



SAPA JOURNAL



The Society of Army Physician Assistants

P O Box 07490, Fort Myers, FL 33919 Phone & Fax (239) 482-2162

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A Civilian Organization Representing Army PAs

Mar/Apr 2006

MAJ Womack, PA-C, in Afghanistan Officially Unveiled!

From SP Corps Connection Jan 06



MAJ Womack, PA-C, and ILE group at unveiling.



MAJ Womack, PA-C, at unveiling of "Have Stethoscope Will Travel."

The painting, "Have Stethoscope Will Travel," by artist Stewart Wavell-Smith, was officially unveiled on 8 December 2005 at the US Army Women's Museum at Fort Lee, Virginia. It is part of a new exhibit which opens in April or May 2006. The exhibit will be titled "Army Women; Combating Global Terrorism." Mr. Wavell-Smith traveled to Afghanistan as an artist and saw firsthand our troops and the coalition forces. He reported in drawings and sketches his impressions of "Operation Enduring Freedom." While in Afghanistan he worked with other Combat Photographers and gathered many photographic references to incorporate into his paintings. Two Combat Camera Photographers the artist wishes to recognize are TSgt Jeremy Lock and WO2 Mike Buytas from C.C. Charleston AFB. In working with and seeing the medical care provided in OEF he was moved to honor these amazing healers in a painting or paintings. From a photo taken by TSgt Lock, he composed a 3 foot by 4 foot painting of MAJ Sherry Lynn Womack attending to a little Pashtun girl being held by her big brother. This image in the artist's mind captured why we were there and the heart of our Soldiers reaching

out to strangers in a hostile and strange land. His painting, "Have Stethoscope Will Travel," comes from an old television series "Have Gun Will Travel," and is the first of twenty-seven paintings that honor American and Coalition forces in Operation Enduring Freedom. The US Army Women's Museum is also working with the Kentucky National Guard and hopes to have a life-size diorama depicting SGT Leigh Ann Hester and her MP section in Iraq on 20 March 2005. SGT Hester was awarded the Silver Star for heroism in combat on that day. She became the first Army woman since WWII to be awarded the Silver Star. Both the diorama and the Womack painting will be important parts of the exhibit. For the record, MAJ Womack asked that we include her gratitude and support to her fellow PAs, particularly CPT George Midla, CPT Larry Carpenter, and MAJ Doug McDowell—her hero PAs from OEF!

SAPA President Responds to Distasteful Political Cartoon

Mr. Philip Bennet
Managing Editor, The Washington Post
1150 15th Street NW
Washington, DC 20071

To the Editor of the Washington Post

I am writing this letter in response to the distasteful political cartoon posted in your newspaper on page B6 by Tom Toles in the January 29th edition. I am the president of the Society of Army Physician Assistants. We are a civilian organization whose main purpose is to speak for the Active Duty military Physician Assistants and as an extension, the active duty military member and their families. The majority of our members are military veterans of previous and current wars/police actions/skirmishes' and campaigns. We have been on the front line taking care of our military in the thick of action to bring them home. We are proud of our Active Duty, Reservists and National Guard members. We are proud to stand up next to them, with them and serve them as they serve our country. Even though our forces are all volunteers, the members have no choice or say in which areas of conflict they might serve. They have no choice which patrols they might pull and they certainly do not have a choice of which type of wound they might incur in the service of their country to preserve the rights and privileges of this country.

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The SAPA Journal staff and SAPA Board of Directors encourages membership participation in this publication. Feel free to use this forum to present your views on any topic you desire. The publication of clinical articles on any subject is also solicited, however, to reduce our workload, we do request articles be presented typed, double-spaced format, and on 8 1/2 x 11 inch white bond paper or on CD or floppy", IBM compatible, in Microsoft Word format. The editor reserves the right of final acceptance of articles as well as the right to serialize articles which are too lengthy to be included in a single issue.

The SAPA Journal is the official publication of the Society of Army Physician Assistants. The views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the editors, SAPA, the SAPA Board of Directors or the Department of the Army unless explicitly expressed as such

This is not an official Army Publication.

