

BETHESDA NAVAL HOSPITAL 1971 PROJECT

PDF VERSION ~ 5-11-2026

WEBSITE: www.iconsoncotton.com/bethesda.php



National Naval Medical Center ~ Bethesda Maryland

Written by: Chaz Winkler

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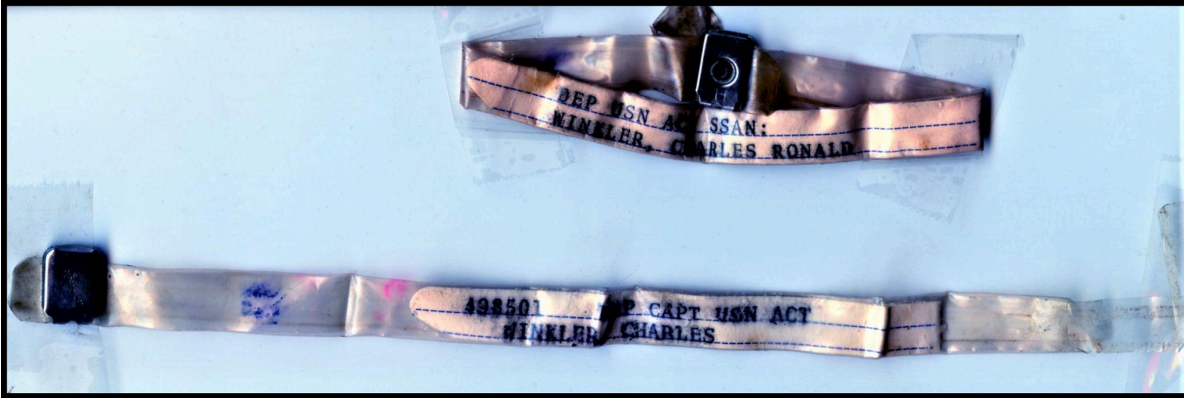
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My name is Chaz Winkler. This is a brief introduction to a concept for a true story movie about my experience as a dependent patient at Bethesda Naval Hospital when I was 16 years old. It is based on vivid memories I have of recovering from a serious injury I sustained in high school that led to my admittance to an orthopedic ward



The two bracelets I wore while I was at Bethesda Naval hospital in Bethesda, MD, from late December 1970 through early May 1971. I took the SAT exam and had my 17th Birthday while in the hospital.

BACKGROUND:

I was born on April 18, 1954, at Balboa Naval Hospital, San Diego, California.

I currently live in Nags Head, NC. (Current Website) [HERE](#)

My father graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy, class of 1948. He was a submariner and commanded the USS REDFISH from 1961 to 1963, then served as a squadron officer at the Ballast Point submarine base on Point Loma. He was then stationed in London, England, with the Military Sealift Command until 1970, when we returned stateside to Kensington, MD, that fall, where I attended Albert Einstein High School.

While working on the stage crew for the school's production of the play *OKLAHOMA*, I injured my foot after jumping down onto a catwalk above the stage and eventually wound up being admitted to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD.

The catwalk above the stage had a bolt sticking up through a bracket that punctured my foot, and it took almost 6 months to resolve the issue. A piece of my tennis shoe had lodged next to a bone in my foot, which caused a severe infection. This issue was worsened by an infection that had become entrenched in the hospitals' operating rooms due to the treatment of Marines wounded in Vietnam.

"During the Vietnam War, infections among soldiers treated at facilities like the Bethesda Naval Hospital were a significant challenge, though they differed notably from the multidrug-resistant outbreaks seen in more recent conflicts." [HERE](#)

The whole experience was like "MASH" meets "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest", and "Empire of the Sun", with me as the youngest patient among an all-military cast, most of whom had been wounded in Vietnam. I spent my time on two orthopedic wards during my stay, 3C & 5C.



The Iconic "Last Supper" scene

"Bold, timely, subversive, and above all funny, *M*A*S*H* remains a high point in Robert Altman's distinguished filmography." [HERE](#)

Most of the patients on the ward had injuries to their extremities, and were either ambulatory or in wheelchairs, as I was. Also important to understand is that almost all of them were alert and capable of most normal activities. They were only constrained by the nature and type of treatment of their wounds. Some were in plaster casts or in traction, which required their extremities to be kept elevated for long periods of time. Sedatives like Demerol were frequently administered after returning to the ward and prior to dressing changes of wounds.

