Gary, where the hell are you? Has anyone seen Gary?" It took them a long time to find him in the darkness.

They found him lying a few yards short of that small ditch that he had chosen to be his refuge. A mortar shell had exploded nearby as he ran for that ditch. He was completely dressed and his boots were laced and tied. Harry did not know if he'd found his glasses. There was no blood on him and at that time his friends did not know what had killed him. Later, an autopsy demonstrated that Gray had been hit by one small shell fragment. That one piece of metal entered his chest cutting a large vessel in his mediastinum and killing him quickly.

The flight back to the 93rd was in darkness. There were a few dim instrument lights that I could occasionally see over the shoulders of the pilots. There was the rhythmic flick of a light somewhere outside on the tail or top of the chopper. I was only vaguely aware of any of these. The murky blackness overwhelmed me. I sat numbed and in a dream world. My arms and legs were heavy and inert. I slumped and my head hung forward, and it would have been an extreme effort to hold it up and look around.
My thoughts were detached and remote, and I sensed that the disjointed wanderings of my consciousness came from a place or time far removed from the heavy weight of my present body. I remembered that Gary had several small children and a beautiful wife. I puzzled as to the Vietcong soldier that had dropped that fatal mortar round into the tube. What was he like? He must now be a hero in the National Liberation Front because I had no doubt that the effective Cong intelligence network had spread the word that the attack had killed an American major. Did they also know that he was a "bac-si," a doctor? I

could not believe that they might not care one way or another. In a pure General von Clausewitz approach to war, the killing of a doctor who treated and returned soldiers to combat was, in theory, a more effective way to reduce the strength of an enemy army than killing an infantry major who fought them in battle. Did they intentionally include the hospital in their attack? What would have happened to the bed bound patients if the hospital had been full of sick and wounded soldiers?

My mind wandered back to the individual soldier who killed Gary. Was he a peasant kid recruited from a farm? Was he an old soldier who had fought the French or even the Japanese? Or could he have been a student with a brilliant mind like Gary, recruited by the Communist Front to be a soldier and due to the uniqueness of his mind, made a mortar gunner because he understood angles, trajectories and physics? Of course, I would never know, but it did make me realize that the brilliant minds of the world need good and not sinister opportunities if they are to accomplish worthwhile things. Gary had the opportunity and used his brilliance constructively, even if only for such a limited time. But as I'd thought the day before, isn't any time on earth almost irrelevant when compared with infinity? My answer was no. Even so, if that Cong gunner had a similar brilliant mind, his opportunity was limited, for the present, to warfare. He, like Gary, might die because of this war. Thomas Grey's words, "some mute inglorious Milton, here may rest," slowly crept into my numbness, and only then did I come close to any understanding of their full meaning.

CHAPTER 9

A FORLORN CHRISTMAS AND A BIZARRE NEW YEAR'S EVE

> We are beginning to see some signs of success and there is an erosion of (enemy) morale. Secretary of State Rusk, 1966.

Thanksgiving passed quickly and after a protracted month we soberly celebrated Christmas. The night of the 24th of December 1966, most of us attended the midnight chapel service to worship our God while living in a land of Buddhists, Cao Diasts, other Asian sects and a few Vietnamese Christians. We mouthed the expected words of traditional carols accompanied by music played on the smallest of pianos, which was standard issue to all military chapels throughout Vietnam. This piano usually stood silently and dusty during our regular services for want of an adequate musician.

Christmas eve night, our pianist was a youth the age of most of our patients, and was not someone I'd seen before. But he was also different from most other soldiers in Vietnam. He was lean and darkly tan, his hair was cut extremely short, his forearms and large hands which extended from his rolled up black, green and tan jungle jacket sleeves looked ape like in their power. A black M-16 rifle lay on the floor beside him. A heavy

canvas harness with all metal buckles and hooks taped for silence and a web belt holding a smoke canister, at least two fragmentation grenades, a Bowie knife the size of a small axe and three canteens were carefully draped over the M-16 as if to say, "these are my rod and my staff and they comfort me." His helmet sat silently on the piano. His boots were a bilious green, cut lower than U. S. army issue boots and they looked like old fashioned tennis shoes. Why was he wearing such foot gear and where did he get them? I never found out the answer, but his professional appearance convinced me that he had good reasons. This man was a soldier in every sense, a young American who had fought and killed and would kill again or be killed.

He didn't move during the entire service. He always looked down at the keys, and hunching forward played exquisitely, with great talent, oblivious to our meager and inadequate incantations. As so often was the case in this strange Asian land, I was again struck with an apparent inconsistency. Here was a fine musical talent carrying a rifle rather than playing in an orchestra. Where had he come from? Where did he learn to play so well? Was he a professional musician who was drafted? He seemed to be a young musical prodigy, and additionally, a skilled soldier who, I assume, was borrowed from a nearby combat unit to play for our service. There was not a dry eye present. Our tears were not so much because of the splendor of his music - though some tears were for that - as they were for our loneliness and the young soldiers being blown apart all around us. I never saw our piano player again.

On Christmas day, the patients and staff feasted on frozen turkey, dressing and cranberry sauce, washed down with cherry Kool Aid. The strains, scratchy but

recognizable, of Bing softly singing White Christmas and Rudolf the Red Nose Reindeer, were launched, like salvos of H & I (harassing and interdicting) artillery fire, through the hospital PA system. The salvos were followed by silence until the officer of the day or his orderly remembered to move the arm back to start all over again at the beginning. Such reminders of home, along with holiday boxes containing presents, family pictures, Kool Aid packages, tins of sardines, smoked oysters, and other meats did little to improve our spirits or inspire us with love for the Christ child and the holiness of Christmas. Ignoble as it may have been, we tried to forget that it was Christmas. In such a time when close friends and family are very important, we either embraced our new friends for support or withdrew into ourselves and our own thoughts. We attempted to shut out Christmas and not think about home.

The slim, the lumpy and the savory nurses showed off their most attractive qualities by wearing the best of the few dresses they brought with them to the war zone. I am certain that it is hard for most readers to understand, as it is for me so long removed from that place, that civilian clothes were worn by doctors and nurses when off duty in and around a combat hospital. Surrounded by rubber trees and dense tropical jungle, such attire was an appreciated change from the fatigue uniforms. Wardrobes increased in number and sophistication after visits to Saigon and R&R cities and because of hand-me-downs from departing doctors and nurses leaving for home.