You, on the other hand, have choices. You can choose to support our military members even if you choose not to support the policies that have put them in harm's way. You can choose to help their morale and mental well being by letting them know that you support them in their efforts to serve and support this country. I served this country for twenty-five and one-half years. I served as a medic in Vietnam and continued to serve afterwards. I can tell you from personal experience the pain, frustration and low morale our servicemen/women experienced from the attacks of the 'free' press (and the press was and is free because of the military member protecting it) during that time in our history. You can choose to put into political cartoons' anyone you wish, but I ask you to remember that the military member cannot defend himself/herself against such attacks as you have promulgated. The military cannot organize itself into a political body or any type of organization other than what it is, that is an organization designed to protect you and your rights. History has shown that the Viet Cong were 90 days from giving up until the 'free' press started to support them and not support our military. Is history going to repeat itself, have you as the press not learned from history? I was taught that the news media was to report the news, not make it (or has 1984 finally arrived?).

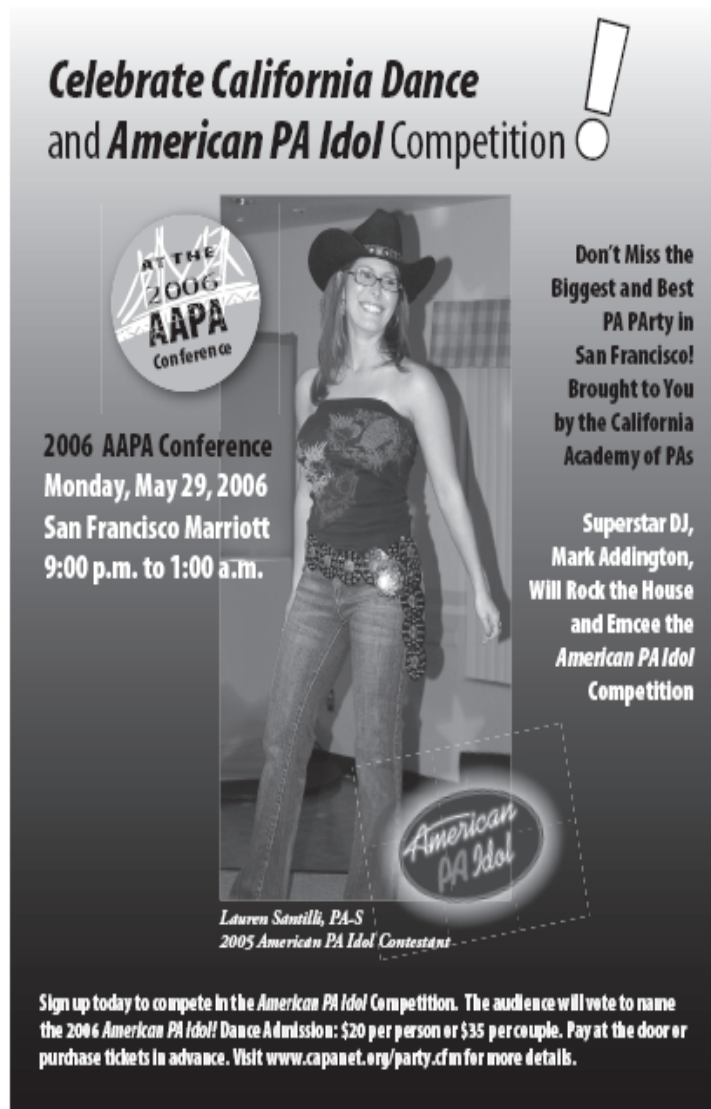
As long as the editors of the Washington Post continue to hold the military members in contempt, and continue to publish despicable, abhorrent, mean spirited cartoon depictions of our military members, I will urge the membership of SAPA as a whole to boycott your publication, I will urge the military families as a whole to boycott your publications. I will urge the membership and military families to recognize who your advertisers and sponsors are and to write to them in protest and to boycott those advertisers and sponsors. The owners and editors of the Washington Post should be ashamed of the treatment you have given to our military members. You should be praying for the safety and well being of our military instead of stabbing them in the back with extreme political cartoons. I ask, no, I demand an apology to be given our military members and further demand that you not involve the military members in your mean spirited political cartoons. Stop demeaning those that cannot defend themselves or answer you back. Stand up, be courageous like our military who stand up courageously for your rights.

I fully expect this not to be published by you in your newspaper, but it will be published in the SAPA newsletter and sent to the Veterans Caucus of the American Academy of Physician Assistants and any other national publication that will disseminate truth, honor and morale support for our troops.

