

Even a medic can't save everyone

Robert: When you going to tech school in the service, you're practicing on dummies all the time, plastic dummies. You give, you show em how to do sucking chest hole wounds, CPR, whatever, and you go through the manuals and it's all in a book. But when you deal with a live person, a person who is breathing, whose limbs have been blown off, whose body 95% of their body's been burned from jet fuel or shrapnel wounds where some small fragments of a bomb has blown whole pieces of their body off and the person is in pain or their condition is so bad that in less than 24 hours that we we're betting who was gonna be dead. That to me was one of the most eye opening experience.

And the first night that I was there and I had already had a patient and we had a unit which was called the holdover unit, all the patients who would not be stabilized we had to see if they were gonna be alive the next morning. So during our eight hour shift, we would make bets to who would be dead or who'd be alive. And most of those patients were stabilized with morphine so they didn't have no pain, some of em were barely conscious, some of em couldn't even talk. But at the same time when we did their vital signs most times if you got a small pulse or you felt the air, you knew they was still alive.

I think the most shocking thing to me was to come back, I'll never forget it, in one of my shifts two died. And that's what made me realize that war can kill you or you can be forever changed which I realized then, I thought then of course I was gonna die. And that made me realize as a medic that I couldn't save people which is what we'd been trained for, all I could do was help stabilize em.



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