MOH recipient speaks to students

By MC3 Jeff Hopkins
Assistant Editor, VPE

One of the recipients of the nation’s highest honor, the Congressional Medal of Honor, spoke to medical students at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) on the topic of leadership, June 22.

LTC Alfred V. Rascon, USA, received the Medal of Honor Feb. 8, 2000, and is noted for having received the medal 34 years after he was nominated for the award. The paperwork for his nomination was lost for three decades before the men he served with learned he had not received the award. Of the approximately 3,400 recipients of the award, Rascon is one of less than 100 still living.

Rascon was a 21-year-old Army specialist, serving as a medic with the Army’s 173rd Airborne Brigade when the incident in which he earned his nomination took place. On March 16, 1966, Rascon’s unit was attacked by a large number of North Vietnamese troops near the Long Khanh province. Rascon disregarded his own safety numerous times, making his way to the front of the battle to provide aid to the wounded soldiers on the front line. In many cases, Rascon shielded the bodies of his fellow soldiers with his own, deflecting grenade shrapnel from the already wounded soldiers. He was also shot in the hip; the bullet traveled up around his spine and exited from his clavicle.

During the fray, Rascon also managed to retrieve a heavy machine gun lying forgotten in the battle, saving it from possible enemy use, and enabling another soldier to continue to provide suppressive machine gun fire.

Rascon was so heavily injured in battle that he was not expected to survive, and was given his last rites. However, after six months of recuperation at Johnson Army Hospital in Japan, he was back on his feet, and received a Silver Star Medal for his actions.

Rascon spoke to USU’s medical students on the topic of leadership and its importance in the military, not only to commissioned officers, but enlisted servicemembers as well.

“The thing a lot of us don’t realize is whether you like it or not, sooner or later, you’ll be thrust into a position of leadership,” Rascon said. “You may be ready for it, you may not be. But you lead by example.”

“I was given the medal in 2000, 34 years after I had been involved in Vietnam. Four or five days after the medal was given to me there were articles out in the paper. One of the articles was sent to me, written by an attorney, who said that he was in Vietnam with me in 1972 or 1973 when I was there on my ‘second summer vacation,’” he said. “The article read something like ‘I knew Lt Rascon, who was about to be a captain then. One night we knew we would be overrun, we’d been preparing for it for the day. Half an hour beforehand, Lt Rascon took the time to come up to each of us, and made us aware of the fact that things might be bad, but they might be ok. He came up to each of us and made us feel that we were wanted and that he cared about every one of us. The greatest thing was that he spoke to all of us the same way he spoke to others.’”

“I was never aware of that,” Rascon said. “I thought I was just doing my job, and 35 years later, I’m being told things that I did when I was a young Army officer. Leadership is something that a lot of us have, and that those of us who don’t have by nature, learn from the example of others.”

Rascon praised the students for their dedication to service.

“Ladies and gentlemen, you make my day, because of who you are and what you do, that you’re willing to come do something for your country,” he said.

Rascon is “an immigrant by birth, and an American by choice,” and wasn’t a full U.S. citizen, but a legal resident in the U.S. at the time of his heroic actions. He was born in Chihuahua, Mexico, and immigrated to the United States when he was young, settling in Oxnard, Fla.

After his speech, LTC Alfred Rascon received the book “Medics at War,” from 2LT John Knight, USA, SOM, Class of 2010.
USU faculty member receives Attending Physician of Year award

Dr. Jim Holliman, program manager of the Afghanistan Health care Sector Medical Reachback Program with the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences’ (USU) Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine (CDHAM), received two noteworthy honors from Penn State University where he spent 17 years practicing emergency medicine (EM) and teaching EM residents.

The first award was the “Kym A. Salness Attending Physician of the Year” award. Dr. Salness was the first chair of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center and Penn State College of Medicine.

The second award was started by Dr. Holliman’s emergency medicine residents: “The Jim Holliman Best Teaching Resident” award (for the senior resident who demonstrated the best teaching effort and ability).

