One of Emanuel Hospital's Life Flight helicopters took Ryan across state lines to safety. Cathy Ramey

Van Camp's wife, Teri, a former Sacred Heart nurse who resigned in 1987 over an attempt by hospital officials to starve patients and who had become intimately involved by this time, noted that even one more day off the dialysis machine could have killed Ryan, or at least greatly compounded the injuries already caused by what the husband called "medical assault."

Grudgingly, the hospital continued the treatment, but made it apparent that little Ryan was unwelcome and increased pressure on the parents to "pull the plug."

The search for another hospital continued, as did the roadblocks erected by the Sacred Heart staff, who admitted under oath that they only sent "selected records" on the infant's condition to inquiring hospitals.

"Sacred Heart was sabotaging placement," noted Teri Van Camp who was the one who discovered the hospital's attempt to "pull the plug" on Ryan in their records when the hospital denied the attempt.

Finally, on December 12, a Portland hospital, Legacy Emanuel Children's Hospital, agreed to take Ryan in from the cold atmosphere at Sacred Heart.

Dr. Randall D. Jenkins, director of pediatric nephrology at Emanuel, had read about the case in the Portland *Oregonian* and, confident that he could keep Ryan alive, called Sacred Heart in Spokane.

"I think this child can live," said Jenkins. "From what I hear this is not a hopeless case."

Soon afterwards, Ryan, in a tube-strewn incubator, was placed aboard a helicopter on the roof of Sacred Heart for his flight — in both senses of the word — to Emanuel. It was reminiscent of an escape from death by his father 21 years earlier. Nghia Nguyen, who was born Vietnamese, was aboard the last helicopter to leave the roof of the American embassy in Saigon when America withdrew from Vietnam in 1973.

So, Ryan fled across state lines to safety.

Emanuel's staff, distinctly different from that at Sacred Heart, was ready to help Ryan. It soon became apparent to them that Ryan's condition

Nurse Lynn Morris-Dick of Emanuel Children's Hospital looks after 6-week-old Ryan Nguyen, who was transferred to Portland from Spokane.

Former Sacred Heart employee exposes questionable "ethicist"

Teri Van Camp was once a registered nurse at Sacred Heart Hospital in Spokane. She enjoyed her work. But in 1987, when she returned from a vacation, she found a "no code" order on Gilbert, a 79-year-old diabetic who had just had his second leg amputated.

"No code," up to this point, had meant that a patient would not be recuscitated if their heart or lungs failed. But, unknown to the staff, Dr. Johnny Cox, the ethicist at the hospital, had changed the meaning of "no code" to include stopping food, water, and antibiotics.

"Johnny Cox is a soft-spoken, bearded, intellectual person cloaked behind the Catholic Church," said Van camp. "He spouts the traditional Catholic line to a point, but suddenly makes a 90-degree turn.. He refers to cases where the 'burden' of life outweighs the benefit."

In Gilbert's case, he was not receiving antibiotics for his stump infection. This led to problems with eating and drinking — and dehydration. He was beginning to go into renal failure.

Van Camp and several others objected, but to no avail.

She found that the family had been talked into signing permission for the "no code" order under the auspices of its original definition. When Van Camp later interviewed Gilbert's son, he told her that the withdrawal of food and water had not been included in the explanation.

Van Camp approached Sister Peter Calver with the story. But Claver stomped her foot and said, "This is not happening in this hospital."

"I beg to differ, but it is," replied Van Camp. "Now you know he has to die, or else how will you explain why they withheld fluids from him for so long?"

And die, he did — though an IV was given to him at a time when it was probably too late. Van Camp was later told by another nurse on the ward that Gilbert's IV had been "cranked up to 200 ccs per hour" which gave him a pulmonary overload.

Teri Van Camp

Shortly after Gilbert's death, Cox held a day-long workshop for doctors and nurses to "deal with their emotions" over the new "no code" exclusions of food, water, and antibiotics and the fact that they had been "trained to heal."

During the conference, Cox listed several occasions where he had brought death to patients who were not terminal. Van Camp stood and read the Vatican statement on such issues which prohibits bringing about the death of nonterminal patients, but Cox would not respond.

During that time, Van Camp and others contacted disability activist groups and Catholic officials. She was assured by church officials — including a letter from the Holy See — that Cox was being closely monitored.

However, the "ethicist," Johnny Cox is still at the hospital and, according to hospital sources, was a key figure in the attempt to bring about the death of Ryan Nguyen.

Darla Nguyen holds Ryan and discusses the upcoming surgery with an Emanuel Hospital doctor. Paul deParrie