

TRUE GRIT: A Life of Renewed Mobility

The power and the glory have gone, and what's left of war is the ugliness and pain.

The drama lies no longer in the strategies of battle but rather in the miracles of modern-day rehabilitation. Soldiers severely wounded in the service of the military can now be aided to function remarkably well in the service of everyday civilian life.

Even the incredible flash six-day war between Israel and its neighbors in June, 1967 had its inevitable list of casualties and wounded. Isashar Kaufman, a 21 year old Israeli paratrooper who had already completed his tour of duty in the army but who returned to action because of the emergency crisis, was among the critically injured.

Blown up by a landmine and shot from an enemy tank, Isashar was flown by helicopter to a hospital in Tel Aviv where he lay unconscious for three weeks,



Dr. Maurycy Silber demonstrates Isashar Kaufman's new prosthesis.

awaking to find himself minus his left arm and right leg. His right ear lobe had been completely resected and his left leg fractured in seven places.

In time the patient was fitted with upper and lower prostheses but the artificial leg caused Isashar Kaufman discomfort. The Israeli Embassy in New York telephoned Dr. Maurycy Silber, physiatrist in the Dept. of Rehabilitation Medicine here at Sinai, and asked if he would take on this patient. Dr. Silber, well-known in Israel for his rehabilitation work on other war victims during his visits to that country, readily accepted the challenge. Soon Mr. Kaufman arrived in Baltimore, with the physical assistance of an uncle from Toronto and the financial assistance of the Israeli Ministry of Defense.

By means of careful examinations, repeated fittings and frequent revisions and adaptations, a new prosthesis was prescribed by Dr. Silber and manufactured under the personal supervision of Martin D. Massey, prosthetist of the Hanger Company. The result was a leg which allows the patient to walk with ease and without pain.

"This artificial leg is unique in Baltimore," said physiatrist Silber. "The old prosthesis was ruining the thigh muscles and in time would have permanently immobilized any part of that leg." What Dr. Silber did was to apply a leg used for above-the-knee amputees to Mr. Kaufman's leg which was lost below the knee.

The results proved exciting for doctor and patient. Isashar Kaufman returned to Israel where he is enrolled as a fulltime student at the Technion engineering school in Haifa, walking faster, better and more painlessly than any times since his injury. "He has tremendous will power," said Dr. Silber, "and soon he will be able to run, and even dance if he should want to."

In a letter of thanks which Dr. Silber received from Israel shortly after his return, Mr. Kaufman wrote that not only was his newly fitted leg offering him a life of renewed mobility but that his good right leg, which previously had to carry the entire weight of the body, had finally ceased to ache.

"This is the first week since June, 1967 that I have no pain," he wrote.

Dr. Silber who maintains contact with Mr. Kaufman, has another major benefit in store for him. An

electronic arm that will allow infinite flexibility and is still in the experimental stage, will replace his present conventional artificial arm just as soon as it is available on the market.

In August of next year, Dr. Silber will see Isashar Kaufman again. It will be his third visit to Israel since the war of 1967 and on each of these visits, taken on personal vacation time, Dr. Silber tries to assist in the rehabilitation of as many war victims as time permits. But it is impossible for him to accomplish all that needs to be done in the limitations of his short stay. "I personally know of 30 young men who probably need help badly," said Dr. Silber, who agreed that by now the number had possibly grown even more. The help they seek is of a similar nature to that rendered to Isashar Kaufman, the money and the expertise, so that they may rejoin the community as healthy and active members of their society.



You'd never know he was an amputee, to see Isashar Kaufman walk away after treatment at Sinai.