Prior to coming to USU, Dr. Holliman served as professor of surgery and emergency medicine at M.S. Hershey Medical Center at Penn State. He was also director of the Center for International Emergency Medicine, and director of the International Emergency Medicine Fellowship Program. In addition, Dr. Holliman served as associate program director of the York-Hershey Emergency Medicine Residency Program at M. S. Hershey Medical Center and Medical Director of the City of Reading Fire Department, EMS Division. Dr. Holliman received his medical degree from Washington University 1979 and completed his residency in general surgery from the University of Utah in 1983. He has been a member of American College of Emergency Physicians since 1984.

In Honor of those who gave unselfishly of themselves: Annual Maryland Anatomy Board Memorial Ceremony

By MC3 Jeff Hopkins
Assistant Editor, Office of External Affairs

Students, faculty, and staff from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) attended the Maryland State Anatomy Board’s (MSAB) 34th annual memorial ceremony at a dedicated gravesite on the grounds of the Springfield Hospital Center in Sykesville, Md., July 18.

Each year, the MSAB holds a memorial ceremony for the people who, through the Anatomical Gift program, donated their bodies for the use of furthering medical education.

The ceremony included speeches from the chairman and vice-chairman of the MSAB, musical selections including “Amazing Grace,” sung by Springfield Hospital Center employees, and members of USU’s Joint Service Color Guard paraded the colors and ceremoniously folded the National Flag.

George Holborow, USU’s anatomical curator, as well as the administrator of USU’s Anatomical Gift program, and one of USU’s two MSAB members, said the ceremony is not only meant to honor the donors, but to provide closure for the donor’s families, as well as the students.

Holborow explained that the it also provides students with an opportunity to thank the donors for their addition to their education.

“This is their first patient,” Holborow said. “From these people, they learn to develop bedside manner, and learn respect for the patient. The memorial services give closure to the students as well, they get to say goodbye to their first patients.”

Capt Timothy Gerlach, USMC, USU Headquarters Company commander, recited the poem “Old Glory,” while SSgt Fabio Batista Sanchez, USAF, MPO, and SPC Walter Cruz, USA, LAM, members of USU’s Joint Service Color Guard, ceremoniously folded the National Flag during the Maryland Anatomy Board Memorial Ceremony.

Dr. Rosemary Borke, professor and vice chair of the Anatomy, Physiology, and Genetics department (APG), and USU’s second MSAB member, echoed Holborow’s thoughts, adding that the virtual anatomy simulations don’t quite give students the same intimate knowledge that the donors provide.

“The donors provide a wonderful way to advance health care. With the simulations, you only really get to learn anatomy in two dimensions. The donors help the students identify anatomical structures by relationship, and it really reinforces the lessons to experience anatomy in three dimensions, actually uses the senses, touching and seeing.”

Borke also said the student turnout at this year’s memorial was much higher than originally expected.

“I think the students have a real personal link to the person, because they benefited so much from learning from their first patient, and they want to be there to say goodbye and to show their appreciation to the families,” she said.

She said that the families of the deceased may not understand why they chose to donate their bodies to medical science, and that seeing the students at these ceremonies helps them let go.

Both Holborow and Borke said that the large student turnout this year was a tribute to the students’ appreciation for the donors. At first the students were going to arrive by van, but the number of students attending grew to require bus transportation.

“We had at least 60 or more students,” Borke said. “We even had some students from the previous class who couldn’t come the previous year due to prior plans.”
Students come to the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) from all walks of life. Some come from families with rich medical and military backgrounds, while others find their way to USU as the first in their family to wear a stethoscope or a pair of combat boots. At the end of their education at USU, however, they're more than acquainted with both.

2d Lt Jeff Martin, USAF, is a student of USU’s Graduate Education program, with the Department of Medical and Clinical Psychology, on the Military Clinical Psychology track.

Martin was born and raised in Beaumont, Texas, near the Texas-Louisiana border, and is the youngest of three children. His father is a county judge and owned several bars, and his mother is a contracts manager for an appliance store.

