



THE DUSTOFFER



DUSTOFF ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

FALL/WINTER 2006

In this issue:

PLAN NOW FOR THE DUSTOFF REUNION FEBRUARY 16-18, 2007

PLUS

THE DOCTORS OF WAR

BY BOB DRURY, A FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT FROM
ARMY DOCTORS AND MEDICS IN IRAQ



DUSTOFF with escort in Afghanistan



President's Message



As we begin preparations for the 2007 DUSTOFF Association reunion, I am reminded of the sacrifices made by our brave DUSTOFF Warriors each and every day in Iraq, Afghanistan, and all around the world. This last year we lost three brave warriors in our two combat zones. SSG Heath Craig was on his second hoist of critically wounded Soldiers from a fire fight in Afghanistan. SSG Craig gave his last full measure of courage in the effort to save another Soldier's life. SGT Steven Mennemeyer and SGT Jeffrey Brown were killed during an NVG training flight in Iraq.

The legacy of Charles Kelly lives on today. This reunion will also honor our founder, SSG Thomas "Egor" Johnson, with his induction into the DUSTOFF Hall of Fame. Without his vision and his gutsy determination, this great Association would not exist today. On his shoulders rested the task to get this organization off the ground, chartered, organized, and headed into the history books.

Now we stand as the keepers of the legacy. Our programs are strong and meaningful. This year we awarded our first scholarship under the new program in partnership with the Quad-A. Lucas R. Markham received our 2006 Mike Novosel DUSTOFF Scholarship and is attending the University of Central Arkansas. Please read my report on the scholarship on page 13.

We are also supporting the efforts of the Medical Evacu-

ation Prophecy Division and the AMEDD History Program by providing funds to transcribe oral history accounts of our DUSTOFFers who have served since the end of the Vietnam War. It is a noble thing we do to document and publish the history of DUSTOFF since Vietnam.

Finally, this October saw the dedication of the Surgeon Neel Pavilion at the AMEDD Museum. This Association donated \$5,000 to that effort over the last five years.

I am proud to have had the honor to serve as your President and am looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible in February at the Holiday Inn Riverwalk. We have a full schedule and hope to fully energize our "unit level reunions" for our Friday Night activities. See reunion information on pages 26-27.

God bless you and God bless our DUSTOFF Warriors.
Doug.

-DUSTOFFer-

Letters to The DUSTOFFer

Pat Brady is leading the search for the DUSTOFF legacy at the Viet Nam Center at Texas Tech University.

I recently became aware of the Viet Nam Center at Texas Tech University. In 2005, I attended their annual conference, which was very interesting. I also found that the Center was well managed and resourced. But while there I discovered that although much of the Viet Nam experience is well documented, there is virtually nothing on DUSTOFF!

The only explanation was that the DUSTOFF community has not participated. I feel DUSTOFF is a story that needs to be told, so I agreed to put all my papers and writings there. I also sent a list of all the books on DUSTOFF that I could find. The University will add them to the site. In the future I will do an oral history and expect to lecture on DUSTOFF, as well.

I would encourage all the DUSTOFF community to check the Center to see if you can contribute anything that may be useful to the DUSTOFF legacy. I fear that legacy will die in our active forces, and in the future the only trace will be at places like the Viet Nam Center.

Pat Brady

Old-Timer Steve Vermillion sent the following notice about an upcoming event.

Our new website is located at <www.vietnamdustoff.com>. The 2006 Reunion will be in Atlanta, Georgia, on 10-12 November 2006. The web page has more current information. Please tell your buds who were pilots, crew chiefs, flight medics, or support personnel in DUSTOFF or Medevac units in on the action.

If you know someone who has written books, articles, or have other things for sale (Vietnam stuff), let me know.

If you know someone who can join us as a guest speaker at no cost, please let me know.

Steve Vermillion

General Shows Different Kind of Courage

An article written by Sig Christenson, military writer for the San Antonio Express-News, keeps us up-to-date with one of our heroes.

Retired Army Major General Patrick Brady is known for his bravery, rescuing 51 men by helicopter on one day in Vietnam.

A Medal of Honor recipient, Brady, 69, of Cibolo, tried to raise the morale of wounded troops Thursday, but it took a different kind of courage to do that.

One of the first Soldiers he saw, Staff Sergeant Nathan Reed, lost his right leg at the knee six weeks ago, after he was hit by a roadside bomb in Baghdad.

"I'm planning on playing golf when I get out of here," Reed, 36, of Shreveport, Louisiana, told him.

Brady left the room wiping tears from his face. It was early afternoon and he'd just begun a tour of Brooke Army Medical Center. But the difference between Brady and others visiting the troops is that he was a patient as well, two days removed from hip replacement surgery.

Propped up in a reclining chair on wheels, Brady was

pushed from room to room on BAMC's fourth floor, his left leg carefully set so the new titanium hip wouldn't pop out. At each spot, he'd try to make small talk while signing copies of *Medal of Honor—Portraits of Valor Beyond the*

(Courage, continued on page 7.)



MG Pat Brady visits with SSG Nathan Reed.