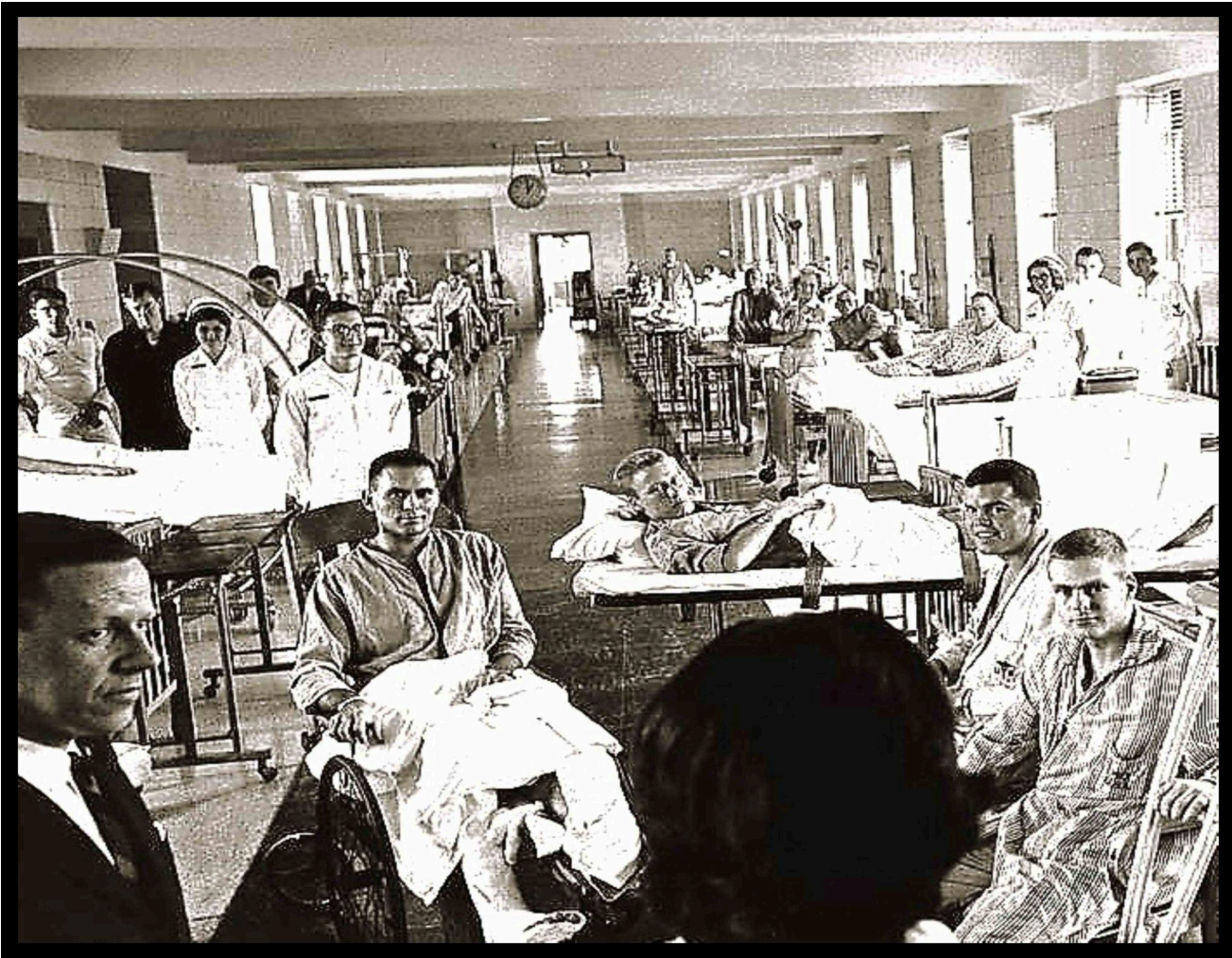
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“One of three films to sweep the “Big Five” at the Academy Awards—Best Actor, Best Actress, Best Director, Best Picture, and Best Screenplay—director Miloš Forman’s One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest is a powerful film deserving of its accolades. Based on Ken Kesey’s 1962 novel, the film takes place in a psychiatric hospital with a narrative that illuminates the institutional practices of such a facility, the intricacies of the human mind, in addition to critiquing behavioristic psychology and commending the individualist mentality.” [HERE](#)

It was a best of times/worst of times situation, culminating with me and roughly a half dozen or so Marines from orthopedic ward 3-C (and possibly 5-C) going to the MayDay Vietnam War Protests in Washington, D.C., in 1971. It is my understanding that some of the active military patients may have faced disciplinary consequences for leaving the hospital without permission.

