

CASE 1

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This 27-year-old American Soldier was found dead in bed near Pleiku, Viet Nam. The only available history indicated that he seemed to be well before going to bed on 20 April 1966. He was found dead in bed the following morning. The examining physician noted that he was "yellow as a pumpkin."

Autopsy revealed marked yellowish discoloration of the skin and sclera. The right lung weighed 900 gm., left 850 gm. Both lungs were hyperemic. The heart weight 250 gm. with no abnormalities. The spleen weighed 850 gm. and was reddish-brown in color. The liver weighed 2100 gm. with a tan-brown color. The kidneys weighed 150 gm. each and were not remarkable. The brain weighed 1500 gm. and was slightly congested. Examination of the blood 33 hours postmortem revealed total serum bilirubin 8.5 mg%, direct acting bilirubin 3.5mg%. Wright and Romanowsky stained smears of cardiac blood demonstrated many chromatin-like dots and cytoplasmic rings compatible with plasmodium falciparum malaria.

Stain: Hematoxylin and eosin section of cerebral cortex.

Points for discussion: 1) Diagnosis
2) Reason for rapid demise.