DUSTOFF Association Executive Council

President:

Doug Moore Doug.Moore@NA.AMEDD.Army.Mil

Executive Director:

Dan Gower ed@dustoff.org

Executive Assistant to President:

Vice President:

Timothy Burke ... timothy.burke@amedd.army.mil

Treasurer:

Dan Gower treasurer@dustoff.org

Secretary:

Anthony Garcia .. secretary@dustoff.org

Historian:

Patrick Zenk historian@dustoff.org

DUSTOFFer Editor:

Jim Truscott jtrus5@aol.com

Web Site:

<http://www.dustoff.org>
Ronald Huether .. ron@hueyproductions.com



DUSTOFFer layout & design

Susan Gower rockgower@yahoo.com

Printing

Ink, Spot, Ink Printing & Publishing

DUSTOFF Association Past Presidents

Chuck Mateer (1980-81)	..... deceased
John Hosley (1981-82)	..... hoss@capital.net
Byron Howlett (1982-83)	..... bybkhow@aol.com
Ed Taylor (1983-84)	..... eddotaylor@aol.com
Thomas Scofield (1984-85)	..... tomsco@erols.com
Joseph Madrano (1985-86)	..... jmadrano@satx.rr.com
Jim Ritchie (1986-87)	
Donald Conkright (1987-88)	..... dconkright@sbcglobal.net
Roy Hancock (1988-89)	..... southflite@yahoo.com
Glen Melton (1989-90)	..... GlenMelton@aol.com
Gerald Nolan (1990-91)	..... gerrynolan@aol.com
Jim Truscott (1991-92)	..... jtrus5@aol.com
Roger Opio (1992-93)	..... roger.opio@amedd.army.mil
Ed Bradshaw (1993-94)	..... edwardb421@aol.com
Robert Romines (1994-96)	..... rromines@cablelynx.com
Daniel Gower (1996-97)	..... dan.gower@amedd.army.mil
Charlie Webb (1997-98)	..... dustoff6@hotmail.com
Herb Coley (1998-99)	..... coleyhs@earthlink.net
Merle Snyder (1999-2000)	..... snyder@belmontcc.com
Gregg Griffin (2000-01)	..... greg.griffin@us.army.mil
Jeff Mankoff (2001-02)	..... jgmankoff@satx.rr.com
Ken Crook (2002-03)	..... kcrook@satx.rr.com
Art Hapner (2003-04)	..... hapner@erols.com
Ernie Sylvester (2004-05)	..... esylvest@tampabay.rr.com
Garry Atkins (2005-6)	..... garrylynatkins@aol.com

Founder

Tom "Egor" Johnson command_madsen_police@verizon.net

Members at Large

Michael Kelly	..... michael.kelly1@cen.amedd.army.mil
Jack Leech	..... Jack.Leach@us.army.mil
Scott Avery	..... scott.avery@us.army.mil
Mike Bishop	..... mike.bishop1@us.army.mil
Johnny West	..... johnny.west@us.army.mil

Closing Out the Flight Plan

SSG Heathe Craig

Notice appearing in the *Stars and Stripes*, Mideast edition: "Flight Medic Remembered at Emotional Service at Wiesbaden," penned by Matt Millham.

Soldiers prepared to fire a volley during a 21-gun salute to Staff Sergeant Heathe M. Craig, a member of the 159th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), who died on 21 June in Afghanistan during a mission to rescue two 10th Mountain Division Soldiers who had been injured in combat.

As a combat medic, SSG Craig understood that sometimes saving people means risking your own life.

Sometimes the risk doesn't pay off.

Craig and another Soldier died the night of 21 June during a rescue mission near Naray, Afghanistan.

The night started peacefully enough. Craig had just chatted with his wife and played peek-a-boo with his one-year-old daughter, Leona, over a Web camera when the call came. Three 10th Mountain division soldiers were critically wounded in a firefight near Naray.

"He always had missions that came up," Craig's wife, Judy, said. "And that's what happened. A mission came up and he was ready." The couple also have a four-year-old son, Jonas.

Craig's DUSTOFF crew had been called to rescue the wounded. By the time Craig and his air ambulance arrived at the pickup point, one of the Soldiers was already dead.

It was past dark at takeoff, and the terrain where they were headed made it impossible for the Black Hawk rescue helicopter to land.

That meant Craig would have to be lowered into the combat zone by a hoist. It was one of his least favorite things to do, said CPT Angela Wagner, the rear detachment commander of the 159th.

The battlefield still wasn't secure, but Craig plunged in anyway. He secured the first Soldier and got him safely to the hovering ambulance. That troop would make it out of Afghanistan alive.

But as Craig and the second patient were being lifted into the helicopter, the hoist malfunctioned.

"On the second try, I lost him," said SGT James Ramey, the helicopter's crew chief, in a letter that was read at Craig's memorial ceremony in Germany.

Craig and the Soldier he was rescuing, PFC Brian Bradbury, both died. Craig grew up in Virginia. Bradbury was from St. Joseph, Missouri.

"He gave his life saving another," Wagner said.

SGT Kendra Jackson, one of Craig's close friends, couldn't keep herself from crying as she talked about her fallen comrade during the memorial service at Wiesbaden Army Airfield's chapel.

She told how Craig, even after back surgery, would work tirelessly, laboring beyond his body's limits, afraid he might come off as a slacker. Jackson remembers telling him to take it easy. "He would look at me with those blue eyes and say, My name's not worthless."

Few in attendance could hold back their tears as Jackson recounted her friendship with Craig. "Judy, you once told us we acted like brother and sister. He was my brother," she said. "He was our brother."

Mike Toennis

Michael W. Toennis, born April 25, 1955, in San Antonio, Texas, died July 23, 2006, in Houston, Texas, at age 51.

Mike earned a BBA in 1978 from the University of Houston, where he was a member of Beta Theta Pi Fraternity, and an MBA in 1992 from Syracuse University.

He proudly served his country as an Army DUSTOFF aviator, medical logistian, and health services comptroller for the U.S. Army Medical Dept. Michael was medically retired as a Major after 14 years of active duty, during which time he was a member of the DUSTOFF Association.

Later, he became a CPA after working as an auditor for the firm of BDO Seidman. Mike is preceded in death by

his father, Ewald Toennis, and is survived by his wife, Karen Toennis and their son, Joseph Toennis, both of Kingwood, Texas; mother, Lilo Toennis; and brother, Andre Toennis.

