

# **BETHESDA NAVAL HOSPITAL 1971 PROJECT PAGELESS SYNOPSIS**

**PDF VERSION ~ 6-13-2026**

**WEBSITE:**

**[www.iconsoncotton.com/bethesda.php](http://www.iconsoncotton.com/bethesda.php)**



**National Naval Medical Center ~ Bethesda Maryland**

**Written by: Chaz Winkler**

**4008 South Virginia Dare Trail,**

**Post Office Drawer 3 ~ Nags Head, NC 27959**

**(252) 564-5317**

**[osobnc@gmail.com](mailto:osobnc@gmail.com)**

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My name is Chaz Winkler. This pageless document is a brief introduction to a concept for a true story book and 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.

### **BACKGROUND:**

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

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, served 18 months at NATO-SACLANT in Norfolk VA, then served as a squadron officer at the **Ballast Point Submarine Base, Point Loma**. He was then stationed in London, England, with the **Military Sea Transportation Service(MSTS)** until October, 1970, when we returned stateside to Kensington, MD, where I entered Albert Einstein High School's junior class

While working on the stage crew for the school's production of the play *OKLAHOMA*, I injured my foot after jumping 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, it took almost 6 months to resolve the issue. A piece of my tennis shoe(I still have that piece in the 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](#)**

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**1965 [picryl](#) photo: Orthopedic ward that looks exactly like the wards I was on, and is most probably one of the wards in C Wing. The entrance to the solarium is seen in the back center where patients would gather to talk, play cards, read, or entertain visitors. It was well lit and had open views of the grounds below.**

**[HERE](#)**

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

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 had plaster casts or were in traction, which required their extremities to be kept elevated for long periods of time. Sedatives such as Demerol were frequently administered after returning to the ward and prior to dressing changes of wounds.

It was a "best of times, worst of times" situation, culminating with me and roughly a half dozen or so Marines from orthopedic ward 5-C going to the MAYDAY Vietnam War Protests in Washington,

D.C., in early May, 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.

The hospital staff consisted of military personnel ranging from young corpsmen to admirals, who occasionally came by during Grand Rounds on Friday mornings. 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.

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.

I have compiled a list of my experiences and periodically add to it as they come back to me. They are brought to mind as I continue to do my research. In the same way, I am 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 a clearer understanding of how our veterans have lacked access to proper medical and mental health care from the Vietnam era, straight through to the present. The movie could potentially bring timely and productive recognition of this situation which is the result of the perpetual lack of adequate funding. This would need further consideration as the project moves forward.

(see website: [www.iconsoncotton.com/bethesda.php](http://www.iconsoncotton.com/bethesda.php))

***“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](#)***

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**Supporting Documents, Photographs, and Other Items of Interest:**

- **CONTACT:**

**Charles R. Winkler**  
**P.O. BOX 3 ~ 4008 SOUTH VIRGINIA DARE TRAIL**  
**NAGS HEAD, NC 27959**  
**252-564-5317**  
[OSOBNC@gmail.com](mailto:OSOBNC@gmail.com)

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**(These websites contain ongoing research I am conducting and present more thoughts about options for the direction the film could potentially take.)**

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“In October 1965, President Lyndon B Johnson and First Lady Lady Bird Johnson conducted an official visit to the Bethesda Naval Hospital in Maryland. This facility, historically critical for treating

service members, served as a primary site for the medical rehabilitation of troops returning from the escalating Vietnam War. The President's presence in the wards was a deliberate exercise in executive visibility, intended to bolster morale among the wounded and demonstrate federal commitment to military personnel.” [HERE](#)



*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](#)



*“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](#)*

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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 PIO      |
| CDR  | July 1963   | USS REDFISH (AGSS-395) | January 24, 1964 |
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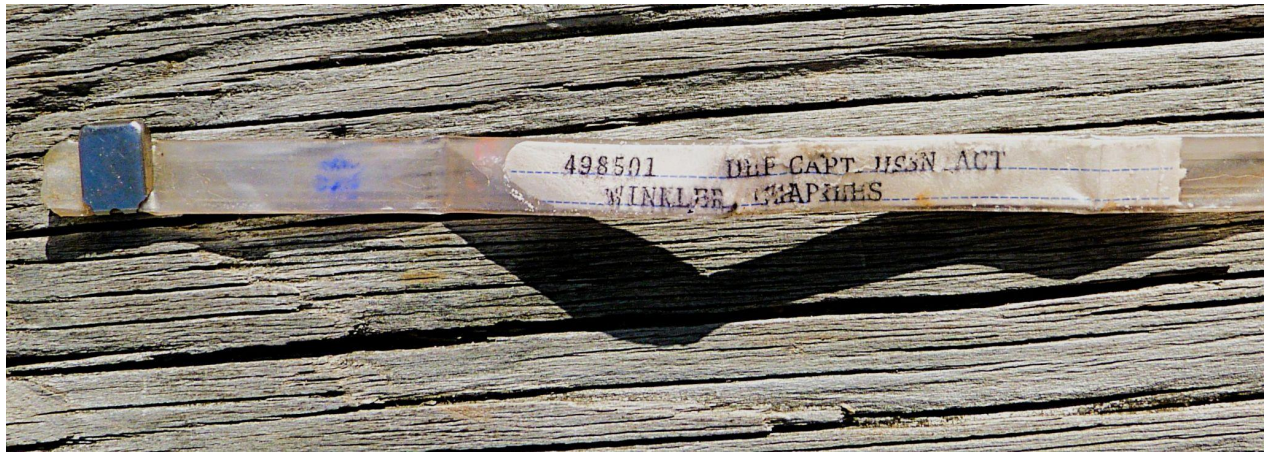
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The two bracelets I wore while I was at Bethesda Naval hospital in Bethesda, MD, from late December 1970 through early May 1971. Above is the one from my time Ward 3-C, and below is the one from Ward 5 -C. I took the SAT exam and had my 17th Birthday while in the hospital.



1968 scorecard from the old Bethesda Naval Hospital golf course.