“Students come to USU as the first in their family to wear a stethoscope or a pair of combat boots. At the end of their education at USU, however, they’re more than acquainted with both.”

As an Air Force technical sergeant, he performed many roles as a Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) program instructor.

Martin cited his love for the outdoors and a passion for survivalist situations as his primary motivation for becoming a SERE instructor, as well as the spark that ignited his interest in psychology.

“One of the residential treatment centers I worked at was a therapeutic wilderness camp, so that kind of burst my interest in wilderness survival. Essentially we had kids out in the woods, and everything was cooked by fire, and I had horrible skills, I didn’t know what I was doing, so that kind of prompted the interest in wilderness survival as well as psychology,” Martin said. “So when I found out there was a job that entailed going to the woods to become an expert in wilderness survival, then to teach people how to evade, and you got to parachute and scuba dive and all these other things that pararescue did, I was absolutely into that.”

In his first few years as a SERE instructor, Martin taught the survival and evasion aspects of the course to aircrew members at Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash., in which he would escort six to 10 participants to a remote forest location, where for approximately one week, they would learn the basics of survival, and then the advanced skills of finding food and water, finding or creating shelter, making fire, and signaling, all without being detected.

“They’ll have some food, but at some points they have to find their own,” Martin said. “I’ve definitely had my share of being cold, wet, and hungry, and I’ve eaten things that most would not.”

“We take them to a remote, austere location, and it can quickly turn into a real survival situation even during training,” Martin said. “We don’t stop, even when the weather turns bad; in fact, that’s a prime opportunity. The lessons are very salient when it’s like, ‘you need to listen or you’re going to die.’”

At the end of the instructional portion of the course, the students are cut loose, and the instructors then become an ‘enemy force,’ attempting to track down the students, while they implement everything they’ve learned that week in an attempt to escape and evade undetected. Martin said it’s a huge challenge, as some of the students have never spent any time in a forest.

“Many of these military members have never been in the woods ever, in some cases have never been camping, and so to take them from that to a very advanced skill set, for instance you’re not using a tent, you’re using the type things you have off your aircraft in the event of an in-flight emergency, it’s a very profound sort of life changing experience for most of them,” Martin said. “To do that and then eventually cut them loose on an exercise and turn around and be an enemy force, and try to track them down, the goal is to have them come out more confident and more resilient, and have them know that they can do this if they need to.”

Martin provided the same type of training for flight doctors, nurses, and air evacuation technicians at Brooks AFB [now Brooks City-Base] in San Antonio, Texas, for the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, before returning to Fairchild as Operations Non-Commissioned Officer for the Resistance Training Laboratory, essentially a mock POW camp with a very realistic enemy force which trains students of the course to resist interrogation and exploitation by an extremely malevolent enemy. During that time he also completed his undergraduate studies in social psychology at Park University. He said that his daily job greatly reinforced the lessons in psychology he received in the evenings.

“It was really neat to learn about lessons in social psych at night and then the next day, see real examples of them: people with cognitive disso-
New look for Walter Reed National Military Medical Center

By Vern Schinski, Ph.D.
Special Assistant to the USU President for BRAC/Integration

The new Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC) will have a new look. The new ambulatory-care structure on the North side of the tower will match the new warrior-care addition on the front of the current in-patient facility, which will give the complex a symmetrical appearance from Wisconsin Avenue.

With the interest in warrior-care generated by the popular press in response to the recent issues at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, DoD leadership and Congress have planned for the accelerated construction of the WRNMMC.

The new plan calls for the renovation of existing intensive care beds, remodeling patient rooms into private rooms, addition of a family support space, and will also address other issues.

The plan will accelerate construction by nine months and add additional features at the cost of an additional $443 million. The renovation of 75 additional single patient rooms will begin in September and is scheduled for completion by March 2009.

The construction of the warrior care center is scheduled to begin in April, 2008 and to be completed by October, 2009. The remaining BRAC construction will also begin in April, and is scheduled to be completed by August 2010.