Mike fought a thirteen-year battle with ALS. During this time, he remained active in the DUSTOFF Association, rarely missing a reunion. He served as the Special Assistant to the president of the Association for many of his last years, accomplishing tasks for the Association using his "eye-blink computer."

Mike and Karen were always the light of the DUSTOFF reunions and exhibited courage and steadfast love for each other. Many a DUSTOFF Aviator faced possible death with skill and even daring. Mike and Karen faced certain death with grace and courage and even a bit of cheer, standing as a true testimony that we all recognized as coming from within and from outside of themselves.

Visited by his friends and comrades in the last days before his death, Mike left us all in awe of his courage and fortitude. Karen and Joe remain in our prayers and thoughts as they face life without Mike. We are all better for having known and loved Mike.

The family suggests memorial contributions to MDA/ALS Research, c/o IBC Bank, P.O. Box 272243, Houston, TX 77277-2243, or to your charity of choice.

Wesley Hunt Green

Wesley Hunt Green, a beloved husband, father, son, brother, uncle, nephew, and friend, died on 22 September 2006 at Baton Rouge General Medical Center. He was 42, a resident of Lottie and a native of Baton Rouge. He was a U.S. Army veteran with 14 years of military service, including Operation Desert Storm, with the rank of Sergeant/Crew Chief with the 872nd Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance).

His wife, Carol, wants everyone to know that he loved his children, and every decision they ever made had their best interests at heart. He loved many

people and many of life's events. His daughter, Cayleen, will always remember him teaching her new and exciting things, like all the buttons in a helicopter. Brandt, his son, will always remember the fun at Blue Bayou Waterpark on the Purple and Gold Ride.

Bob Mock

Bob Mock passed away in his sleep on October 13, 2006.



542nd Med. Co. (AA) DUSTOFF en route to an urgent mission from a base in Kirkuk, Iraq.



54th Med Co. (Air Ambulance) DUSTOFF in harm's way in Iraq.

82nd Med Loses

Two Soldiers in Iraq

SGt Steven P. Mennemeyer, 26, of Granite City, Illinois, and SGt Jeffrey S. Brown, 25, of Trinity Center, California, died when their UH60 Black Hawk DUSTOFF helicopter went down in a lake near Rubtbah, Iraq, west of Baghdad, on 8 August 2006, during a night vision goggle training/orientation flight.

Survivors of the accident include the Pilot in Command, Instructor Pilot, and two other service personnel, one a member of the Navy and one a Marine.

The 82nd was under the operational control of the 3rd Marine Air Wing, 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

—DUSTOFFer—

Vietnam History not in School Books

In a recent interview published in the *Wall Street Journal*, former Colonel Bui Tin, who served in the general staff of the North Vietnamese Army and received the unconditional surrender of South Vietnam on 30 April, 1975, confirmed the American Tet 1968 military victory. "Our losses were staggering and a complete surprise. Giap later told me that Tet had been a military defeat, though we had gained the planned political advantages when Johnson agreed to negotiate and did not run for reelection. The second and third waves in May and September were, in retrospect, mistakes. Our forces in the South were nearly wiped out by all of the fighting in 1968. It took us until 1971 to reestablish our presence, but we had to use North Vietnamese troops as local guerrillas. If the American forces had not begun to withdraw under Nixon in 1969, they could have punished us severely. We suffered badly in 1969 and 1970 as it was."

On strategy: "If Johnson had granted Westmoreland's requests to

enter Laos and block the Ho Chi Minh trail, Hanoi could not have won the war . . . it was the only way to bring sufficient military power to bear on the fighting in the South. Building and maintaining the trail was a huge effort involving tens of thousands of soldiers, drivers, repair teams, medical stations, communications units . . . our operations were never compromised by attacks on the trail. At times, accurate B-52 strikes could cause real damages, but we put so much in at the top of the trail that enough men and weapons to prolong the war always came out at the bottom. If all the bombing had been concentrated at one time, it would have hurt our efforts. But the bombing was expanded in slow stages under Johnson and it didn't worry us. We had plenty of time to prepare alternative routes and facilities. We always had stockpiles of rice ready to feed the people for months if a harvest was damaged. The Soviets bought rice from Thailand for us."

On the Left: "Support for the war from our rear was completely secure,

while the American rear was vulnerable. Every day, our leadership would listen to the world news over the radio at 9 a.m. to follow the growth of the antiwar movement. Visits to Hanoi by Jane Fonda, former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, and ministers gave us confidence that we should hold on in the face of battlefield reverses. We were elated when Jane Fonda, wearing a red Vietnamese dress, said at a press conference that she was ashamed of American actions in the war and would struggle along with us. Those people represented the conscience of America, part of its war-making capability, and we were turning that power in our favor."

Bui Tin went on to serve as editor of the *People's Daily*, the official newspaper of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Disillusioned with the reality of Vietnamese communism, Bui Tin now lives in Paris. ■

HOOAH!

You may be too HOOAH if:

- Your newborn must attend the newcomer's orientation briefing within the first 30 days.
- Your wife's two favorite shades of lipstick are light green and loam.
- You go to a barbecue and insist that your family feed tactically.
- You make your children clear housing before they go off to college.
- You require your mechanic to replace the sand bags on your floorboards as part of a tune-up.
- Your POV is equipped with black-out lights.
- Your kids call their mother "Household 6."
- Your kids volunteer to pull air guard on the school bus.
- Your doorbell sounds off with the current challenge and password.
- You have sector sketches and range cards posted by every window in your house.
- You give the command "Fix Bayonets" at Thanksgiving dinner.
- Your kids show their meal cards at the kitchen door, except the oldest, who is on separate rations and must pay for the meal.
- You make your daughter sign out on pass on Prom Night.
- Your kindergartner calls recess a "smoke break."
- Your wife "takes a knee" in the checkout line at the supermarket.
- You do your back-to-school shopping at the U.S. Cavalry Store.
- Your son fails the third grade but tells everyone he was a "phase three recycle."
- Your kids salute their grandparents.
- Your wife's "high-n-tight" is more squared-away than your Commander's.