Abysmal and misplaced cutout paper stars and snowflakes, like dozens of plastic propeller toys, twirled strangely from bulky twine stuck with scotch tape to the Quonset ceilings. We heard that Bob Hope had played somewhere near by. Rumor was that four

rows of seats, front and center, reserved for our hospital, were empty because our CO was afraid that our trucks might get ambushed and he quietly forgot to send anyone. I trust that there was a Christmas truce in 1966, but if so, no one believed it, and the dust-offs continued to bring in wounded soldiers and their whump, whumps were not silent in the night. Christmas was a melancholy time. We were as happy when that family holiday was over as we were when every day ended. Later in the subdued lights of hootches, the NCO club and officer's club most of us drank ourselves into a deep sleep to forget how long it would be until we would be home.

Then something wonderful happened; New Year's Eve arrived. After our mournful Christmas, the celebration of the New Year, 1967, allowed us to drown our depressions, at least for a few hours, and wash all the melancholia away in an hour or two that fused our odd group of individuals into a close society of friends.

I don't know exactly how it got started. But a week or two before December 31, 1966, the officer's club manager, a young medical corpsman whose principal duty was to protect and defend our store of alcohol, acquired from some unknown den of ruffians, stole or by illicit negotiations, traded some valuable commodity for enough good champagne for each chopper pilot, doctor and nurse to have at least two bottles.

Several days before the celebration, I should be but I'm not ashamed to admit, there was serious debate as to how the champagne should be distributed. Should each person be handed two bottles as he or she enter the door of the club, or should it be served continuously with the hope that it would not run out during the long evening? As it turned out, it did not matter because, for some party enthusiasts, it was a short evening

due to their self-induced unconsciousness. The evening ended quickly for those who tried, in their enthusiasm to end the hell lived through during 1966 and welcome the beginning of the year that would take them home, and drank all they could in a few minutes. Some of these zealots passed out on the floor of the club, while others collapsed outside on their way to the latrines or their beds. A few may have even reached their beds before falling into a deep sleep.

But the story of the wonderful evening is not about the people who retired early, but about others, still drinking assuredly but still on their feet. To be honest, most of us survived until much later, past midnight. I served as one of the bartenders, because some of the celebrators drank mixed drinks. Many switched back and forth between champagne and scotch, bourbon, gin or beer. I do not believe many of us were out to destroy ourselves that night, and I am not telling this part of the story to glorify intemperance or other debauchery. But, I tell the story of that New Year's evening because it happened and is part of all of us who were there.

There was slow dancing. Bizarre partners slowly passing by, their figures reflected in the quality liquid awash on the plywood bar counter gave the appearance of a Toulouse-Lautrec poster. A muscular pilot, hunching down from above, disappeared half way into a lumpy nurse with biscuit dough biceps hanging limply as she stretched up on tiptoes. They nuzzled, with closed eyes, grinding their torsos together in a frolic of dance pretense. A slim nurse wearing a sexy dress, which would later be above her waist while she was still on the dance floor, and a shorter, balding, but young surgeon slowly and seriously stroked each other around the dance floor. A very beautiful nurse with flowing

dark curls cascading to her shoulders, wore a cascading black cocktail dress. Although previously she had been distant and haughty to all others except her married doctor playmate, she now snuggled warmly against another. Oblivious to her current enjoyments, and using both of his hands, her doctor, now massaged the loins of a new, recently arrived young lady. He and his previously haughty friend were, in the spirit of the New Year, making new friends.

There were serious romances also. One couple sat at a small table, not touching but seeing no others. With faces close together, they talked quietly. Occasionally during the evening, they painfully left each other's side to dance and flirt with someone else, probably in an ineffectual attempt to hide their shared love because of commitments back home. Did they really believe no one knew?

The record player screeched something by a forgotten dance band. Mouths moved, people laughed, and the imperceptible words and grunts from all corners of the room washed together with the music.

Midnight arrived and suddenly – boom, boom, boom. It came from right outside the building. In our fearless, drunken state, we strolled outside to see. The sky was alive with fire - white, yellow, red and orange tracers, streaking north, south, east and in any direction. The fuselage came from thousands of weapons shooting skyward rapidly and coming down slower, making arches and cross patterns in the black sky. Explosions and flashes were accompanied by the rat-a-tat-tat of automatic weapons. Pings and thuds from occasional ricochets nearby added to the din and danger. We were fearless and miraculously, none of us were hit. We smiled, laughed, kissed, molested, and yelled at the

top of our lungs, "HAPPY NEW YEAR!"

What was so special about that night? Really, a very wonderful thing happened. We, a rum soaked band of lonely and lost Americans, because of our disgustingly human behavior, could not look at ourselves as seriously as we had before. That wild night broke some tension. That night made us look at each other and see our own and other's frauds and human failings. Such behavior destroyed pomposity and made most of us supportive friends. We were young, in a war and make no apologies. War is a young man's game, and it was a young person's game in the hospitals; young doctors, younger nurses and, in most cases, even younger helicopter pilots. We, although young and wild, became bound together for a short time because of that evening and the release of our shared frustrations, and at last, became a more united and caring hospital.

CHAPTER 10

KOWLOON AND HONG KONG

> We are generally pleased ... we are very sure we are on the right track. President Johnson, 1967.

On final approach, modern buildings spiked upward like reflecting ice crystals protruding from the soft turf of some frozen pasture land. But these glistening spires were warmed by a temperate sun and reached skyward from the margins of Kowloon and Hong Kong bordering on the South China Sea. Hong Kong Island, almost completely covered by these sparkling towers, and neighboring Kowloon represented civilization to our worn out, olive drab eyes. We gawked, jaws slack, and drooled as we watched through the airplane's portholes like children at Disney World's Ten Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, and were dumbstruck by the beauty and elegance of this British Crown Colony. Below in the bay, small white speed boats skimmed playfully in circles, brightly decorated Chinese junks chugged slowly and steadily toward their destinations as they had done for centuries, and the Star Ferry's double-decked boats crisscrossed between the land masses leaving sudsy wakes in the inviting, pale green, tropical water.

The sun streamed into the cabin through the small portholes and reflected off the suspended dust in the dead, smoke filled air. Then the beams of light moved upward and along the opposite wall like search lights as the plane tipped sharply to port and fell seaward. We dropped lazily down and down toward a narrow, needle-like projection of land jutting out into the water. As we gawked, an airliner sped down this spit of land and lifted silently up into the air. My God, I thought, that needle is the runway! Oh please, I don't mind dying on take off after R & R is over, but please dear Lord let us have a safe landing and a few days to savor civilization and do not let me die before I taste the pleasures of this remarkable international city - at least not before I can bite into a bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich and drink a glass of fresh milk.

