

MY FARM BOY VIET NAM HERO

“Pete” Hays, age 21, from Nebraska, on 23 January, 1968, was shot nine times with a AK-47 rifles. His unit was told he died on the helicopter that brought him to the 18th Mash Hospital at LaiKhe. But he survived! From the helicopter he was rushed to the operating room where he was resuscitated. Chest tubes were placed to expand collapsed lungs. His shattered right kidney, colon, gallbladder, and a piece of his liver were removed. A torn open duodenum was repaired. The leaking bile, gastric and pancreatic juice had destroyed some of his skin, fat and muscle. I had to leave the muscle and skin open. Then I repaired a torn brachial artery near his right armpit. Several wounds were debrided and left open. He made a quick recovery. I found out he lived a few miles from my parents in Nebraska. (My father, John Riley, was pastor of the Free Methodist in Beaver City, Nebraska.) When Pete reached Fitzsimmon’s Army Hospital in Denver, he called his parents and told them about me and my parents. Imagine my parents’ surprise when strangers came to their door and told them their son had saved Pete’s life. I returned from Viet Nam in February, 1968. I had left my wife Martha and our three daughters in San Pedro, California. We drove to Nebraska to visit my parents. While there, we visited Pete’s parents on their farm. With tears in their eyes, they thanked me for saving Pete’s life. They had already lost a five year old son who was killed in a tractor accident. Later, I stopped by to see Pete while he was recovering at home. I took pictures of him and his scars. (I ALSO still have some pictures I have pictures taken in the operating room. At first, Pete wanted to be a Vet, but he loved farming too much. In 2003, I visited him on his farm just north of Goodland, Kansas. He was married to Connie, and was raising quarter horses. He also taught “Dudes” how to use a Lasso! His daughter, Jessica, is a real estate agent and a horse trainer. She is married and has a young son, Jaxon, and does Barrel Horse racing. His son, Nathan, was a farrier. Pete’s army buddies thought he was dead. When he went to visit one of them in Texas, the man fainted, thinking he was seeing a ghost!

I speak on the phone to Pete and Connie. Pete is now being treated for a brain tumor thought to be due to his exposure to Agent Orange, so please pray for him and his family. Ironically, Pete was born on Veterans’ Day, 1947. A few years ago, Pete and Connie lost their son, Nathan.

UPDATE: AUGUST 9, 2017. Today, Connie Hays called to inform that “Pete” died on MY 2, 2017. He was buried with the Ashes of his Son, Nathan, near Salina, Kansas. He leaves his wife Connie, a daughter Jessica, and a grandson Jaxon.

Pete was a farm boy, who gave his all for his country. In the Hospital in Viet Nam, and ever since, I have not heard him ever bragging or complaining about his injuries. He did not consider himself a hero. BUT, HE IS A REAL HERO! *(see pictures on next page)*

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This is Pete's grandson, Jaxon, dressed as the Lone Ranger for Halloween.

Below is Jessica with her barrel racing award.