Courageous 498th Plans Reunion

The 498th has scheduled its next reunion for 16 February 2007, to be held in conjunction with the DUSTOFF Association Reunion, 16-18 February 2007.

Both reunions will be held at the Holiday Inn Riverwalk, San Antonio. Registration for the 498th Reunion will be open at 0900, Friday, 16 February, on the seventh floor, adjacent to the Tango Room. The bar will open for drinks at 5 p.m.; dinner will start at 7 p.m. in the Tango Rooms 1 and 2, with music and dancing from 6.30 to 10 p.m..

We hope this information will garner your excitement about attending the Reunion. We had 74 in attendance in '06 and hope to have at least 90 in 2007. All DUSTOFFers are invited, not just 498th alumni.

The fee to attend is \$40 per person, including registration, dinner, and music. Please forward your attendance fee to Ron Chapman, 6303 Meadow Grove, San Antonio, Texas 78239, and include your name, address, and e-mail with the fee. Please forward the fee to arrive NLT 1 February 2007.

Famed 54th Inactivated in Memorable Ceremony

The 54th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) was inactivated on 15 April 2006 at Fort Lewis, Washington, where it had called home since the early 1970s. The 54th, under the command of MAJ Peter Lehning and 1SG Ruth Bryner, held the company's last formation at Grey Army Airfield on 13 April. The entire 62nd Medical Brigade was on-line for the event. With its rich history in combat and the Great Northwest, a large gathering of 54th alumni was on hand for the occasion, ranging from Vietnam to recent Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans. Also on hand were a number of individuals the 54th had rescued off Mount Rainier and local accidents over the years, along with a contingent of local press. The ceremony was presided over by the Brigade Commander, COL Thomas Bailey. It was a great honor to have Medal of Honor Recipient and former 54th Commander MG

(R) Patrick Brady as the guest speaker, which added tremendous dignity and importance to the day.

The colors were folded and sent to the Department of Heraldry, where they will be kept until the 54th is reactivated sometime in the future. The remainder of the memorabilia was shipped to either the Department of Heraldry or the Army Medical Department Museum at Fort Sam Houston.

A reception followed at the Fort Lewis Cascade Club for all present and former members of the 54th.

Some key leaders and all aircraft and related equipment were shipped to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where they have become Charlie Company, 3/82nd Aviation Battalion and will continue the DUSTOFF mission. ■

(Courage, continued from page 3.)

Call of Duty. The book profiles Brady and 115 other medal recipients.

Brady's visits generally went well, the soldiers talkative and pleased. Staff Sergeant Josh Forbess, one of four survivors of a fiery helicopter collision in 2004 over Mosul, learned that Brady's daughter, CPT Meghan Smith, was in Iraq at the same time he was.

"The word hero to me is overused. But he's living proof of the meaning of the word," said Forbess, 28, of Fort Campbell, Kentucky, in town for his 12th operation, this one to get a nose.

"It makes me feel good my son's not forgotten," said Terri Johnson, whose son, PVT Steven Smith, 19, of Brookfield, New York, lost both legs on 8 April in Iraq.

Brady was a DUSTOFF pilot in Vietnam, saving wounded troops. More than half the men in his unit earned Purple Hearts while saving thousands. He lost two choppers the day he earned his medal, but that wasn't unusual. There'd been worse days.

"It (the danger) gets to be a routine," he said. "But there's no more fruitful routine than saving lives."

A major on his second tour in Vietnam, Brady flew a UH-1 Huey to rescue two badly hurt South Vietnamese soldiers on 6 January 1968. It was a volunteer mission that followed other failed efforts to extract the soldiers because of bad weather.

Thick fog and nearby enemy fire greeted Brady as he lowered his craft between trees and jungle foliage, but he got the men out. He was soon on another mission, fighting his way through fog in an area where two other DUSTOFFS had been shot earlier in the day. Somehow, Brady made five trips, saving every wounded GI—39 in all.

But he wasn't done. On his third mission, enemy fire damaged his 'copter, but Brady still got the injured men out. He got another Huey and made another mission, arriving in time to see a fellow Huey fly off after a mine exploded. After Brady landed, his crew navigated the minefield to reach the wounded.

All but one of the wounded were on board when one of Brady's crewmen stepped on a mine, damaging the copter. He flew six soldiers to the hospital and got a new 'copter, saving 51 wounded that day. When it was over, 400 bullet holes were found in the 'copters he'd flown.

Perhaps no one this day knew that, but Reed enjoyed meeting Brady, as did SGT Ezequiel Hernandez of San Antonio. Both survived a Memorial Day IED attack in Baghdad that claimed the lives of CPT James Alexander Funkhouser, Jr., a 35-year-old Texas State University graduate with New Braunfels ties, and a pair of CBS News journalists.

Still, not everyone was cheery. SPC David Gonzalez, 22, of Glen Ellyn, Illinois, a Chicago suburb, lay quietly in his bed as Brady struggled to make conversation.

"David is a deep thinker and not much for conversation," his mom, Catherine Gonzalez, 50, also of Glen Ellyn, explained. "But he's a good kid."

Brady met other patients on the ward, looking like one of them in his green hospital gown and plastic identity bracelet.

(Courage, continued on page 8.)



MG Pat Brady visit with SSG Josh Forbess.

The Wall

They walk along the granite block
Past names all etched in stone.
Among so many others here,
But feel so all alone.