While I have no definitive knowledge of any such discipline actually taking place, there were other times when it was discussed as being a possibility by active duty patients on the ward. These could range from drug and alcohol issues to being out of the ward without permission over night.



1965 picryl photo: Orthopedic ward exactly like the wards I was on. The entrance to the solarium is seen in the back where patients would gather to talk, play cards, read, or entertain visitors. It was well lit and had open views of the grounds.

The hospital staff consisted of military personnel ranging from young corpsmen to admirals, who occasionally came by during Grand Rounds on Fridays. We had access to all the areas in the hospital, including other wards, that were open to visitors as well as some that we discovered through exploration. My step-grandmother worked at the front desk on the ground floor of the tower, greeting visitors and giving directions. My mother had taken my brother and I there many times prior to my admittance so I was familiar with the layout of that area. I had also played many rounds of golf on the 9 hole course that wound its way around the grounds of the hospital. In the summers of 1968-69, my father would drop me off at the golf Pro Shop for the day on his way to work at the Naval Command Headquarters in Washington D. C.

Another privilege was use of the indoor basketball court that was, like the golf, available to dependents of military personnel. Those experiences gave me a feeling of confident familiarity with my surroundings that proved invaluable to my eventual bonding with the other patients on the ward.



Protesters gathered at Wisconsin Blvd. and N Street in Washington D. C. (Photo by P. Schmick.)

The movie would include my experiences and those of the wounded veterans during my 4 1/2 month stay, ranging from tragic to euphoric, a truly unique and almost singular real-life journey. Regarding the excursion we made into Washington D. C. to attend a Mayday 2071 Vietnam War protest, my research suggests there have been no full-length Hollywood feature films (scripted movies) specifically about the 1971 Mayday Vietnam War protests.

Lawrence Roberts' seminal 2020 book, "MayDay 1971" has caused historians to reexamine and reassess the importance of those events and to finally acknowledge them for the broad impact they had in real time. That presents the possibility of "weaving" my story and the MAYDAY 1971 story together in some way.

I am compiling a list of my experiences as they come back to me. They are brought to mind as I continue to do my research. In the same way, joining pertinent social media outlets and Facebook groups to gather remembrances from wounded Vietnam veterans and service members has also been helpful. That effort has left me with an understanding of how our veterans have struggled to access the proper medical and mental health care they deserve for decades. The movie could bring timely and productive recognition of this unforgivable predicament.

“For decades, military veterans have faced persistent and interrelated hardships, often centered around physical and mental health issues, challenges in transitioning to civilian life, and systemic difficulties in accessing benefits.” [HERE](#) & [HERE](#)

PROJECT UPDATE ~ 5-9-2026:

My initial research into the Mayday protests we attended in May of 1971 took me to **Lawrence Roberts’ “Mayday 1971: A White House at War, a Revolt in the Streets, and the Untold History of America's Biggest Mass Arrest”** (published 2020). His unheralded exploration provides definitive evidence regarding the importance of a brief but consequential period of American history.

“Award-winning investigative reporter Lawrence Roberts tells the story superbly from start to finish... With a talent for research and an eye for colorful detail, Mr. Roberts presents a lot of new and overlooked material... Mayday has been paid less attention than other protests of the period, and its significance overlooked. **Mr. Roberts’ first-rate book redresses that imbalance.”**

—Wall Street Journal [HERE](#)

(The "imbalance" this article refers to is the fact that while the Vietnam War era has been well documented, the significance of the 1971 Mayday protests—the largest mass arrests in U.S. history—has been largely overlooked or forgotten.)