We disembarked by sliding down the hand rails of a portable gangway pushed tightly up against the plane's door. We were directed to a large room for a briefing - deja vu. This time though, we were allowed to sit down. The room was small, as were the oriental chairs which were not designed for fat American asses. Paper flowers in Coke bottles were the only things on a few tables pushed back against the walls, and an occasional tilted picture of a junk or sampan hung as a reminder that this reception center was far away from the war. A large electric fan groaned painfully from side to side in a back corner.

"It is my pleasure to welcome you to Hong Kong," came a metallic but pleasant voice. A warrant officer standing on a runty dias addressed us. His head seemed to touch the cardboard ceiling. "I will not delay you very long because I know all of you want to get started, and the Allied Military Command here (i.e. big brother will be

watching) wants you to enjoy your six days of rest and recuperation."

"How the hell did you get such a plush job?" called someone from the back of the room.

"I flew gunships in Vietnam for a year."

Silence.

"May I proceed?"

Silence.

"Hong Kong is a British colony and one of the major tariff-free ports of the world. It consists of Hong Kong Island, which is to our south and where the town of Victoria is located, part of the Kowloon Peninsula where we are presently located, the New Territories to the north and over 200 small islands. The British have been here for more than 150 years, except for the short occupation by the Japanese during World War II. Thirty years from now the lease of the New Territories expires and the British are supposed to return the colony to the Peoples Republic of China. But its value to the English and the free world is so great that the expectation is that this will not happen. A compromise will be worked out. But in the interest of harmony, at present, Communist China is allowed to trade here, so you'll see ships and even some buildings flying Communist flags. Communist China operates banks and has other commercial buildings here. In fact, ... "

"Christ, I wish he'd get to pussy. That's what I'm here for," whispered a young trooper behind me.

"... and it's located here in Kowloon, near the Star Ferry dock. You can't miss it.

But, it is off limits and you may not enter it or make purchases there. Go look in the windows and you'll see how inconsequential the goods are that Communist China has to offer for sale when compared to the goods offered by the rest of the world - a few ivory pieces, porcelains, propagandized art works, carved teak, etc. You will not be disappointed that you can't buy there. Besides those in the official Communist China Store there are many other products that you may not purchase because they were manufactured or handcrafted in Communist China. One item, which most of you already know about, is human hair wigs. Most of the beautiful, human hair wigs sold in Hong Kong were made in Communist China and if you buy one, you will not be allowed to take it out. It and your money stay here. This goes for all other items made in Communist China."

"Can I buy Communist pussy or do I have to ask first?" the horny trooper asked.

Snickers.

"Did someone back there have a question?"

Silence.

"There are some wigs that are not made there, but to be allowed to take them back to Vietnam, you must have an official and properly executed CO, that is a certificate of origin. Insist on this before purchase and deal only with reputable merchants. There are counterfeit COs out there. Other items that require COs are listed in your handout."

"Are the cat houses listed?"

"We'll be finished soon, and then you can go shopping for whatever you want. Please understand, this is an international city. The British, using their highly disciplined

local Chinese police force - these are tough cops - and Gurkhas from India make Hong Kong a very safe place, if you don't do foolish things. So, use your heads and don't do anything or go anywhere you wouldn't in another large unknown city. There are female escorts available in most bars who are there for one purpose only - to make money. They are known as B-girls. They work for the owner of that bar and if you let one join you, you pay for her drinks and any time she spends just talking to you. If you want her to leave the establishment with you, for what ever purpose ..."

"Goddamn right."

"Amen, brother."

"... OK, let me repeat, for whatever purpose, you must `buy her out,' that is pay a fee to the bar to let her leave with you."

"Oh man, my dick's hard already," groaned the trooper.

"Quiet, let the man finish, you cocksucker," snapped a mean looking three striper.

Silence.

"If you understand that she is in that bar to take your money, and you know that you must pay for her time - by the hour, day, or week - while you are here, and also understand that she was with a different soldier last week, different soldiers every week, and will be with a different soldier each week after you are gone ... what I'm saying is don't fall in love. Keep it in perspective if you can't keep it in your pants, because she's going to tell you that she loves you. By keeping it in perspective, these girls can make your visit very pleasant. Some of them can be excellent companions and tour guides by showing you the sights, they can recommend the good but inexpensive restaurants, they

can save you money by telling you what is a bargain and what is not; but they expect you to buy them gifts also. We only have a few more things to cover. Any questions so far?"

Silence.

"OK. Let's move on. There are establishments that are off limits, many times because they serve rotten, unsanitary food or are known for their thievery, but occasionally because their girls are know to be diseased. These establishments are supposed to be listed in your handout, but the list is always behind, and remember, girls anywhere, even those in unlisted bars, move around from bar to bar and can have syphilis and gonorrhea."

Silence from behind.

"Macao is off limits to all military personnel. You will see the hydrofoil going to and from it each day. It's an exotic Portuguese colony, and civilian tourists go there all the time, but don't take that side trip. You may not return. There is considerable unrest there - stirred up by the People's Republic and the Red Guard - and several American servicemen have disappeared down there recently. You may tour the New Territories. There are tours there each day which take all day and allows you to see the more primitive parts of the colony. But the scenery is much like Vietnam, so I doubt that many of you will wish to take that trip."

"Sheeit no." He'd awakened.

"There are other things that I have in my notes, but I think I've covered what is important. Despite the cautions and admonitions in this orientation, the U. S. Government wants each of you to enjoy your visit. Have a good time, but do remember that you

represent the United States. Please respect the culture and feelings of the other nationalities that are here. What you do and how you behave reflects on your country ..."

"Fuckin A."

"... the vans waiting outside will take you to your hotels."

The buses were marked with names of the hotels. We had made our hotel reservations months before while still back in Nam. I better understood why the "division slice," as my military history professor back at West Point called the number of support soldiers needed to keep one combat soldier in the field, was seven to one or something close to that. Unlike other countries, we pamper our fighting men. The American government provides its soldiers with fancy post exchanges, N.C.O. and officer clubs, swimming pools, movies, U.S.O. shows and Bob Hope, and, in Vietnam, a travel service that arranged tours from the battlefield to exotic places - transportation and hand holding free. Seven soldiers doing other things for every soldier fighting.