Nuclear/Radiological Threat and Effects Experts Share Latest Research Findings

Leading experts on worldwide nuclear and radiological response, radiobiology and the medical effects of exposure to ionizing radiation will present the current findings during an annual course at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences’ (USU) Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute (AFRRI), July 30 through Aug. 3, 2007.

The talks are part of the annual Medical Effects of Ionizing Radiation Course (MEIR): Scientific Update. The postgraduate-level instruction, with continuing education credits is intended primarily for military personnel, healthcare providers, senior disaster preparedness personnel, and operational planners.

The event will include a tour of the unique radiation facilities at AFRRI, a presentation by Albert Wiley, M.D., director of the Radiation Emergency Assistance Center and Training Site (REAC/TS), on radiation accidents and triage, and a presentation by Evan Douple, Ph.D., scholar at the National Academies, on the late effects of exposure to ionizing radiation.

In addition, the course will cover the biomedical consequences of radiation exposure, how the effects can be reduced, and how to medically manage casualties.

The course addresses these specific topics: fundamentals of ionizing radiation, ionizing radiation interactions with cells and organs, diagnosis and treatment of acute radiation syndromes and combined injuries, psychological effects of radiation exposure, internal radionuclide contamination, radiological defense, and radioprotection. Students are acquainted with the hazards of ionizing radiation, radiation pathology, human exposure resulting from radiation accidents, consequences of nuclear weapons detonation, and nuclear accident response by government organizations.

MARTIN, continued from page 4

nance; people coping with an extreme stressor; and how different people cope; what makes one person rise up to the challenge, and another person not do as well, and how we can effect that through training? It got me into psychology to address that on a broader scale,” he said.

Martin said he learned about USU when he was at Brooks, from flight doctors who heard of his interest in psychology. He says he feels very fortunate to receive his degree here, and praises USU’s scientist-practitioner approach to education.

“Psychologists in the military bring something important to the table, and that’s the ability, especially with the scientist practitioner model they employ here,” Martin said. “You end up with a psychologist that can not only do the clinical and therapy work, but also is enough of a scientist so they can evaluate processes. It teaches students to be able to look at training effectiveness and ask, ‘Is there a way we can make it more effective?’ This helps high functioning operational units, and enables us to feed commanders ways to improve their organizational structures, give them some tools and techniques to improve unit morale. It provides a social psychology perspective and an organizational psychology perspective, and I think this school is the best at encompassing all of those agendas.”

Post-graduation, Martin said he’d like to go overseas, and possibly complete a tour of duty at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, one of the first places to which wounded warriors from theaters of battle in Iraq and Afghanistan are evacuated. He said he’d like to be able to help wounded servicemembers get ready to return stateside.

In the precious time Martin isn’t studying, he turns to music and exercise, his longtime hobbies.

“I play guitar whenever I can. I’m a musician and a triathlete. I still try to find time to train. That’s one of the keys to surviving this experience is to stay engaged in your hobbies,” Martin said.

Martin’s wife Melissa is also no stranger to USU. She works as an accounting specialist in the Financial Management department, and is the president of USU’s Student Spouses Club.

“She’s also from the Beaumont area. We met in Texas, and have been married for ten years. We met through mutual friends and have literally been together ever since. I pretty much knew right off the bat she was the one,” Martin said. “She is definitely the secret to my success.”
USU’s Anatomical Curator receives Faculty Senate Appreciation Award

By MC3 Jeff Hopkins
Assistant Editor, Office of External Affairs

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) Faculty Senate recognized the recipient of the Faculty Senate Appreciation Award during the senate’s meeting June 26.

George Holborow is the anatomical curator for USU’s Anatomical Teaching Laboratory (ATL) as well as a retired Senior Chief Petty Officer of the U.S. Navy Reserve, and the administrator of USU’s Anatomical Gift program, through which people can donate their bodies post-mortem to the advancement of medical science. He is a “brick-owner,” having been with the university from the start.