After looking over several reviews, I decided to reach out to Roberts via email, hoping he might have some interest in my undertaking. I received a reply the same day:

On Wed, Apr 8, 2026 at 8:55 PM Lawrence Roberts wrote:

Chaz,

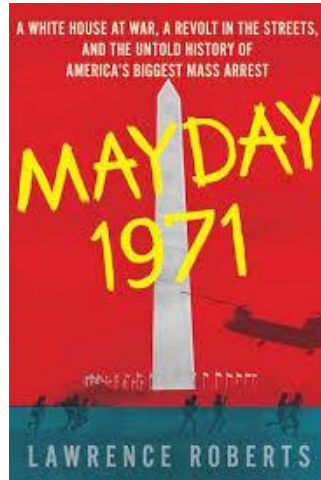
Very nice to hear from you. Your project sounds really interesting. You certainly landed in a unique place as a 16 year old in the spring of 1971!

I don't recall coming across your wheelchair contingent in my research for MAYDAY 1971. I went back today to search both the Washington Daily News and the Washington Post digital news archives for that week and didn't see any reference to that particular action. It certainly seems like the kind of thing that *would* have made it into the news, given that these were active duty guys in the middle of one of the most intense antiwar demonstrations of the times. Yet I don't find anything.

Perhaps someone took photos. The Post and Washington Star photo archives were collected years ago by the historical section of the DC Public Library downtown. They aren't digitized, so you'd have to travel there in person or send a surrogate to see if any unpublished photos or contact sheets of your group exist. It would be a long shot, for sure.

Were you downtown on the days of the arrests, or did the roundup happen after your visit?
Again, thanks for reaching out and best of luck with the project

Larry



**“Mayday 1971: A White House at War, a Revolt in the Streets,
and the Untold History of America's Biggest Mass Arrest”**

More about Roberts book, MAYDAY 1971:

Christian Science Monitor Book Review: July 30, 2020:

“This is a complex story with dozens of actors and events taking place simultaneously at different locations. Roberts effectively organizes the book by retelling the story through the eyes of several key participants. Readers get to know Jerry Vernon Wilson, the district's police chief; protest leaders Rennie Davis and David Dellinger; a special assistant to President Nixon named Egil “Bud” Krogh Jr.; an undercover police officer named John O’Connor, who was embedded with the Vietnam Veterans Against the War; and the heroic, hard-charging Barbara Bowman, who directed the Public Defender Service.

“The Mayday protest has largely faded from popular memory with the passage of time, but the legal cases that followed had a profound impact. Before the Mayday demonstrations, the district government regularly limited the size and location of protests. Those restrictions were swept away and the rights of citizens to express their views were increased.

Without the precedents set by the Mayday protests, events like the Million Man March and the annual Right to Life demonstrations could easily have been banned.

“Other resulting judicial decisions curtailed police authority to make mass arrests and affirmed the rights of demonstrators to receive fair warning before being arrested. Still another case gave individuals the right of action against federal officials for violations of their First Amendment rights of free speech and assembly.” [HERE](#)

MISCELLANEOUS SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

- **CONTACT: Charles R. Winkler**
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- **CAPTAIN C. WINKLER CAREER SUMMARY ~ 1964**

CORNELIS (n) WINKLER, JR.
 COMMANDER, U. S. NAVY

Commander Cornelis (n) Winkler, Jr., U. S. Navy, was born on November 21, 1924, in San Francisco, California. He is the son of Mrs. Cornelis Winkler, (Father deceased), of 18, 206 Daves Avenue, Los Gatos, California.

He entered the U. S. Naval Academy in 1944 and was graduated in 1947 with the class of 1948-A.

From July 1947 to September 1949 he served aboard the USS GENERAL W. A. MANN (AP-112). In September 1949, he was transferred to the USS ALBANY (CA-123) and served there until being assigned to the Submarine Officers Basic Course at New London, Connecticut, in January 1951.

Upon graduation from the Submarine Officers Basic Course he was ordered to the submarine USS CHARR (SS-328) where he served until June 1954.

In July 1954 he became a student in Mechanical Engineering at the U. S. Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey, California. After two years there, he was awarded a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering and was ordered to the submarine USS COBBLER (SS-344) for duty as the Operations Officer and later Executive Officer. In July 1957 he became Executive Officer of the USS MEDREGAL (SS-480).

In July 1959 he was ordered to the Office of Naval Research in Washington, D. C. for duty as Submarine Warfare Projects Officer.

