

## **Clean Bite™**

### **The Story:**

Clean Bite™, and its design comes from my serving as an Army Medic on an amputee ward at Walson Army Hospital during the Vietnam era. As a college sophomore, I enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserves, (361<sup>st</sup> Evacuation Hospital), and subsequently was trained as a medic. Shortly after returning from active duty, I was assigned to do my weekend drills at Walson Army Hospital, Fort Dix, NJ, and there I reported to work on an amputee ward.

My duties entailed doing whatever was required from taking vital signs, wound care, bathing, addressing bodily functions, feeding when necessary, etc. Curiously however, the brushing of our patient's teeth was not a priority. During this same time period I was traveling back from St. Louis by car, and all I wanted to do was brush my teeth. It was not until then that my thoughts shifted to those soldiers who no longer had this ability, and that the thought of their possible discomfort had never even crossed my mind, because their only remedy would have been to ask a medic to do it for them.

Literally within seconds, almost all that embodies Clean Bite™ came into my mind's eye. There were complexities that needed to be thought-out, with the biggest being that it needed to be consumed not spit out, but none the less the seed was planted. What stuck was the conscious awareness that Clean Bite™ (what I then called a Dent-Chew Brush), at some point needed to become a reality.

What followed within a short time was something that shook my core, then, and continues to do so to this very day. Reporting for duty one weekend the head nurse informed me that I would have only one patient to care for that weekend, and that he was behind a curtained wall that she pointed to. What I encountered was a young soldier who over that weekend would change my life forever. He was young, even younger than me, and the war had taken all of his limbs at the hips and shoulders.

He had a blank stare that was catatonic, and I became robotic. I did all that I was trained to do without withdraw or hesitation, but what went through my mind was that I was first a medic, and I wasn't sure if he was thankful that a medic had saved his life. There was nothing I could think of that I could speak, without reluctance. Even "good morning" seemed unwarranted, and telling him my name, well, why would he even care.

When the weekend came to an end, what I knew, and could never discuss or acknowledge was that my humanity failed miserably, not as a medic, but as a person, because I was unable to utter a word, simply, there were just no words to be spoken. I never saw him again, nor did I ever speak of him to anyone until about three years ago.

Three years ago I was five years into doing all I could do to bring Clean Bite™ to fruition, and candidly was on the brink of quitting. My sister, a retired Navy Nurse and Vietnam Veteran, sent me an email that she thought I would find of interest. It began with the picture of a light haired, blue eyed sailor in his dress whites, and there was no text. The pictures continued to include his girlfriend (whom he later married), and then pictures while deployed and then in a hospital bed.

He had suffered the same injuries I saw four decades before, the emotion that erupted caused me to cry uncontrollably. All the shame and personal disappointment of forty years had come to the surface, without reprieve. The young sailor's name is Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Taylor Morris. I contacted him by email through his girlfriend Danielle Kelly, and told him who I was and what I was doing. It was Taylor Morris and his example that made it clear that quitting was not an option. Last month I asked him if I could publish this account using his name, his response; "Sounds, great." He and the service men and women like him have as much to do with Clean Bite™ as I do.

My sincerest thanks to Taylor, my sister, my daughter Catherine, and all the other men, and women who have ever worn a uniform of our country's Armed Services, for their dedication and sacrifice in protecting our Freedoms.

With Great Appreciation,

John H. Gallagher, Jr.  
Managing Member  
Dent-Chew Brush, LLC