

U. S. S. GRIDLEY (DLG-21)

FPO SAN FRANCISCO 96601

10 January 1967

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RPL/fld

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Duggan:

The most difficult task any physician undertakes is the counseling of loved ones who have suffered a great loss. Words are but a pittance in comparison to the sincere feeling of sympathy we experience in your behalf.

As William's parents I feel you should know certain happenings surrounding this tragedy which might otherwise remain anonymous.

As the Medical Officer aboard USS GRIDLEY I first received word of the possibility of injury aboard the UH-2 helicopter shortly after 6:30 PM on the 6th of January. Expecting the worst, so as not to be unprepared, I summoned my Corpsmen to stand-by with all available resources. We did not know at this time that anyone aboard had been injured, but as the crippled helicopter approached the ship the possibility of severe injury aboard became more apparent.

Before the rotors had stopped I entered the craft and discovered that both William and the pilot, LCDR Joseph Brecka, were injured.

It was immediately ascertained that William was severely injured in the chest. He was evacuated to our operating room within two minutes. What took place in the following eighty minutes can best be described as the most sympathetic, efficient, and heroic effort to save a man's life that I as a physician have ever witnessed.

We simply asked for emergency blood donors and within minutes 75 or more of the GRIDLEY crew were standing in line with sleeves rolled up.

From the start, I suppose, William's wounds were fatal, but the thought of futility had never crossed a single mind during any one of those eighty minutes. We never gave up hope for an instant.

Having been exposed to numerous emergencies in large expensive hospitals it is difficult for me to be impressed. However, not only was I impressed by the efficiency and efforts of my fine corpsmen, but by the willingness and exemplary assistance of people who had no background in medicine whatsoever. I can safely say that William could not have received better treatment anywhere in the world when the amount of vast co-operative effort is considered.

When William reached the ship he had already lost a considerable quantity of blood. The extent of wounds are as yet undetermined, but it was definitely established that the left lung was the major area of damage, and the heart could conceivably have been hit.