

AM I DYING FROM AN INJURY RECEIVED 79 YEARS AGO?

By Bob Pocklington

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I will let you decide and just present the "facts" as I remember them. Dates and time are meaningless; I was born in 1925 so I was about seven when our Little Red Wagon did me in. It was a marvelous toy and used in a hundred ways for small chores and a lots of fun. But like most kid's toys it suffered a good amount of abuse and one day the rear wheel undercarriage collapsed and rendered it useless. But only until the friend next door removed the front wheels and now we had a sled. Sammy Smith was a big kid and inexhaustible, he would pull me and my kid brother around the yard making sharp curves until he spilled us, it was great fun and little harm done except the usual skinned knees and elbows. Then one day the rim around the wagon peeled off like a banana skin.

The rim being gone added an element of danger because the rider had nothing to hang on to unless knuckles were risked to maintain stability. Putting fingers under the sheet where steel met gravel was inadvisable, in fact, advised against. So Sam had to trade twisting turns for speed and the malice in his heart made that easy for him, not exactly sadistic but close. Sammy needed to burn off energy and we wore our father's work gloves, a compromise but Sammy would soon discover that the wagon's tongue was breaking off; it did and we spent the balance of that day looking for a solution. We should have junked the wagon's remains and just remember the fun we had with it but again Sam saved the day when he stumbled on a piece of stout rope.

Remember that I was but 7 years old when Sam tied the rope to the steel bottom. Unfortunately all around the edge of the hole where the tongue had been was jagged steel pointing upwards. Right, when Sam pulled me down into a ditch the steel wagon bottom stopped but my body didn't and I felt a sharp pain as the metal pierced the flesh where foot and ankle met. Ignorance was not bliss as panic took over and I ran tearing my foot open to the toes, screaming loud enough to get the attention of two men working nearby. One of them held me down while the other made a few rough stitches to try to stop the bleeding. The local doctor deemed their repair job good enough.

Eleven years later I was in the middle of the Rhine River. It was March 25, 1945, just

43 days before the end of the WWII. Our unit was under fire from enemy artillery on the shore and I took a few hits on the left leg. One piece of shrapnel went through the boot and lodged between those same two toes. I guess there was something unlucky about my left foot.

After months of pain and more to come, I am now minus the two biggest toes of that foot. My cardiologist and vascular surgeon tell me it was 86 years' worth of tryglicerides that has clogged my arteries – but I think it's more exciting to say it was those two injuries. Either way, I am in awe of my physicians' knowledge and skill, and the patience and diligence of the **Sentara Rehab staff**, who worked hard to put me back on my own 1.5 feet.