Looking through the bus window, I saw the venerable Peninsular Hotel lying close to and overlooking the harbor where it had stood for over a century and had housed many distinguished visitors in its long history. I then wished that I'd made my reservations there instead of at the modern Hilton on Hong Kong Island. My regret was short, however, for as the van slowly pulled onto the ferry I smelled the ripeness of the sea and heard the cries of gulls again. I was engulfed with pleasant associations - San Francisco and happier times. Oh God, the loneliness and the pleasure of past memories.

The Hilton Coffee Shop was America away from home with its curved formica counter tops and swivelled counter stools. The waitress, who was Chinese, but spoke

better English than most Americans, looked strangely at me but at the same time seemed to understand. I was still in uniform and there was no hiding that I was an American soldier on R & R from Vietnam. I devoured three BLT sandwiches and four glasses of fresh milk.

Later I strolled the streets. I watched the people, looked in the shops and slowly passed the tall, modern buildings, one of which flew the Communist flag and displayed a small brass plate announcing that it was the Bank of the People's Republic of China. I made my way east, along Queen's Road, and into the notorious, I later discovered, Wanchai district - or "Wanch" as multitudes of sailors from many countries have called it for generations. Wanchai was and, still is, I imagine, the home of many "Suzie Wongs," and the center of prostitution on Hong Kong Island. The small bars and brothels were advertised by bright signs in Chinese characters and English - Tillie's Topless, Wrangler's, Saigon, Paradise Palace, and other inviting and lustful names. Although it was still afternoon, the early trade had begun and a cluster of young, slim and attractive "Suzies" smiled and said "hello G.I." Their ponderously applied lip stick and exaggerated high heels reminded me of pre-pubescent American girls stumbling around in their mother's shoes playing grown up. Not feeling superior, but actually frightened of my own vulnerability and possible disease, I moved on quickly. Certainly somewhere there must be some maturity and elegance among the prostitutes of such an international city.

While I was in the Wanchai district, I first became consciously aware of the ever present street noise. Later, by being aware, it was apparent that most of Hong Kong is always in bedlam. There was the endless chatter of a foreign tongue from the ever present

throngs of people, the din of traffic, the noise of animals - loose and in cages - and, something new and alien to me, the clatter of mahjongg tiles and the shrieks and curses accompanying this Oriental game. The shops and vendors spilled into the narrow streets and alley ways. I was not familiar with much that they offered for sale. There were dried things strung up and hanging, wet things in glass jars, colored powders and roots, dried animals which appeared to be dehydrated and skinned monkeys, dogs and rats. One food shop had live mice, lizards, and small snakes in cages. In another, small live frogs were for sale. I'd heard of eating monkey brains, bird's nest soup made from the saliva of birds, and soup made from blood. I'd even been told that the Chinese eat bear paws as a delicacy. But seeing such things and the animals displayed relieved me of any inquisitive appetite and reinforced my current diet of BLT's and whole milk. I retreated from the "Wanch."

Several days later I shopped at a British department store, Lane Crawford, and bought gifts for my family. I priced cultured pearls at several shops and at the China Fleet Store, a big "exchange" type mart for military personnel. But the large, opera length strand which I wanted was $500. Years later I would pay $10,000 for a similar strand here in the United States. Back then, I settled for a modest, but beautiful, strand of "black pearls."

As the warrant officer suggested, I looked into the windows of the official Communist China Store. The window displays looked like the displays of a small museum, a few beautiful things displayed in glass show cases. I looked through the open door; there were no customers.

The most interesting shopping area was a long, old wooden dock, recently

converted into shops on two levels like a mall and named something like the Ocean Terminal Arcade. Browsing through this was delightful and entertaining. Stores from all over the world, almost every country, sold most any product ever made. The British merchants were most evident with their linens, woolens, porcelains and china, silver, briar pipes, scotch whiskey, and many other English products. There were stores containing boots, jade, middle east and Chinese rugs, watches and clocks, paintings, ivory, cloth and clothing from all over the world.

One day I joined a Lotus "site-seeing" tour. After covering parts of Kowloon, the bus slowly circled Hong Kong Island on the narrow but picturesque roads. Our guide was a beautiful Chinese girl, probably twenty years old. She spoke perfect English. By now I had discovered that such perfect diction and usage was the result of an excellent educational system open to some but not all Chinese, as well as the proper exposure to Englishmen, Canadians, Australians but few Americans. As with the Americans in Vietnam, I doubted that many Britishers bothered to master Cantonese or Mandarin, a common failing of colonizing powers. She entertained us with many interesting facts about Hong Kong. "Although the colony is large, over 400 square miles in total area, its land area grows larger each year. This may seem strange to you. We are not given more land by Communist China. The additional land comes from the sea, by filling in with earth along the shore, through reclaiming - reclamation. Such reclamation is necessary and welcome because most of the people live around the Harbor in Kowloon and Victoria. The only way to provide housing for these people is to construct very tall buildings with many apartments and to reclaim land from the sea so that there is more land to build upon.

More land is needed also for farming in order to provide food for the colony, but because there is not enough land on which to grow food, the colony must import most of its food from Communist China. As you have observed, except along the water's edge, the buildings are built on very steep slopes, mountains actually reaching up to 2,000 feet above the harbor. When the rain is heavy during the summer, our monsoon or typhoon season, there are dirt slides and sometimes one of these buildings will collapse when the ground gives away."

The bus inched along through the narrow streets beside the harbor. The gulls glided, holding against the breeze as if suspended in a seascape, and only their cries and occasional plummets into the oil slickered swells vouched for their reality. I was home again in San Francisco.

"These typhoon shelters were constructed by the government for a very important reason," she offered.

"What is a typhoon shelter? I don't see any shelter," asked someone.

A damn good question, I thought, I don't know what she is talking about either. We were becoming less shy and more talkative.

"Oh, my sincere apology. I understand. Please look at this large concrete jetty that extends far out into the water. Note that it then turns at a right angle and runs for almost a quarter of a mile along the shore line creating a calm body of water inside the jetty which is separated from the turbulence of the bay and the sea. Look," she said pointing, "there is a small sampan passing out through the opening now."

A small, dark, slim-hulled wooden boat with a high bow and similar aft section, not

much larger than a row boat but much more beguiling in appearance and movement, was departing the shelter. The sampan was propelled by a lone elderly man standing on a platform in the rear part of the boat, slowly sweeping a long oar back and forth, gracefully moving the small boat forward. The middle of the sampan was covered by a rounded tin roof, apparently the living area for the man and his family.

