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(1)                   INSIGHT SEGMENT 1

(2)                 **Q     Welcome back to INsight. We're here at**  
(3)         **the Sweeney Studios. I'm here with Richard**  
(4)         **Sippitz. He is a veteran, served in the U.S.**  
(5)         **Military, retired from the Air Force.**

(6)                 A     Yes, ma'am.

(7)                 **Q     Thank you for that.**

(8)                 A     Thank you.

(9)                 **Q     And we're talking to you today because you**  
(10)         **underwent foot surgery at the VA with Dr.**  
(11)         **Hammersley.**

(12)               A     Yes.

(13)               **Q     Let's talk about that. Tell our viewers**  
(14)         **how the whole thing started.**

(15)               A     Well, I did 24 years in the Air Force and,  
(16)         of course, I retired here, in Fort Wayne, and it was  
(17)         recommended that I, you know, go to the VA, but  
(18)         bottom line was that Dr. Hammersley was the only  
(19)         podiatrist there, so it was kind of like I had no  
(20)         other choice.

(21)               **Q     And he told you that you needed this**  
(22)         **surgery.**

(23)               A     Correct, he did. He, and I was very leery  
(24)         about it, so I asked for a second opinion and I went  
(25)         and seen a local doctor outside of the VA realm and

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(1) he had suggested, you know, just, there was no  
(2) surgery that could have been done to correct it, so  
(3) he suggested fusion, but Dr. Hammersley said he  
(4) could do something to fix it, so I'd be able to walk  
(5) again without a cane.

(6)           **Q     So had the surgery. How'd things go after  
(7) that?**

(8)           A     Pretty bad, because I ended up having to  
(9) have two surgeries because after the first surgery,  
(10) during the first surgery, he nicked a tendon and he  
(11) couldn't finish it up during that one, so he had to  
(12) close me up and then go back in a second time, and  
(13) since then, the prognosis is basically fusion or  
(14) replacement, so I, and it's very difficult to do any  
(15) ordinary household chores. Mowing the lawn. I love  
(16) doing yard work, but I can't, I'm unable to do that  
(17) now.

(18)          **Q     Have you had follow-up appointments with  
(19) Dr. Hammersley?**

(20)         A     Yes. I had to go down to Marion, where  
(21) his, I guess he was just stationed out of there, but  
(22) yes. And, you know, each time I told him, I said,  
(23) you know, it's, didn't get any better, didn't get  
(24) any better, but that was about it. That's where it  
(25) ended up.

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(1) Q So when did you learn that there was  
(2) malpractice incidences against Dr. Hammersley?

(3) A The VA had notified me back in 2018,  
(4) beginning of 2018, that they wanted to talk to me  
(5) about a doctor. First, they weren't forthcoming  
(6) with the information, but then they finally told me  
(7) that it was concerning Dr. Hammersley and some of  
(8) the surgeries that they had mentioned that they were  
(9) unnecessary. They sat me down in a room, there were  
(10) several administrators, chief surgeon in the VA, and  
(11) proceeded to tell me how bad my ankle was. They  
(12) showed me pictures of the deterioration since the  
(13) surgeries up until, you know, most current, and,  
(14) basically, that was, you know, an eye opening  
(15) experience. I didn't realize what was going on, you  
(16) know, because I always, well, you know, being a  
(17) military, you know, veteran, we look for, we don't,  
(18) we have, we're very apprehensive about the VA and,  
(19) you know, but, but it's one of the things we get  
(20) instilled in us while we're in the military, to stay  
(21) within that military structure, so it was very  
(22) difficult.

(23) Q In that meeting, did they encourage you to  
(24) file a malpractice claim?

(25) A Yes, ma'am. As a matter of fact, it's

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(1) called a tort claim.

(2) **Q Okay.**

(3) A They said that I had up to two years to  
(4) file the tort claim and they gave me all this  
(5) paperwork and everything on how to do it, the steps  
(6) on how to do it, like a checklist, so to speak, as  
(7) well as to add that to my current disability rating.

(8) **Q So what happened when you did that?**

(9) A I filled out all the paperwork like I was  
(10) supposed to. I had received a phone, it took quite  
(11) a few months, but I received a phone call from a  
(12) lawyer, seemed like she said that she was  
(13) representing the VA outside of the Pentagon, and I  
(14) gave her all the information that she requested and  
(15) towards the end of the confirma- or that, the  
(16) conversation we had, she said that she would be  
(17) remissed if I didn't tell you that there's a statute  
(18) of limitations. And at that moment, I paused. I  
(19) was like, and that's when I said, "Then why'd you  
(20) even tell me?" Because, and then she said, "There's  
(21) other avenues," you know, and all this other stuff,  
(22) and then, and that's why I just, I mean, I was so  
(23) disgusted, you know, and there's other individuals  
(24) that are, that this happened to are probably, that  
(25) are definitely worse off than I am.

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(1)            Q     So that's when you reached out to Sweeney  
(2)        Law Firm.

(3)            A     Actually, I had seen the, the television,  
(4)        the interview with them on TV, and he, that's when I  
(5)        emailed them and that's, I mean, he became my  
(6)        lawyer.

(7)            Q     You would encourage, if there's anybody  
(8)        else that's in your situation, absolutely they  
(9)        should do that.

(10)          A     Oh, absolutely. I, and, you know, there's  
(11)        a lot of the individuals out there, a lot of vets  
(12)        out there, that aren't even aware that this is going  
(13)        on. I mean, it's just, it's a systemic problem  
(14)        that, I know that it's getting a lot better than it  
(15)        was in the past, but we still have a long way to go  
(16)        cleaning up the Veteran's Administration.

(17)          Q     Well, again, we appreciate your service.  
(18)        Thank you for what you've done. If you're a victim  
(19)        of malpractice or feel like you were a victim of  
(20)        malpractice at the VA, all you have to do is give  
(21)        them a call today or visit their website at  
(22)        sweeneylawfirm.com. We'll be right back.