“I’ve been here since May 3, 1976,” he said. “in Navy-terms, I am what would be called a ‘plank-owner.’”

Holborow’s dedication to education, research, and patient care earned him the award, said CDR Gerald Denton, MC, USN, an assistant professor for the Department of Medicine (MED) and president of the Faculty Senate.

“Mr. Holborow has consistently supported education, faculty research, and patient care for many years. He is approachable and supportive of faculty endeavors and works tirelessly to ensure that appropriate cadaveric specimens are available for teaching, research, and patient care related activities,” he said. “He runs a safe, well kept ATL that is conducive to education. Recent additions include plasma screen monitors to simulcast dissections. He supports many courses for medical students, GME, and CME, including USU courses like the annual Spine/Peripheral Nerve and War Surgery Courses. Mr. Holborow is well-deserving of the Faculty Senate Appreciation Award.”

The Faculty Senate Appreciation Award is presented for outstanding support to the faculty. It may be given annually to any employee of USU, but does not have to be given every year. The faculty senate discusses and presents the award.

Holborow was taken by surprise by the honor; he had just departed on leave when the notification came through by email, and he didn’t receive it until just three hours before the meeting in which he was recognized.

“I am very humbled, but also very pleased to have received this honor,” Holborow said. “I was a little speechless. I thought, ‘wow, what an honor to be bestowed upon me.’”

Holborow said what he has enjoyed most about his time at USU is the opportunity he has in his position to interact with everyone in the university, from the custodial personnel to Dr. Rice, and that he has a hand in producing what he said he feels is the finest kind of doctor, the medical officer.

USU hosts second annual Science, Service, Medicine, and Mentoring program

The Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) Office of Recruitment and Diversity will host the annual Science, Service, Medicine, and Mentoring (S2M2) program for high school students, July 2-7, 2007 at the Bladensburg Community Center, Landover, Md. The S2M2 program is for students between ages 14 and 17 who have completed ninth grade biology and are interested in pursuing a career in science, engineering, and/or medicine.

This unique program incorporates didactic sessions including presentations and discussions on health disparities, college preparation and financial aid options, and allied health care careers. S2M2 also allows the students, who are from a variety of ethnic, educational, and economic backgrounds, to experience the medical profession with hands-on exercises in emergency medical training and surgical skills training. Some field trips include the National Museum of Health and Medicine at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, National Capital Area Simulation Center and the Navy Ship U.S.S. Barry. Students will also observe surgery at the National Naval Medical Center.

The mission of the program is to encourage, nurture, and enhance the commitment to science and medicine in a welcoming and intellectually stimulating environment for groups of diverse high school students. The USU Office of Recruitment and Diversity is committed to helping build a student body that mirrors the diversity of the nation by providing support to student groups that celebrate that diversity, but share common interests in their future education.

During the week-long program, students fulfill several different learning objectives, such as: describing two common diseases of the eye; demonstrating proper technique in surgical scrubbing; describing two aspects of living with a disability; and being able to describe two important aspects in the care of laboratory animals.

“This whole week has been a great experience,” said Tamara Michaels, a previous participant in the S2M2 from Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart. “I’m definitely planning to attend medical school, and this program has taught me a lot about what to expect.”

A health fair on July 14 at the Community Center is a culmination of the week’s studies where the students have an opportunity to display their posters and present knowledge gained from participating in the program. S2M2 sessions will also be held at USU on July 23-27 and August 6-10.
USU News Briefs

Change of Command Ceremony:
The Brigade Commander, LTC John Maurer, USA, will change command with COL Jack Wempe, USA on Aug. 10, at 10 a.m. in the USU Courtyard. This is a mandatory event for all Brigade faculty, staff, and students. Uniform will be BDUs/ACUs/Cammies.

Brigade Training Holiday:
The USU Brigade will have a training holiday on July 3 and 5 in conjunction with the federal holiday on July 4. Liberty will commence at the close of business on Monday, July 2, and will expire at the open of business on Friday, July 6.