So many here to touch a soul,
That passed so long ago.
And tears now streak from off your
cheek,
Emotions have to show.

There are so many people here,
Who wish the pain to end.
Why not reach out a hand to them,
To listen, be a friend?

The Wall can bridge the largest
gap;
It made our nation one.
We thank the nurses one and all,
And every Soldier, son.

Whose names we see forever etched,
Upon the granite stone.
Though painful, makes us realize,
That we are not alone.

The sacrifice that you all made,
That brings us to this shrine.
Brings all of us closer, left behind,
Perhaps the grand design.

To help the friends and family,
To understand the call.
That took your names from off life's
list,
And placed them on this Wall.

You fought a war, unpopular,
In Nam, so far away.
And now you've found the greatest
peace,
As we stand here and pray.

Beyond the Wall we hope to find,
The reason for it all.
Why you with pride went far away,
To answer duty's call.

Perhaps the flag that others burn,
Became your symbol proud.
Why you gave life, proclaim love,
Of country, very loud.

So, rest in peace, my Warrior,
My nurse and doctor, too.
And rest assured forever more,
We'll all remember you.

The Wall means much to everyone,
Those names in granite cast.
To keep you memories alive,
As long as time will last.

So look upon the granite face,
And touch the names with pride.
For all their spirits linger there,
Beyond the Wall, inside.

(Courage, continued from page 7.)

He was one of them in most ways, even though his war was 38 years ago and he's among just 100 surviving Medal of Honor Society members.

"The kids, who knows what went on, but what I'm saying is the emotional side of this is very difficult for me. I just think about what these kids have given," Brady said, choking up. "It's just tough. So I wouldn't want to do this every day, that's for sure. God bless them." ■



MG Pat Brady visits with PVT Steven Smith.

DUES CALL!

If you are not a Life Member of the DUSTOFF Association and have not made your annual dues payment in a while, you will receive a letter from us shortly asking that your dues be brought up to date. According to our constitution, dues are \$15 per year for officers and civilian members. Dues for enlisted members are \$7.50 per year. Life Member status is attained after 15 CONSECUTIVE years of dues payments.

To convert to a Life Member status, one should consider the following fact: After 9 consecutive years, it is more cost-effective to pay the remaining years' dues (up to 15 years). For 8 or less years, it is more cost-effective to pay the Life Member dues fee of \$100 for officers and civilians or \$50 for enlisted members. We have not sent out a "dues call" letter in about three years, and we have several members who are delinquent in their dues payments. If we don't hear from you, we will have no choice but to put your name into the "Inactive" category.

DUSTOFF Company Transports Injured to Facilities

Writing for the 4th Infantry Division Public Affairs Office, SFC Reginald Rogers, provides an update on the state of the transformation of DUSTOFF within Army Aviation.

Camp Taji, Iraq—One unit has sole responsibility for getting Baghdad-stationed coalition forces and civilians in need of medical care to the right facilities.

Since November 2005, more than 3,500 patients have been transported by Company C, 2nd Battalion, 4th Aviation Regiment, Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division. The more than 80 Soldiers assigned to the unit operate from Camp Taji and Forward Operating Base Falcon.

Missions taken on by the DUSTOFF Company are categorized as urgent or priority, according to patient's conditions.

"Our overall mission is to facilitate the safest and most rapid evacuation of casualties from the battlefield, and that includes all casualties, Soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, enemy prisoners of war, non-U.S. military and civilians," said the company's operations officer, CPT Chris Chung.

While some of their work takes place on secure operating bases, other parts occur outside the wire. The more dangerous point-of-entry pickups include roadside evacuations resulting from IED strikes or vehicle rollovers.

According to Pilot-in-Command CW2 Toby Blackmon, every mission varies from the previous.

"We once had a mission right in downtown Baghdad, where we had to come down between light poles and

wires," Blackmon said. "Even when security is provided, landing the aircraft on a road in the center of the city with tall buildings can still feel insecure."

"We're able to maintain a level of camaraderie that makes us a great company."

"You just have to trust your mates and crew chiefs to keep the aircraft clear as much as they possibly can, and trust your gut to do the best job you can," he said. "Getting the patient on board the aircraft is what it's all about."

Charlie Company is in the midst of its third deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The unit deployed during OIF I and II as the 507th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) before being reassigned to the CAB and deploying as part of the brigade's General Support Aviation Battalion. Some of the unit's Soldiers spent no more than eight months between deployments.

Despite the high OPTEMPO, Chung said morale remains high because the Soldiers realize the importance of their jobs.

"We're able to maintain a level of camaraderie that makes us a great com-

pany. Our morale remains very high because everyone takes pride in the mission, which is the most important thing here."

Chung and Blackmon agreed that crew coordination and unselfishness help the Soldiers work as a team.

"Crew coordination is making sure that everyone knows what their job is inside the aircraft," Chung explained. "I think it helps that everyone's unselfish. They know that when we're flying, we've got three other guys we've got to take care of, in addition to the patients we're picking up. So, as pilots-in-command, it's our job to ensure that we bring everybody back."

"Each crewmember plays a vital part in accomplishing missions," Blackmon added.

"There are four people required to be on the aircraft for us to run a mission: the pilot-in-command, the pilot, the flight medic, and the crew chief. When you put all four of them together, each person is the most qualified on that aircraft for their special position. If you have one person missing from that group, the others cannot work," Blackmon said.

The unit will be among the CAB's first to redeploy back to Fort Hood in the upcoming months, but Chung and Blackmon both refuse to look that far ahead.

