

INTO THE DRAGONS JAWS

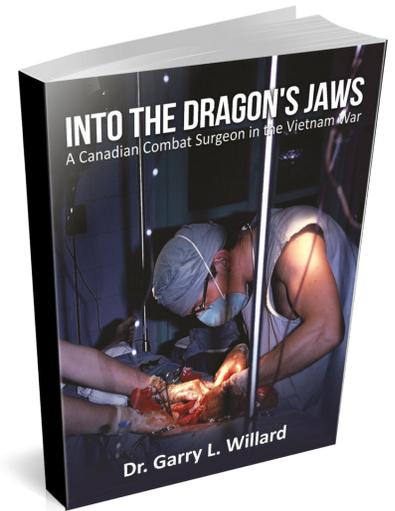
A CANADIAN COMBAT SURGEON IN THE VIETNAM WAR

DR. GARRY L. WILLARD

"Into The Dragon's Jaws" details the exciting adventures and experiences of a young Canadian Red Cross combat casualty surgeon who volunteered to assist Vietnamese-war wounded following the Tet Offensive in South Vietnam in 1968.

The intensity and drama of this book are enhanced by many photographs illustrating surgical care in oft-times dangerous and volatile circumstances. Dr. Willard describes his role as a trauma surgeon candidly. Some stories are heartwarming, others heartbreaking. Such is the pathos of war.

You will come away with an intimate perspective of the Vietnam War, as seen through his eyes at the height of the conflict.



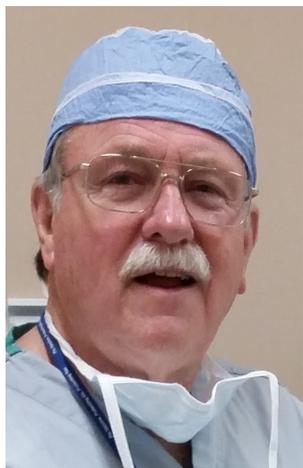
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DR. WILLARD started his career as a graduate from Queens University in Kingston. He is currently an Assistant Surgeon at Brampton Civic Hospital, part of The William Osler Health System of the Greater Toronto Area. During his 30 years as a General, Thoracic, Vascular and Trauma Surgeon at Etobicoke General Hospital in Toronto, he served as Chief of Surgery and subsequently was a McMaster University Assistant Professor of Clinical Surgery

He lives on a rural property northwest of Toronto near Loretto with his wife Heather, his daughter Lisa, his autistic son Christopher, variously with his stepchildren Melissa and Matthew, and Scout, the last of a loyal trio of Yellow Labradors.



A LOOK INSIDE



AUTHOR'S NOTE

Some years ago, I began writing a series of short stories about my combat casualty surgery experiences in South Vietnam 1968 and adventures in Southeast Asia with my loyal friend and medical school classmate, Dr. Ken J. Bradley aka Brad. These anecdotes could well have remained a simple diary to be shared with family and friends. But they, my medical school classmates, and surgical colleagues encouraged me to write a complete memoir.

In fact, while still in Vietnam, I asked that letters home be kept safe, should I ever consider writing a book! There was no lack of material as I could readily recall events and there were typed copies of those letters waiting for me on return. In addition, I had kept a detailed surgical and combat journal in country supported by 35mm Kodak slides, and Super 8 movie footage. Subsequently an extensive Vietnam War library, including many books and collections of newspaper, magazine and journal articles was developed, detailing Vietnam's evolving history.

Over the many years since Vietnam, the stories of experiences there have been told and retold keeping them fresh. In the early years there were many reminiscences with Brad and our wives. Sometimes, the anecdotes were recanted over an OR table or in a Hospital Surgical Lounge. The stories even added spice to the banter in hockey dressing rooms playing with the Etobicoke Generals and the Vaughan Bulldogs, in the NHL (Nobleton Hockey League) and with the Alliston Seniors. And interesting they seemed to many alumni attending Queen's Meds'63 and Fort Henry Guard Reunions in Kingston.

Illustrated lectures have included presentations to Toronto University, Queen's University, Canadian Club, Empire Club, Port Credit Probus, Toronto Academy of Medicine, General Rohmer Air Force Cadet Squadron, Headwaters Health Care, and several Remembrance Day High School audiences. The most memorable event was a major seminar prepared in 2002 for the First Canadian Field Hospital Battalion which was about to be deployed to Afghanistan. They had come down from Canadian Forces Base Petawawa to CFB Borden for military exercises including a complete set up of their mobile facilities. This was our Canadian version of MASH!

Why publish now? It has taken many years for both Americans and Vietnamese to heal their wounds and the War (The Vietnam War to the Americans and The American War to the Vietnamese) no longer strikes like lightning into their souls, In earlier times, especially in the States, when the nation was polarized for and against the war, anger could pour out with even the slightest reference to the conflict. Returning American veterans were vilified and spat upon. Nowadays their service is recognized. This is a time of acceptance. The reception of the recent TV film series "The Vietnam War" by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick is a good example. Mark Bowden's book "Hue 1968" revealed that the Tet Offensive was truly the turning point of the war. That his book, published in 2018, was a New York Times best seller suggests a watershed in America's self-reflection and social attitudinal change.

Why the title? I chose "Into The Dragon's Jaws" to denote the inherent danger and savagery of war. The dragon, of course, is iconic of Vietnam and Southeast Asia. As well, the geographical shape of Vietnam appears to be that of a long and sinuous dragon. The Dragon was selected as a motif for the spine of the book. Take a look at the top of the map and see it taking a bite out of Laos!