"There are not many boats in this shelter at this time because the weather is good. When a typhoon is predicted, the shelters fill up quickly."

The shelter was now apparent, and it looked like a small harbor. There were no piers, however. Apparently, the first sampans and junks tie up to the jetty, then subsequent ones tie up against and parallel to these boats and so on and so on until there is a floating mass of sampans and junks. Some "streets" are left open in the water so that single boats are able to leave without disturbing many others. To reach the shore, the people on the boats walk from boat to boat.

"Before the government built these shelters, many `boat people' died each typhoon season. I believe that you call them hurricanes in the United States. Here, unfortunately, we have many more typhoons than you have hurricanes. The boat people, or Tanka as we call them, are fishermen, and they have a society which is separate from the people who live on land. The boat people, each entire family, earn their living by fishing and sell or barter the fish for necessities. When there is a wedding, the ceremony is conducted on the boat. Many boat people are born on their family sampan, live on a boat all their lives and die there. Some never leave their floating homes anytime during their entire lives. But sadly, this type of life is less common than in the past because of competition from large

commercial fishing boats, and many Tanka are now working on land even though they still live in their sampans."

Our guide took us to Repulse Bay, a half moon cut of white sand and emerald water, overlooked by the Repulse Bay Hotel. I still see it all today, in my mind: the low, sprawling buildings facing the bay, and the hotel lawn, broken with scattered tropical trees, sloping down to the road which passes between the hotel and the beach. It was a shock to be told that such beauty was the site of brutality during WW II. In December 1941, the Japanese attacked over the adjacent hills and the British and Canadians were determined to keep the road between Aberdeen, a village down the coast, and their headquarters in the Repulse Bay Hotel open and secure. They put up a determined resistance. Their defense collapsed after three days of fighting. The Allied prisoners were marched to a house near the hotel, where most of them were put to death. The few survivors were imprisoned with other British Empire soldiers and families in Fort Stanley, which lies further east along the southern coast of Hong Kong.

What a desperate and horrible experience it must have been to be a prisoner in Fort Stanley, fearing that you were lost and abandoned with little hope of rescue because you were held in the heart of Asia, yet confined within sight of one of the most beautiful places on earth. I wanted to ask questions and discover more but our Oriental guide seemed very uneasy discussing it, perhaps because we were Occidentals involved in another war in Asia. I remained silent and fearful for our current and future prisoners of war in Vietnam, and dreaded my imminent return to the war.

She continued, "This bay, the hotel, and Deep Water Bay to the west were used by

Hollywood to film `Love is a Many-Splendored Thing' with Mr. William Holden."

Several questions were asked, but she could not give us any interesting or sordid details - a failing which an American tourist company would not have overlooked, even if it took fabrication to say that Holden slept in that room behind the mimosa tree, or that he had his lady friends flown to the hotel in his private sea-plane.

One night, I enjoyed a delicious Chinese supper in an off-limits restaurant. It was not until I returned to Vietnam that I found out that these restaurants were declared off limits because so many American troops became sick after eating there. There were no monkey brains, mice, blood soup or snakes that I was aware of, so I completely relaxed and devoured the delicious Chinese dishes. The brochure read, "Evening Harbor Cruise, Authentic Junk, Dinner on a World Famous Floating Chinese Restaurant." Several other American soldiers and I boarded the Junk and were served drinks on the forward deck. My companions that evening were young and from combat units. They enjoyed drinking and looking at the beauty of the harbor and from their conversation I gathered that this was a night off to rest from their previous nights of debauchery. We cruised around the western part of Hong Kong and into the bay at the fishing town of Aberdeen, mentioned earlier in connection with the battle at Repulse Bay. As the junk pulled along side the restaurant, children in sampans converged on our junk and speaking in an unintelligible but completely understood international language, telling us to toss coins into the water. They screeched, waved, dived and disappeared into the murky, green swells, competing with each other for the coins. They were excellent swimmers and delighted in our attention.

But now that I had been in Hong Kong several days, I began to sense the delicate

but clear contempt that the Chinese held for outsiders, especially Americans. I hoped these children were more tolerant in their feelings toward us, but I began to doubt such was the case. The patrons of the restaurant and the waiters were tolerant but clearly aloof and it was apparent that they wished that we eat, pay and quickly depart.

They knew that we were American soldiers. Of course, there was no hiding that fact. An American voice is unmistakable, we were all young, we had close haircuts, and we were all men with that awkward look that comes from wearing civilian clothes recently unpacked from a duffle or B-4 bag. Damn, I suddenly realized we soldiers had been discriminated against and segregated ever since we hit Hong Kong. We had even been segregated from other tourists. Only American GIs were on that bus tour, and only GIs were on the junk cruise. The tour services had quietly segregated us from the more "desirable and civilized" tourists, although they certainly accepted our American dollars. I remembered seeing other buses and other junks with laughing American and European tourists pass by - but not with any young American soldiers aboard. We were outcasts, and I resent it to this day!

Chapter 11

THE CHIEF HAWK, SENATOR J. STROM THURMOND

The United States still hopes to withdraw its troops from Vietnam by the end of (next year). Secretary of Defense McNamara, 1964.

The field phone, hanging in its canvas bag, clinked twice as the party on the other end turned the crank.

"Goddamnit, turn down that music, I can't hear a thing." Then into the phone, "can't hear you, SPEAK UP! Who? Yeah, he's here - Mayson! Some colonel from MACV."

I looked at my watch, it was about 2100 hours. The call had to be coming from somewhere outside the hospital. No one bothered using the field phones inside the wire. It was easier to walk a few hundred yards if need be and carry on your conversation face to face.

"Coming," I yelled. *Boyer*, our Duke Blue Devil, turned down "Die Fledermaus" as I passed his cultural den. Each occupant tried to give his few square feet of floor space a personal touch, and our cardiac surgeon seemed to have many comforts, including a

quality stereo and many classical records. I knew he bought the stereo in Japan while he was there on R & R, but he either brought the records with him or had them mailed from home. Generally, everyone was considerate of their hootch mates and kept the noise down, especially after midnight. But there were exceptions. Several weeks before, the local psychiatrist got on a big toot and entertained several nurses in his partially partitioned area until about 5 a.m. At 6 a.m., our hospital urologist got up to start his day, threw a pitcher of water on the worn out romeo, lifted the foot of his cot, twisted it, dumped the psychiatrist onto the concrete floor and greeted him with a pleasant "Good morning."