"It's a short amount of time, but we still have a lot to do," Chung said. ■

Plan Now for Reunion 2007

Make your plans now to join us for the next DUSTOFF Association Reunion. We will meet in San Antonio at the Holiday Inn Riverwalk on the weekend of 16–28 February 2007. We are working hard to make this another memorable event. Friday night is once again going to be set aside for reuniting with your favorite unit. We DESPERATELY need volunteers to step up to the plate and be "Unit Captains." Your duty, should you decide to accept it, will be to work with our Executive Director to decide where you will hold your unit get-together on Friday night. Use your imagination and get together with your comrades to decide how you want to handle it. We will publish any known plans in the November *DUSTOFFer*, so time is of the essence—make your plans now. For those who don't have a favorite unit or have a unit that doesn't set up a separate event, we will work on having a big mixer at the hotel of some sort. We don't want anyone to feel left out. Contact Dan Gower and discuss the options as soon as possible. You may call him at work (210-221-1835), on his cell phone (210-379-3985), or at home in the evenings (210-822-7206 or 325-388-2631). Don't be afraid to volunteer—it can be fun.

The Making of a Crew Chief

A priceless recollection by the founder of the DUSTOFF Association and most recent inductee into the DUSTOFF Hall of Fame, Egor Johnson.

Forty-one years ago, as a 19-year-old Private First Class, I arrived in Vietnam and began my processing at Camp Alpha. In reflection, I remember entering this tent camp with trepidations as to my future and what I would be required to do during this tour. Having served for eight months in Alaska crewing a CH-21 in the cold weather, the heat of Vietnam was new to me.

I remember arriving with four other helicopter mechanics and our discussion in the tents that evening. We discussed our desire to be assigned to a gun ship company, for if we were going to be shot at, we sure would like to shoot back.

My memory is vivid as it relates to the evening prior to my assignment. We were joined by a crew chief returning from R&R and waiting for his flight to his unit up-country. As he was a combat veteran, we listened with silent respect as he told us about the war. I remember to this day his words. He said, "It doesn't matter what unit you're assigned to, as long as it's not a DUSTOFF unit. Those guys are crazy. They fly unarmed Hueys with a big red cross for a target. Hell, if you're assigned to them, your chances of going home are about zero." I went to bed that night with this advice on my mind.

The next morning, my name was called at formation. The Replacement Sergeant announced that I was to be assigned to the 57th Medical Detachment, and I was to wait at the Admin Tent for the unit to pick me up. At 1100 hours, across the footbridge next to Camp Alpha, a large SP5 came to pick me up. Shortly, I met my first DUSTOFFer, SP5 George Brevaldo. Ten minutes later I was entering the hooch that was to be my home for the next seven months. I was now assigned to the mission that I feared most.

Less than an hour later, George had me down by the flight line, at the Orderly Room. I stood before an epitome of DUSTOFF and an officer whom I would begin crewing for in two months, Major John W. Dean, the Detachment Executive Officer. He welcomed me to DUSTOFF, and I received my first briefing on DUSTOFF and the legend of a man whom I have come to respect beyond all others, Major Charles Kelly, and the mission that became my life.

I remember after processing into the unit, my arrival back at the hooch and my introduction to the crewmembers who were soon to be my brothers in arms. That evening I was enthralled by my bunk mate, a hero who within two weeks would be wounded. SP4 Billy Hughes spent hours telling me about DUSTOFF and about Major Kelly. I went to sleep that first night in DUSTOFF with a desire to be one of these special men and to be accepted into this special "Band of Brothers," whose one goal in life was to save wounded.

Over the next seven weeks, I spent my time, working on the unit's helicopters, repairing damage, helping my heroes pull their inspections. I guess I was doing well, be-

cause it seemed that I was given some difficult missions in maintenance to fix. It seemed that I was always able to get them done. One evening the guys began calling me "Igor," after fixing a linkage problem that no one seemed to know the cause. This was just prior to New Year's Eve, and the next night I received orders to pull guard at the Officers' BOQ. I was assigned on the patio, just outside the Officers' Club.

As a mechanic, I was assigned an old M-1 carbine. However, I had become friends with SP5 Ted Bartley, a legendary scrounger in the unit, and I asked him if I could use his German sub-machine gun.

That evening, having been told there was intelligence that the VC were planning to hit the BOQ, I took my post on the patio. I decided to pull the bolt back on the sub-machine gun and place it on safety. As the evening wore on, somehow the bolt slipped from the safety notch into the firing position.

It was almost midnight, and I accidentally nodded and (despite the legend) hit the trigger, causing the sub-machine gun to fire nine rounds through the bamboo in front of my position. Well, every officer (except one, Major Dean) hit the deck inside the club. Needless to say, I was not too well liked that evening, and I remember having the sub-machine gun taken away from me and being given a .45 pistol with one round, to finish my tour. That evening I earned the wrath of our Commanding Officer, Major Bill Campbell.

After this incident, I was sure my goal of crewing a DUSTOFF ship was gone forever. Two days later, I had finished a 25-hour inspection on one of our helicopters when Captains Jim Truscott and Ed Taylor came walking out to the helicopter.

I saluted them and stated, "Sir, the ship is ready for its test flight." As long as I live, I will remember what Captain Truscott said next.

"OK, get your helmet; we are going up." Always before, one of the crew chiefs would take over and take the ship out. In this case, the ship did not have an assigned crew chief, as SP5 Roger Reel had left the detachment to go with Air America. Here I was going on my first flight in a UH-1B as a crew chief. Well, we took off and were in the air for only a few minutes when a call for an urgent medevac mission came across the air.

Although we had no weapons and I had no experience, Captains Truscott and Taylor decided as we were the closest ship, advised the unit we were inbound. Quickly, Captain Truscott began to tell me what I was going to have to do. Minutes later, I was to fly my first DUSTOFF mission, and evacuate my first two wounded.

(Crew chief, continued on page 11.)

