

A Five Part Miracle

by S/Sgt. Graham E. WALTON

In the early evening of January 7, 1975, at Regina, Saskatchewan, George Maveal slipped, fell and struck his head on a 30-inch high brick wall. Through the sub-zero temperature of that night he lay unconscious and bleeding, remaining undiscovered until sometime the next day.

A neighbour out walking her dog found him lying in a pool of blood. Because she could see no visible sign of life, her first reaction was to think George had been robbed and murdered. She called the police, who, after checking the body, removed it to the hospital for examination.

Preliminary examination revealed the rectal temperature of the body to be 26°F. The body was placed in a thermo reactor to raise the temperature. Various life support systems were connected. Two specialists worked on George for one and three quarter hours, attempting to stimulate a heartbeat with an electric shock apparatus.

The specialists were so certain George was dead, they gave instructions his wife should be called to come and identify the body. Two interns were sent for to come and disconnect the equipment and remove the body to the morgue. But then, a miracle happened. A heartbeat was detected. George was alive, even though he had been completely frozen.

He was, however, still in a deep coma. The doctors explained to his wife that he was technically alive, but the artificially-induced heartbeat could not be guaranteed. It might continue for hours, days, weeks or even months, then suddenly stop. Even if it did continue, there was no guarantee he would regain consciousness. If he became conscious, he would probably be a vegetable, because of the irreparable brain damage caused by lack of oxygen.



Ex-Cst. George Maveal as he is today.

George was placed in intensive care. Then he regained consciousness; the second part of the miracle. He was able to think and converse with no apparent brain damage; the third part of the miracle.

The specialist then told George he was faced with one of two possibilities if he wanted to continue living. Either all extremities of all limbs would have to be immediately amputated in order to forestall gangrene, or he could endure a great deal of pain for a few weeks without pain-killing drugs. His body would soon enough indicate which areas would have to be amputated and which had recovered. It seems that the human body is a wonderful machine and can repair itself to a certain degree.

The fourth part of the miracle: only his fingers and thumbs required amputation. George's right foot remained intact and only part of his left foot had to be amputated. George experienced a number of difficulties during this part of his recovery.