I depressed the talk button on the handset, "This is Dr. Mayson." I then let up on the button to listen. The voice on the other end was muffled and far off. He said something about being a colonel and that someone requested that I be somewhere tomorrow. Here, a request from a bird colonel was only a polite way of saying do this and be there. "I'm sorry, sir, I can't hear you very well. Can you speak louder?"

The connection got better, maybe because fewer phones at that moment were pulling less current from the lines. The field phone I was using was connected to the hospital headquarter's switchboard, but where the outside lines came from and how they were powered was a mystery. "Senator Thurmond wants to see you in Di An at 1000 hours tomorrow. He'll be there for a short time; can you get there?"

This colonel was a diplomat. Probably a public relations type assigned to and traveling with Senator J. Strom Thurmond, from my home state.

"Colonel, how do I get to Di An?" I thought of that JAG Captain at Second Field Forces; what was his name?

"Major, that's where the 1st Infantry is located, it's not far from you."

"Colonel, I'm not sure I can get a Jeep, I might hop on a chopper going there. I don't know, but I'll try."

"Do your best, I'll tell him you are coming."

"Yes, sir." I released the button and hung up.

"Goddamnit."

A few days earlier I'd gone to Second Field Forces Headquarters to be photographed and make a sworn statement which was notarized. Then they gave me my pistol back, along with a Vietnamese gun permit. A young attorney, a captain, had done the officiating and when we discovered we were both from the same state, we had a pleasant visit talking about home. He was from the lower part of South Carolina, and his uncle was United States Senator Strom Thurmond.

"As you know, my uncle is a hawk and really believes in this war. I do too, I guess, and there was no question that I'd do part of my military obligation here after I finished law school, but ..."

"Jesus, there wasn't anyway you could have escaped coming over here, I said. He is `Papa Hawk' when it comes to Vietnam. When's your DEROS?" I asked.

"That's the problem ...." There was a distinct pause and I thought he'd decided to stop or change the subject, but he went on, choking slightly either because of emotion or the dust, "My uncle wants me to extend my tour for six more months."

I laughed, inappropriately. The attorney captain didn't think it was funny. I didn't either when I realized he was absolutely serious and that Senator Thurmond must be putting pressure on his nephew.

"Come on," I said, embarrassed that I'd laughed, "just tell him you want to come home and you've done your part. He'll understand, I'm sure he will. Everyone wants to get the hell out of here after a year."

"You don't know my uncle." He was right. I didn't know Strom Thurmond, but I, like all of us from his state, knew his radio voice and his martinet-like reputation. I was fourteen when I first heard him speaking over the radio. In the forties, World War II hero Strom Thurmond hit the radio waves and totally overwhelmed his opponent in his campaign to be governor. Whoever that long-ago-forgotten opponent was, he didn't have a prayer against that determined onslaught, and Thurmond became governor. This young captain did have a problem - he was facing that determined onslaught. To this day, I don't know if Thurmond or his nephew won.

Although my dad and Thurmond were old friends and it was possible that my dad had asked him to look me up, there was no question in my mind that the captain told his uncle Strom that a doctor from his state was nearby thus causing my current predicament. How was I going to get to Di An, and get there safely?

I found George Allen and explained. How was I going to get to the headquarters of the "Big Red One" by 1000 hours tomorrow? George said that somehow he'd get me a Jeep by 0800 tomorrow and that it should only take about an hour to get there. "But where exactly is Di An?" I asked.

"It's west of us, but you must go back into Saigon and then take the road northwest, out of Saigon." George knew the road, and it sounded like the same intersection where my driver encroached on the red light, but I wasn't certain.

I then visited the surgical wards and since most of the soldiers were identified by a division shoulder patch hooked to their beds to assist visitors from their units, I found and talked to several wounded soldiers who were with the First Infantry Division. Many were from the "bloody one," as it was called in WW II, but these men, although they flew out of and into Di An on the choppers, did not know how to get there from the hospital. I silently fumed. If I were still in the infantry I'd have a topographic map and could find it myself, but there were no maps for doctors.

Finally, a bright young soldier suggested that I talk to Sergeant *Casey*. Thus, I discovered that each major combat unit placed a noncommissioned officer at each hospital to keep track of their men and their medical status. When a commander visited a hospital, his unit NCO would take him around to see his men. *Casey* was that NCO for 1st Division. I found him in his tent behind the hospital and explained that I needed directions to Di An. *Casey* was helpful, "Doctor, go south about twenty clicks and then out the road to Di An. There may be a sign, but I'm not sure."

"Where do we turn?"

"At that big intersection after you cross the bridge. Doc, you'll see lots of military traffic on that road."

I'd seen plenty of military traffic on all the roads. "Is it paved?"

"Oh, hell yes, big road." Adding as an after thought, "But, it gets kinda small

farther out, a few small villages, then Di An. Doc, they'll take you in by convoy anyway."

"Who'll take us in by convoy?"

"The fuckin MPs. They got a check point about five clicks this side of the wire, an when they get enough vehicles together, they escort them in with a tank."

I really didn't want to ask, but I did anyway. "Why?"

"Because of the ambushes. The slopes occasionally hit anything moving on that road, command detonated mines, captured claymores, any shit they have. The tank discourages them."

George did get me a Jeep, a driver and a "shotgun" passenger armed with an M-14. My driver also carried an M-14, and I was given a .45-cal. pistol. I was familiar with all infantry weapons, and was not comforted by our lack of substantial fire power, but I knew that we'd be escorted by a light tank. Now that was fire power!

As we pulled through the gate, a soldier wearing a 1st Division shoulder patch put up his thumb looking for a ride. As he climbed in, I turned to him. "Are you going back to Di An?"

"Yes, sir. Thanks for the ride."

"Sarge, you are very welcome, you have no idea how glad we are to see you. We are going to 1st Division Headquarters and aren't sure how to get there. You can be our guide."

"I'll do my best, but I work in Personnel. I was taken there in a bus six months ago, came out only yesterday for an eye appointment at your hospital, and I'm just trying to get back. I really don't remember exactly how to get there."

There was no sign to Di An that we Americans could recognize, but we turned west at the big intersection after going over the Saigon River bridge. ARVN and U.S. military trucks clogged the road and travel was tedious, but it was a beautiful, warm and cloudless morning, and we enjoyed our slow, peaceful ride through the outskirts of Saigon and into the sparsely settled countryside. It annoyed me again that I did not have a map, but I felt sure we were on the road to Di An.