Army School of Aviation Medicine Flight Medic Course

Published in the 30 June 2006 Army Aviation magazine, this article and update were authored by CSM Buford Thomas Jr., Command Sergeant Major of the U.S. Army Aviation Warfighting Center, and SFC Ronald Belcher, NCOIC of the Flight Medic Course.

The training of flight medics begins at the U.S. Army School of Aviation Medicine (USASAM) here at Fort Rucker, Alabama. I have made several visits to observe the Flight Medic Course (FMC) training and have had the opportunity to participate in hoist operations training.

I am always impressed with their attention to detail and their vigilance in their training of flight medics. As it's often said, "We train the way we fight." It sometimes doesn't happen that way, so it is always good to see Soldiers training the right way.

A Little History

The concept for medical evacuation has been tried and tested over the centuries. Ancient Greek and Roman armies introduced the concept of providing surgeons, medics, and litter bearers, in addition to a standardized medical system similar to today's levels of care.

During the civil war, MAJ Jonathan Letterman, the medical director of the Army of the Potomac, identified the need for trained medics to go into battle with Soldiers. Throughout ensuing conflicts, the Army followed and built upon Letterman's doctrine of dedicated assets for evacuation. This decreased the evacuation time from point of injuries to receiving treatment at facilities. With an emphasis on doctrine, technology, and command oversight on medical evacuation, the survivability rates increased.

The Korean War demonstrated the value of helicopter evacuation, but the lack of en-route care highlighted a need for air crews augmented with a flight medic with aviation training.

During the Vietnam conflict, the UH-1 was ushered in as an air ambulance for aerial evacuation with trained flight medics (FM) working in the cabin, lifting Soldier morale

immensely. With these two assets, troops were able to receive lifesaving care within 30 minutes, greatly increasing the chance of survivability. This remains the "gold standard" of evacuation.

The war efforts continue to prove the flight medic is a combat multiplier.

Modern-Day Capabilities

Over the past three decades, evacuation and training of FMs evolved into a modern, state-of-the-art system, saving thousands of lives.

Prior to the Global War on Terrorism, the FMs were trained to support a variety of operations, ranging from humanitarian support operations to high intensity conflicts. In addition, FMs were taught how to support civil-

based programs, such as Military Assistance to Safety and Traffic or MAST, a mission supporting civilian populations co-located with military bases. The benefit to supporting MAST missions is that a flight medic is able to apply what is taught in the FMC and also to improve their skills in patient assessment, triage, and transport.

For over two decades, aircrews and FMs have demonstrated their dedication and bravery, while conducting high-angle rescue and hoist operations at high altitudes, providing en-route medical care and training, to serve the MAST community definitively.

In preparing Soldier-medics for one of the jobs in the medical field where medics are constantly employing their skills, the FM course proves to be an invaluable spring-board of education, experience, and eye-opening realistic training. Being able to treat patients with various injuries, from car accidents to gunshot wounds, in peacetime, during deployments, and at the home station, FMs and aircrews

(School, continued on page 12.)

(Crew chief, continued from page 10.)

After the mission, Captains Truscott and Taylor remained behind and gave me the counsel of their wisdom on crewing and on DUSTOFF. That was the day my life changed. As I was still in trouble with Major Campbell, I can only assume that they spoke with Major Glenn Williams, who was the new Provisional Company Commander, for he made me his crew chief.

That evening, upon my return to the hooch, I ask SP4 Erick Shank, an artist and medic, to paint my helmet. While we were celebrating (which included a bunch of drinking), Erick painted my helmet RED with a monster on the back, and on the front, in reflective paint, placed my nickname (misspelled, as we were all drunk by then), EGOR. Little did I know then, that this helmet would become famous, and that misspelled nickname would follow me that for the rest of my life.

Many stories have been told about me, not only in DUSTOFF, but my later career as an MP, CID Agent, Instructor, and later in my civilian law enforcement career. I have had the honor of flying this, the most honorable mission, and as a law enforcement agent have been on the ground when calling for a DUSTOFF. I was to meet then Major Jim Truscott again, on a DUSTOFF mission at Gelnhause Germany when I called for an urgent DUSTOFF.

Throughout my life, the greatest honor I have had, to include being promoted to General Director of Public Safety in the best housing police department in Boston, is being a member of the Band of Brothers that is DUSTOFF.

—DUSTOFFer—

School, *continued from page 11.*

are prepared for simple to complex missions from treating one patient to up to six or seven patients.

Ready for the Challenge

After the GWOT commenced, all the preparation and dedication that the FMC put into training FMs came full circle, benefiting from two decades of training advancements to accomplish missions that would test even the most skilled FMs. Yearlong deployments and short turnaround periods at home stations, with an ever-evolving enemy, demanded a change to the program of instruction at the FMC.

To ensure critical lifesaving skills, the International Trauma Life Support was continued, with a high level of concentration placed on patient assessment and identifying any type of life-threatening penetrating or blunt force wounds. Advanced Cardiac Life support continues to be taught, so FMs can treat patients with supportive care, ranging from medication support to early defibrillation for patients severely injured or ill, or not breathing and without a pulse.

Case simulations also build the FM's confidence by letting him/her act as the person in charge of a trauma and medical situation. Students must demonstrate to a high degree their ability to direct and lead a team to manage these situations effectively.

The flight medic course needed to prepare medics for MEDEVAC units by teaching aeromedical factors, aircrew coordination, and increasing their knowledge of lifesaving skills in an aviation environment. Classes also demonstrate the effects of altitude on patients in the aircraft and how to identify symptoms to manage patients in the unique aeromedical environment.