Promotions:
LCDR Dye, USPHS (GSN) will be promoted to CDR on June 29 at 10 a.m. in the Small Dining Room; CPT Burke, USA (PMB) will be promoted to MAJ on Jun 29 at 2 p.m. in the Small Dining Room; and LT Lawrence, USN (PMB) will be promoted to LCDR on July 2 at 4:15 p.m. in the Brigade Quarterdeck area in Bldg C. All are invited and encouraged to attend these upcoming promotion ceremonies. Additionally, TSgt Stewart, USAF (AFRRI) recently was selected for promotion to MSgt, and SSgt Davis, USAF (BDE) was recently selected for promotion to TSgt. Congratulations to them all.

Kerkesner and Bushmaster Exercises:
The USU Joint-Exercises, Operations Bushmaster and Kerkesner, will be held at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., and will require personnel support from July 8-20. Select personnel will be leaving on July 5, and have already been notified. There will be a formation for the main body on July 8 at 4:30 p.m. in the USU Breezeway between Building B and C, with a departure time of 5 p.m. Additional information for staff, faculty, and students involved in the upcoming exercises will be forthcoming from the Joint-Exercise NCOIC, SFC Abram, USA (MEM) at (301) 319-8207.

Brigade Photo:
The USU Brigade will take its annual photo on Aug. 2 at 7:15 a.m. at the USU Amphitheater. This photo opportunity is for all Brigade faculty and staff, officers and enlisted. Uniform for this event will be Service Dress Blues for Navy, Class A for Army, and Service Dress for Air Force.

Parenting Workshop:
There will be a four-part Relationship Enhancement workshop intended to assist couples in continuing to develop their relationship. This event will be held at the FFSO Atrium in Bldg 11 at NNMC from June 25-28 from 11 a.m.-noon and is open to service members and their family members. If you are interested in registering for this class, you may contact PMGrossman@Bethesda.med.navy.mil.

4th of July Safety Message:
This Fourth of July, we celebrate our nation’s 231st anniversary of independence. We take this time to honor those who had the courage to fight for freedom and establish our great country. Celebrate our nation’s independence, but include risk management in all your activities. Motorcyclists - make sure your people have completed the required training, use the proper gear, ride defensively, and obey the speed limits and traffic laws. Additionally, don’t drive a motorcycle or any vehicle if you’re fatigued. Swimming - know how to recognize the presence of rip tides, and if caught in one, swim perpendicular to the current until you’re clear of it, and then swim ashore. Use the buddy system, never swim alone, and always swim where there are lifeguards on duty. Boating - know and follow the rules of the water, be familiar with the area in which you are boating, be alert for dams, submerged obstacles, jet skiers and swimmers in the water, and stay hydrated! Fireworks - don’t hold fireworks in your hand, keep a safe distance from them once lit, don’t use airborne fireworks around housing or combustible areas, have a plan to extinguish fires, and keep children at a safe distance. Remember to drink responsibly - if someone has had too much to drink, make sure they get home safe. All personnel are responsible for managing risk, avoiding hazards and taking precautions to protect themselves and their families. Enjoy this Fourth of July, and everyone return to work rested, recharged, and ready to proudly serve our nation.

King’s Dominion Star-Spangled Salute:
King’s Dominion will offer discount tickets for advance purchase for July 3 for service members to commemorate the fourth of July. For more info or to access this link, go to http://www2.cedarfair.com/kingsdominion/shop/shopping_corporate_partners_list.cfm.

Assistant Secretary of Defense visits USU for Graduate Medical Education summit

A Graduate Medical Education (GME) Summit sponsored by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr. S. Ward Cassells and hosted by the President of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences Dr. Charles Rice was held June 28 and 29. The conference, titled “GME: A Core Requirement for the Military Health System” was attended by leaders in medical education from DOD, the three services, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The meeting, which provided a forum for the frank discussion of the critical issues facing military GME, was highlighted by presentations by national experts in medical economics, medical education and physician supply and demand.
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