It was market day and in each village there were throngs of Vietnamese along the roadside, slowing our progress. They spoke to us as we passed close by, but we, isolated in our compounds except on rare occasions as this, had no comprehension at all as to what they said. I glanced at my watch; it read 0935 hours. We were traveling on a dirt road, and none of us remembered where it had stopped being paved. The pavement probably just petered out from lack of repair. Our "Big Red One" Personnel sergeant thought we were still on the right road because, "We just passed a place where they told us there had been a big ambush."

"Sarge, when do we get to the MP check point?" I innocently asked.

"What's that, Sir?"

"I was told that we'd hit a military police check point and that they'd escort us in by convoy."

"I don't know anything about that."

We were driving past banana groves and rice paddies interspersed with dense overgrown vegetation reclaiming old cultivated land. There were a few hut-like structures far off the road but no other signs of habitation, and now there were no other military vehicles on this road.

I could see movement through the trees that partially blocked our view as the road turned to the left some 100 yards ahead. "Stop," I ordered. The driver already had the jeep in reverse and was turning sharply. As we wheeled back and then started a sharp turn to circle around, all four of us saw a figure behind a machine gun mounted on a dark, slowly moving vehicle. "Fuck," said someone and themuzzle of one of our M-14's swung up from the back seat, and was pointed down the road.

"Wait!" I shouted.

The dark vehicle was a U. S. Army camouflaged Jeep, blackened by mud and dust, with a .30-cal. machine gun mounted on a post in the back and a gunner looking down the sights at us.

"Goddamnit, what the hell are you doing out here?" yelled the passenger as he jumped out of the front seat and ran up, confronting us. He was an infantry major, in full battle dress, and we were damn glad to be accosted by Americans rather than by Vietnamese.

"We're trying to get to the 1st Infantry Headquarters, and we are sure as shit glad to see you. Where the hell is Di An?"

Apparently realizing that we hadn't placed ourselves in harms way on some lark, he cooled down and calmly produced what I'd wanted all along - a topographic map. It was an excellent map, showing all the roads, landmarks, individual buildings and contours with elevations. Suspected Vietcong positions were marked in red on a clear plastic overlay, just like was taught at the Infantry School at Benning.

"Look," he said pointing to the map, "all this is really no-mans land. We control it mostly during the day, they control it at night unless we occupy in force. Behind me,

down the road where I came from is a fork in the road. Take the right hand fork. Whatever you do, don't take the left. Understand?"

"Hell yes."

"After you've taken the right fork turning to the north, you'll see a low building off to your left, a school, then you'll know you are on the correct road - the road to Di An."

"Thanks."

As we drove off he hollered, "Don't take the left fork!"

Don't worry, I thought. But which fork would we have taken had he not come along?

We finally arrived at Di An, and I met with the colonel who had phoned me. "Major Mayson, Senator Thurmond flew out on a chopper about twenty minutes ago, but he asked us to fly you to his next stop. You can send your Jeep back."

Oh, the power of a U. S. Senator. Why hadn't he just sent a chopper for me to begin with?

When we landed, at a place unknown to me, there were a few other choppers sitting quietly in the middle of an open field. Senator Thurmond was not there. But Brigadier General Bernard Rogers, Assistant Division Commander of the 25th Division, was there, so I knew I was getting closer. I had met Rogers previously and enjoyed talking to him for a few minutes before the Senator arrived. Rogers later distinguished himself as a very capable and long serving NATO Commander as a four star general.

They had scraped up about ten of us from Thurmond's state. A "slick" helicopter barreled in and Thurmond jumped out the side door before the blades even slowed. Hunching over he moved athletically through the scattering dust to where we stood, and

smiling broadly, started shaking hands. There were no special introductions, but we told him our names and what part of the state we were from and he was friendly and gracious.

"We're proud of you, son ... the American people love you ... the war will be over soon an then you can go home ... they are on the run ... God bless you ...," and to me, "I'll tell your father you are doing great." He never did, but he did telephone me with his condolences when my dad died in 1980. He certainly was a politician.

CHAPTER 12

NON COMBAT CASUALTIES OF THIS WAR

> Victory ... is just months away ... I can safely say the end of the war is in sight. General Paul D. Harkins, 1963.

It was one of many wearisome Sunday afternoons. "Pebble Beach," our outdoor movie theater with its crushed rock carpet, was full of sun bathers and beer drinkers. I was with a group that was seated at a wooden picnic table, constructed from scrap lumber. It was so covered with empty beer cans that I couldn't find a clear place for my elbows. James DuBois, our present hospital commander - the fortunate Irvin was long ago back in the world - and several others of us were slowly working our way through all the beer in Vietnam. I indeed believed that we were making a considerable dent in the millions of cans consumed each day.

Many of our nurses had made their way up the slope from their hootch to "the beach." The more healthy and energetic doctors and nurses played volleyball in the suffocating heat, but most of us sat around at the tables or in worn beach chairs and talked.

Why, I wondered, did the nurses come to us for whatever, rather than the males beating a path to their hootch down the hill? Probably because "the beach" was one of our

social centers at night, the officer's club was nearby and this part of the compound had become the "cruising strip," I mused silently. It was males and females, like everywhere else, maneuvering and sparring for dominance and "what's in it for me." Because of our abnormally strained, mostly celibate situation, we horny doctors and nurses certainly had prurient thoughts and interests, and I was surprised that unrestrained debauchery had not broken out. The nurses seemed just as interested as we were, but were more subtle in exhibiting any lustful thoughts - and more serious about lasting relationships. That seemed to keep most of the doctors, but not all, at arms length because most of us were married and were fathers.

I was watching a number three brunette - in Vietnam number one was perfect and number ten was terrible in all things, not just women - going into action. She had her hand on her target's arm and her face close to his, whispering. They often were seen together, and nothing of this sort was missed in our small, tight community. I wondered how long it would be before she left for her quarters, and how long, after a short and agonizing waiting period, it would take for him to casually meander that way, believing that no one had noticed. Of course, everyone would know. If he avoided the chief nurse on his circuitous route, we knew that within a few minutes they would be impetuously mouthing each other and screwing on her cot or on the floor in her small room.

"Major. Major Mayson." I heard nothing.

"Goddamn it, Pres, wake up you dumb son-of-a-bitch, the sun has cooked your brain," said DuBois.

"What the hell do you mean," I stumbled out of my trance and thoughts of naked flesh and orgasms.

