

Bizarre, Fascinating, and Wacky World War I & II Secrets. New Legs For Christmas

Suddenly, a Japanese hand grenade sailed through the air and landed directly in the middle of our squad. I knew it could kill or injure several of my buddies, so I lunged at the grenade and fell on top of it. Immediately, the Jap grenade exploded, and the concussion knocked me unconscious. I am Marine Private Joseph Jacob "Jay" Nicholasky, and I woke up screaming with pain! "You sure are a bloody mess!" a first aid corpsman exclaimed. "At first, we thought you were dead, until you groaned. I guess falling with your steel helmet over the grenade saved your life. Your fighting days are over forever, you could lose both of your legs."

But I objected strongly, "I am just 17 years old, and this is my first day of battle." The medic replied, "It is your first day of battle and also your last day of battle. We must evacuate you immediately to the hospital ship, USS Hope."

I was full of morphine, so I could not feel too much pain. My stretcher was loaded onboard this small Higgins's landing craft, (LCM). The waves tossed this little boat around like a cork. We were in the middle of a violent wind storm, but time was critical. I had lost a lot of blood, and all feeling in both legs. And by the time we reached the hospital ship, the morphine

had worn off. I began to moan and groan and was fast going into shock. A rope was attached to my stretcher to hoist me aboard the USS Hope hospital ship. As I was lifted up into the

air above the deck, the hoist pulley slipped. I was dumped off of my stretcher and plunged about 15 feet down onto the steel deck.

The pain was so intense, I just lay there screaming. This is where this pretty little navy nurse, Mary Elizabeth "Liz" Magdalena, came into my life. She ran up and cradled me in her arms. As I was a bloody mess, her white nurse's uniform became red in various places. Then two Navy corpsmen came and began to wheel me into the ship's emergency room. Mary stayed with me, holding me down. Soon, I was in her care, crying like a baby, because of all of my pain.

"Please don't let them cut off my legs," I cried. "I will need them later!" Mary gave a knock out shot, and seconds later I blacked out completely. Two hours later, I slowly came to and

started looking for my legs. All I could find were two little stubs about six inches below my body.

"My whole life is over!" I screamed. "Both my legs are gone!"

However, again nurse Mary came and cradled me in her arms. "We will give you a new pair of legs, even better than the ones you lost!" she exclaimed. If she had not taken time to console me, I would probably have flipped over the edge! (lost my mind) What she did probably saved my life.

Two weeks later, I was sitting up in my hospital bed. I was down in the doldrums, feeling very sorry for myself. Mary came into

my room and locked the door. "No one else must see or know what I am going to show you," she said softly. Then she raised the bottom of her nurses uniform slowly and said, look closely at me!" My eyes widened with surprise as I looked at her legs! For little Mary Elizabeth Magdalena, my nurse, had two stainless steel legs!! She had lost both of her legs, when the Japs attacked and bombed the USS Hope hospital ship!

I already knew that I was falling madly in love with her. But this made up my mind completely. "Some day I will marry you," I murmured under breath.

From that time on, I saw things in a different light. My two legs that I had lost were indeed precious to me. But if I had not lost my legs, I would have never met Mary, the most precious person of my life. The Lord moves in mysterious ways.

My mind went back to the tiny island of Iwo Jima, only around 7.5 square miles in area. Viewed from the air, it resembled a pork chop, with the shank pointing southwest. The island held two air fields and a third was being constructed. They needed it to serve as a fighter escort service for our new very long range bombers, the large B-29 super fortresses. And also for an emergency landing

field for the B-29s.

Iwo Jima was also a major military base for Japan. Lieutenant General Tadami Kurbibayashi was in command of the island and said that he expected to die there, fighting the United States.

20,000 Japs did die there, but his intention was to make the conquest of the Iwo Jima so costly that we would not want to invade Japan's home waters. We will never surrender, but will fight to the last man.

Down under ground, were built barracks, hospitals, storage rooms for food, ammunition, and other supplies. There were miles and miles of tunnels connecting this vast network. Some warrior I am, I didn't last even one day!

Just then, Mary came into the room, and breathlessly announced, Joseph Jacob, stop feeling sorry for yourself... and marry me!! I could not believe my ears, I didn't know that she had any feelings of that kind. Oh, YES I shouted, I will marry you, Mary, just as soon as I can get some new legs. We grabbed each other and began rolling all over my bed. But alas our joy sure was short lived, for in came Miss Springfield. She was the Navy nurse supervisor, and she handed Mary a paper. This is your new assignment, you have just been transferred. You have just fifteen minutes to catch the next boat ashore. Needless to say, that was a happy



by Cecil Owen

and then sad day for both of us. We cried tears of joy, and tears of sad farewell. Now the time changes again, this December 24, Christmas Eve, 1945. Nurse Mary trudges wearily back to her room at the Naval hospital. Here I am, all alone, on Christmas Eve, she cried. Her feelings are at an all time low. However, as she nears her room she hears music. Mary opens her door, and what a surprise... There stands Joseph, on his new legs. He decorated a small palm tree for a Christmas tree. Candles are used for lights, and small candy hang from the branches. "Merry Christmas, Mary," Joseph exclaims. "Standing next to me is the base Chaplain. For you and I are going to be married tonight!"

Mary and Joseph both survived the war and have raised nine children. Both declined to have their picture taken and both of their last names have been altered, to protect their identity. Merry Christmas and Happy New year!

Sources:
A Special Valor by Richard Wheeler
Flags of our Fathers by James Bradley
Personal observations of the author -CLO



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