Evolving Combat Care

Because the enemy is constantly changing and combat evacuations are becoming more dangerous, the Army has adopted a concept called Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TC3). This concept has proven vital in saving military lives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Changing the "old school" thought process that tourniquets should be applied only as a last resort, instead tourniquets are applied early to stop bleeding immediately in combat situations. The TC3 concept introduces three phases of care: care under fire, tactical field care, and casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) care. TC3 is being taught Army-wide to teach needle decompressions, antibiotics, IV fluids, and many other skills needed for today's battlefield, to ensure more Soldiers return home alive.

Another part of the FMC is the introduction to the UH-60A and HH-60Q aircraft, and experiencing different modes of flight in a UH-60 helicopter. The FMC allows the students to experience hoist operations in a safe training environment. Using the USA SAM's 65-foot hoist tower, students learn to operate the high performance hoist and practice insertion and extraction techniques.

Bringing It All Together

All this training prepares the FM for one of the high points of the four-week intensive course, a 24-hour situational training exercise (STX). The STX allows the student to apply the concepts, tactics, techniques, and procedures taught in the first three weeks of the course.

Students prepare like actual FMs, assuming first up duties starting with packing aid bags and conducting maintenance checks on their equipment. They receive a nine-line MEDEVAC request and are sent on a rescue mission.

The students are inserted with the hoist, navigate through the woods tactically to a downed aircraft, and then assess and treat multiple patients, applying TC3 tactics and packaging the patients for movement. They move again tactically through the woods to USA SAM's UH-60A and HH-60Q Medical Suite Trainers (MST), where they train on treating the patients while in flight.

At the completion of the MST portion, they move on to the survival portion. Survival skills, taught earlier in the course, must be employed in order to save themselves, their team, and their patients. Armed only with the equipment found in aviation life-support equipment of ALSE vest, FM students must perform a variety of survival tasks. Eventually, the student will receive a radio call that his or her aircraft is inbound and to prepare the patients and their team for hoist operations.

All students receive a detailed after-action review (AAR) to ensure training was effective and realistic. The majority of the STX occurs at night under limited visibility, with pyrotechnic simulators, smoke, and using an M-240B machine. The STX was introduced to provide the FM with a realistic training experience and to show what it would be like to treat a patient in a combat environment, integrating all the skills taught in the FMC.

Summary

The war efforts continue to prove the flight medic is a combat multiplier. A rich history of service, combined with current, relevant training and the ability to adapt, shows that flight medics will continue to be ready for any mission at any time and anywhere.

Some of the Army's finest Soldier-medics continue to walk through the door of USA SAM motivated to take on the course challenges and become part of the great history of MEDEVAC. The School of Aviation Medicine will continue to evolve as new lessons are learned. The warfighters can depend upon receiving the very best emergency medical care from the flight medic. The flight medic is truly "Above the Best." ■



DUSTOFF Association Scholarship Report

by Doug Moore

In July 2006, I represented the DUSTOFF Association on the Army Aviation Association of America (AAAA) Scholarship Board. As most of you know, our DUSTOFF Association scholarship is handled through the AAAA. I would like to share some thoughts with you because I believe our membership is not taking full advantage of this great opportunity.

Members of the DUSTOFF Association and their spouses, unmarried siblings, unmarried children, and unmarried grandchildren of current and deceased members are eligible for scholarship grants and loans that range in value from \$1,000 to \$11,000. This year a total of \$239,000 was distributed through 138 scholarship grants and 10 interest-free loans.

To be eligible, the parent, grandparent, or student must be a member of the DUSTOFF Association and the AAAA. This allows applicants applying for the DUSTOFF Association scholarship grant to compete for several other grants and loans funded by the AAAA or by their corporate sponsors.

From my personal observation, this is an extraordinarily competitive process because the applicants represent the very best of America's youth, with nearly half of them posting perfect grade-point averages. With that said, I am certain we can rally more than the three applicants we had this year.

The actual selection process works much like a promotion or school selection board. Applications are reviewed for completeness, and identifying information, like names of parents or other relatives, is removed to prevent bias. Applicants are then grouped as freshmen, upperclassmen, and graduate students because some scholarships are limited to those groupings.

Board members review each file individually, looking at grades, areas of study, extra-curricular activities, references from teachers and others, and personal essays, to get a "whole person" picture. Each file is then scored by board members.

After the board members' scores are tabulated, an order of merit list is established and entered into a computer program according to the grants or loans for which they are eligible. This is a somewhat complicated process because some are open to applicants from a specific chapter or organization, others are open to freshmen only, or to freshmen women, and others are open for all groupings.

I hope we have many more applicants from our Association. Please go to DUSTOFF.org for more detailed information and the application to apply for a scholarship or loan.

—DUSTOFFer—



I would just like to say thank you for this prestigious award that will further my college life. Going to college is a major a step in a young person's life, and I would just like to say thank you for your aid in furthering my education. —Lucas R. Markham, son of SP5 Tommy R. Markham, recipient of 2006 Mike Novosel DUSTOFF Association Heritage Scholarship.

Military Truths

- Friendly fire—isn't.
- If it's stupid but it works, it isn't stupid.
- No battle plan ever survives contact with the enemy.
- There is no such thing as the perfect plan.
- Incoming fire has the right of way.
- Anything you do can get you killed, including nothing.
- Tracers work both ways.
- Military intelligence is a contradiction.
- Weather ain't neutral.
- Flies high, it dies; low and slow, it'll go.
- Killing for peace is like screwing for virginity.
- Exceptions prove the rule and destroy the battle plan.
- The worse the weather, the more you are required to be out in it.
- When reviewing the radio frequencies you just wrote down, the most important ones are always illegible.
- The tough part about being an officer is that the troops don't know what they want, but they know for certain what they don't want.
- A Purple Heart just proves you were smart enough to think of a plan, stupid enough to try it, and lucky enough to survive.
- All-weather close air support doesn't work in bad weather.