"Sir," said a voice from behind, "We need you in x-ray, there's been a chopper crash."

"Oh shit, I'm sorry," I said as I came to reality slowly, "I'll be there in a few minutes." My x-ray technician headed back to the ER/X-Ray Quonset.

"See you guys later," I said as I rose stiffly, head buzzing, and black spots appearing before my eyes.

"Get your fuckin mind off the nurses, you've got work to do."

Cole Colequist, a young doctor just recently yanked out of his residency, was on ER duty.

"Hello, *Cole*. What's up?"

"A MACV chopper went down somewhere west of here full of brass. None of them are badly hurt, but I don't want to miss anything on their x-rays."

"Sure, I'll be glad to take a look. How many on the chopper?"

"Five. All full bird colonels. I've got lumbar spines on all of them and a few other exams. I don't see any fractures or anything else." We walked into my office. *Cole* was right, there were no acute fractures. One of the colonels had a defect in the pars interarticularis of his L-5 vertebra, but he knew it was there from previous x-rays so it was old and not related to the crash.

I noticed that one of the colonels was named Selleck. I went to the ER to see him. "Pete?" I ventured. It was Pete Selleck, West Point class of 1952. Pete had been a first

classman at West Point when I was a plebe. During the year we were there at the same time, he was a platoon leader in my company.

"I remember you," he said as he recognized me. "You were in L-2, but what are you doing here at this hospital?" He was distinctly perplexed by the caduceus on my collar.

"I went to medical school after I graduated and after spending three years in the infantry."

"Well I'll be damned, an infantry doctor, what will the Army think of next?"

"What happened today out there -- what the hell were five engineer colonels doing in the same chopper?" That much command power in a single, vulnerable helicopter was someone's blunder, and as a doctor I could get away with asking the embarrassing question.

"You're right. If we'd all been killed, it would have damn near knocked off the entire Engineer Chain of Command in Vietnam. We were on an inspection trip. I don't know yet if we went down because of mechanical failure or were shot down. The pilot did a good job autorotating, and we were lucky - lucky to escape capture and injury."

"Where did you go down? Did you crash somewhere in the Cong's territory?"

"Hell yes, probably, but to be honest, I don't really know. They control most of the countryside, and if we had been on the ground long, I'm afraid that they would have reached us. But another chopper came right in and lifted us out. Look, Preston, whatever you do, don't tell anyone that you saw me here. It's not that we were on any clandestine trip or anything like that, but if you did, it might eventually get back to my wife. I don't

want her to worry about us going down, especially now that none of us were hurt."

Cole came up to us. "Major, when ...."

"*Cole*, here in the hospital we're all doctors, so its Pres or Preston, O. K.?"

"Sure, Sir, in any case, when you get a minute, I need to talk to you."

"I'll be right there."

The five colonels departed in air-conditioned sedans and headed back to Saigon. Their starched fatigues and spit polished combat boots were hardly blemished from the plane crash. Even more incredible was the realization that high ranking colonels and generals were more killable in this war than in past wars. This fact was born out when the ranks of Americans killed was published at the end of the war.

I found *Cole* sitting at a small desk in the Personnel part of the Quonset complex.

"What did you want to talk to me about?"

"Well, it's hard for me to talk about it, but I really need some advice." We sat looking at each other. He was young, articulate, conscientious and, without question, a good doctor. Perhaps he was a little too much of an idealist and, because of this, more vulnerable than most of us. He might get deceived by a patient, friend, or more cynical older doctor down the road sometime, but that evening, I considered his idealism and sincerity to be an admirable.

I waited.

"It's *Sue*."

There was no question who he was talking about. Lieutenant *Susan Walker* was the wet dream of half the hospital - the male half. *Sue* was more than just a beautiful girl,

she was bewitching. Her total essence combined sensuality with an innocence expected from a small town sweetheart, and she made each of us fall in love with her by just talking to us. She was married to an attorney who practiced law in Los Angeles. *Sue* was open and honest; I doubted that she might be involved in a war time romance with a married doctor. Besides, there wasn't any grapevine gossip about her, so she must be clean. I thought that *Cole* was lusting after her. Hell, most of us had been through the same thing. The army should not have sent such an attraction to Vietnam.

"Look, *Cole*," I said remaining serious because he seemed so deeply genuine. "I understand. You miss your wife; we all miss our wives. It is one of the stinking things that a war does to people. If you aren't careful, the separation can break up families. It's easy to get excited over a woman like *Sue*. Hell," I went on changing course and attempting to break some of the tension that I sensed was building, "half of the hospital, the male half, would like to get in her pants. If you were home with your wife, you wouldn't feel this way."

"Pres, honestly, I tried to ignore her. I honestly did. Oh, I'd noticed her around, who wouldn't. But she was so popular, and I was new to the hospital and she has so many friends that I thought that I'd never even get to meet her. The first night I talked to her, I was gone. I didn't want to feel that way, but I truly couldn't help it."

"Look," I said interrupting. I tried to think of something meaningful to say, but before I could think of anything....

"We were both in the Officer's Club late. There was a large group of us there at first, and nobody even introduced us. Guess they thought we'd met before - everyone

comes here and then goes to another hospital or home so fast. Besides, in a war who gets introduced?"

I interrupted again, "Do you have any children?"

"Yes, two. I have a boy and a girl." There was a long pause, and I thought that I'd gotten him to realize the seriousness of the situation.

He started talking again. "I tried to get up and leave the club, but really didn't want to stop looking at her. We were all in a big circle, and I was sitting across from her. She laughed frequently and kept smiling at me. When the last guy left, *Cordell*, he was so bashed he could hardly walk, we kept talking. *Sue* told me that when she was in nursing training to be an Army nurse, she knew that she would be sent to Vietnam when she graduated."

"*Cole*, you don't have to tell me all this."

"I want to, maybe you can help us, or help me or whatever. I need to talk." Oh, God, I thought, what am I going to say. I can't call him a fool or tell him to grow up.

"She told me that she was raised in the Midwest, and that her father is a cattle rancher. She doesn't like ranching and always wanted to be a nurse. Now she's doing what she has dreamed of - caring for wounded soldiers - but she wasn't prepared for the horror and suffering. Pres, she almost started to cry. I could see she was depressed and hurting inside. She wasn't at all like the happy carefree *Sue* you see around the hospital."

"We all hurt inside, *Cole*. It's almost too much to take. You know that yourself. *Sue* is like all the other nurses, just trying to help the wounded and make it back home safely. In her case, to her husband."