and horrific memory for him, and he later said they were as difficult to tolerate as the pain in his arm and chest. He screamed every time he got placed

into a bath, yet no one was attentive to his terrorized objections.

One day the doctors came to talk to him on his return to bed. They assured him they would operate and remove the shrapnel from his chest, but as for his arm, the best measure was to amputate.

Amputate, NO WAY! Ray fought them on this. He would never give permission; he wanted the wound cared for, but there would be no amputation.

He kept his arm and thanked God he fought for it and won this battle.

Ray remained in the Hospital's infectious isolation room and finally got adequate care for his damaged arm as he demanded.

The Hospital was at fault for the dangerous **Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus**

(M.R.S.A.) infection in Ray's arm, and then the doctors tried to coerce him into losing his limb.

This particular complicated condition was resistant to many antibiotic types used to treat other infections. Ray didn't know what was used to treat him, but he gradually recovered from the infection and the alternative operations over time, to save his lower arm.

While remaining in the Japanese Hospital, he was awarded the purple heart for his combat injuries. A medal, pretty as it was, did not replace the terrifying experiences nor the normal use of his arm again.

