

burned for calculations of the need for fluid replacement, and sent the patients to the recovery room. From there, they would be sent to the Plastic Surgery unit. During the first week of the war, skin grafts were never performed on a patient's first trip to the OR because new casualties were always arriving. We often operated for twelve to twenty-four hours without pause, then made rounds, then slept until we heard the helicopters arriving with new casualties.

After about ten days, we had more time to do reconstructive surgery on our patients. We mostly used mesh grafts because the burns were very extensive, leaving too few donor sites available for complete coverage. Mesh grafting allowed us to use a small donor site for a graft that could cover a large burn site. While these grafts did not result in good cosmetic appearance, they covered the burn sites quickly, preventing further loss of fluid. These were lengthy, bloody procedures, tiring to perform. We usually had two or three sessions each day if new casualties were not brought in.



### A short war . . . this time

By the end of the first week, Israel was losing the war. Supplies were dwindling and things looked very bad. One morning, looking out of my dormitory room towards Ben Gurion Airport, I saw an American Galaxy jet, loaded with tanks and war materiel. Five minutes later, another Galaxy landed; they continued to arrive for another two days. Russia was supporting the Arab States and America was supporting Israel. Everyone in Israel was elated and the war turned in Israel's favor.

Towards the end of my sixteen days, after a truce was brokered and no new casualties arrived, I felt that I should give one of my partners the opportunity to volunteer in Israel and went to say good-bye to my patients. They asked me to remember them and to take pictures of some of them, as a memento of the difficult days that we shared. When I arrived at Ben Gurion Airport to fly back to New York, all I saw were American Galaxy jets and hospital planes. I met again some of the young men who had been on my flight to Israel. Not everyone was returning. "You remember the heavy guy near the window? He was killed at the Suez Canal." "The red headed skinny guy—he is still in the hospital." Others not returning were kept in their units for months; on their return to the United States, many had missed their schooling or lost their jobs.

Living through a war becomes an unforgettable part of your being. Having a cup of coffee at midnight on a surgical ward, hearing a twenty-year-old soldier crying out, "Imma" ("mother")—that is a voice that lives with you forever.

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### Seaward

fresh upon the breakers  
oh my heart  
to seaward!  
                                to what end  
what brink  
the savaged will in tow?  
  
oh  
how  
    by luck  
                        by choice  
                                by fate  
  
the brine and buffeting of your  
harbour eyes  
  
awoke my heart  
  
to seaward!  
                                to what raucous end  
what dancing brink  
the grape-hued breakers buoy  
our binding grace!

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**Storm over Sava Harbor, Fiji.** © Jack Fields/CORBIS.