In November of 1961, he attended the Prospective Commanding Officer's Course at the Headquarters of the Commander of the Pacific Fleet Submarine Force in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. He then took command of the USS REDFISH (AGSS-395) in December 1961, in San Diego, Calif.

From August 1963 to January 1964 he was a student at the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia.

Commander Winkler reported to the International Staff of the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT), in Norfolk, Virginia, on January 24, 1964, for duty as the Submarine Nuclear Plans Officer, in the Plans and Operations Division of the NATO command.

Commander Winkler is married to the former Miss Patricia Anne Sweeney, of 4740 Bradley Boulevard, Chevy Chase 15, Maryland. They have two children: Cornelis III, age 12, and Charles Ronald, age 9. They are residing at 4404 Hermitage Road, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

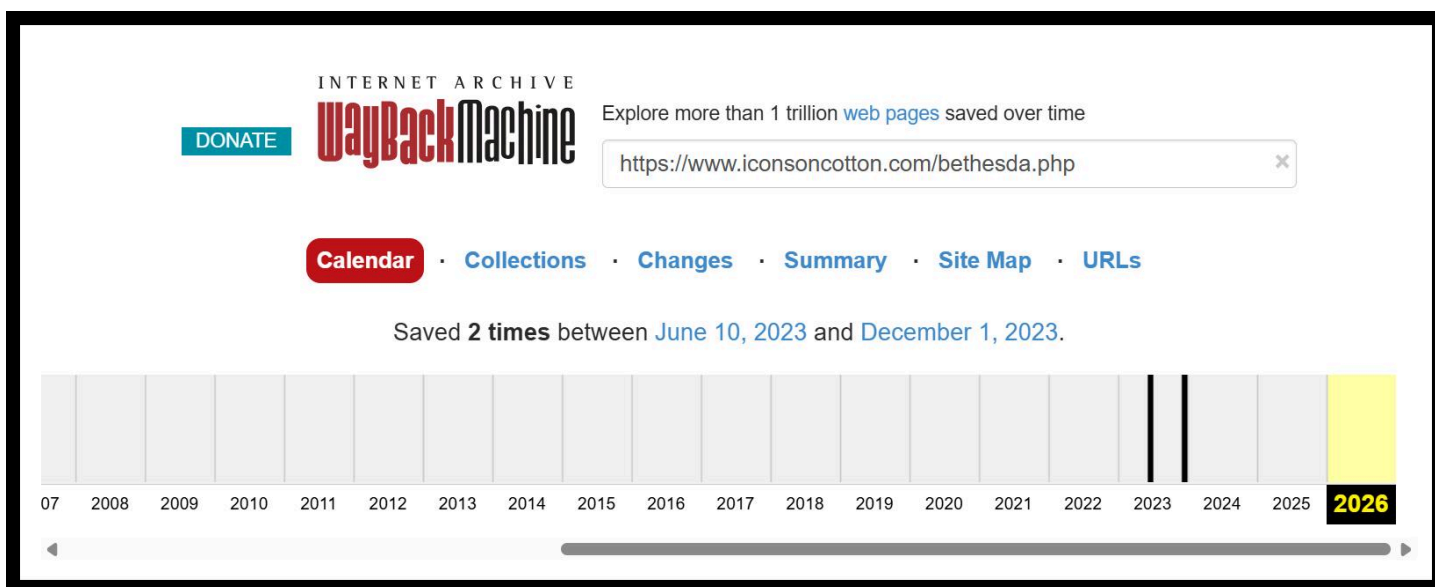
Sailing is listed as Commander Winkler's hobby. He says one of the most unusual events of his military career was the descent in Apra Harbor, Guam, in the bathyscaphe TRIESTE in June 1960 with Lieutenant Don Walsh, U. S. Navy.

PROMOTIONS

ENS	6 June 1947	U. S. Naval Academy	
LTJG	July 1950	USS ALBANY (CA-123)	
LT	July 1953	USS CHARR (SS-328)	
LCDR	July 1958	USS MEDREGAL (SS-480)	SACLANT PIC
CDR	July 1963	USS REDFISH (AGSS-395)	January 24, 1964

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- INTERNET ARCHIVE WEBSITE DATE TRACKING OF MY BETHESDA WEBSITE:



<https://www.iconsoncotton.com/bethesda.php>

Saved 2 times between [June 10, 2023](#) and [December 1, 2023](#).