Sincerely,
 Rev. Stephen W. Ward, MPAS, PA-C
 US Army Retired (Maj)
 President,
 Society of Army Physician Assistants

CALL FOR ARTICLES

I've worked on seven issues of the newsletter now and I find myself all out of ideas. Not unusual for me. That being said, I am in need of your help. I don't know how Hal did it for all those years, but I'm sure one of his most difficult challenges was trying to get enough articles to publish in the newsletter. An experience I can relate to. Come on folks, I know there's a lot of talent out there. Send me your articles and I'll do my best to get them in upcoming issues. Thanks. (CB)



**Celebrate California Dance
and American PA Idol Competition**

AT THE
**2006
AAPA
Conference**

**2006 AAPA Conference
Monday, May 29, 2006
San Francisco Marriott
9:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.**

**Don't Miss the
Biggest and Best
PA Party in
San Francisco!
Brought to You
by the California
Academy of PAs**

**Superstar DJ,
Mark Addington,
Will Rock the House
and Emcee the
American PA Idol
Competition**

*Lauren Santilli, PA-S
2005 American PA Idol Contestant*

Sign up today to compete in the American PA Idol Competition. The audience will vote to name the 2006 American PA Idol! Dance Admission: \$20 per person or \$35 per couple. Pay at the door or purchase tickets in advance. Visit www.capanet.org/party.cfm for more details.

Improved First Aid Kit (IFAK)

By Donald L. Parsons PA-C

A small convoy of military vehicles drives down a dusty road in Iraq. There is suddenly a load explosion and a cloud of dust and smoke envelops the vehicles. There are screams from injured soldiers and chaos overwhelms those who are not hurt trying to figure out what just happened. As the dust clears there are the burning remains of an up-armored M114. Three soldiers riding in that vehicle lay scattered on the ground around its remains. They are in various conditions of injury, one is missing an arm and leg, another is unconscious with multiple fragmentation wounds along his right side, the side closest to the explosive device, and the last poor soul lies in a pool of blood with a large gaping wound to the right side of his head, he is beyond repair. The only medical equipment each soldier carries is an outdated battle dressing in a compass pouch. This battle dressing has been the standard first aid dressing since the Korean War, and is the only piece of medical equipment carried by individual soldiers. For the soldiers injured in today's attack it will do little to treat their injuries. If only the uninjured soldiers had some way to treat the life threatening injuries their buddies have incurred. This would have been a tragic scene several months ago but these soldiers have just been issued their new Improved First Aid Kit (IFAK). Within this kit is enough medical equipment to treat the most preventable causes of death and injury in combat today.



CME OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of PA Education at Stony Brook University is proud to present the:

31st Annual Board Review and Post Graduate Program for Physician Assistants

Dates: August 16-20, 2006

Place: Level 2, Health Sciences Center Stony Brook University
Stony Brook, New York 11794-8202

Registration Fee: \$375 for PA students or new graduates who are not certified; \$350 for groups of 10 or more students registering together. This five day course is packed full of key information pertinent to reviewing for the PANCE and PANRE. Each lecturer describes the key signs and symptoms, diagnosis and management for many of the topics noted in the NCCPA blueprint. The registration fee includes course syllabus, self test questions and answers, daily parking and door prizes, 10% discount at Matthews HSC bookstore, refreshment breaks and a complimentary Asian dinner reception.

Visit our website to view the brochure and registration form:
<http://www.hsc.stonybrook.edu/shtm/programs/pa/boardreview.html>

Connecticut APA is presenting its 19th Annual Charter Oak Conference

If you have not already posted our conference on your web site CME calendar, we would appreciate the courtesy and encourage you to send us your conference basics for our web site.

19th Annual Charter Oak Conference
Monday, March 27 - Friday, March 31, 2006
Water's Edge Resort

Westbrook, CT
34 Category One CME credits
For details: www.connapa.org or call 800/493-9200
Charter Oak Conference Pre-conference Symposium
Sunday, March 26, 2006

Water's Edge Resort
Westbrook, CT
4 Category One CME credits

presented by the Connecticut Academy of Physician Assistants
For details: www.connapa.org or call 800/493-9200

The Pennsylvania Society of Physician Assistants welcomes you to the: 31st Annual CME conference

CME 25 Hours-Category 1
October 4-7, 2006
Harrisburg Hilton,
Harrisburg Pennsylvania

Refer to the web site for details about scheduling, registration, hotel, and attractions
www.pspa.net

101st Captain Remembered as Family Man

By THOMYA HOGAN

The Leaf-Chronicle



A Fort Campbell soldier killed in Iraq last week is being remembered by his family as someone who was into being healthy, had a strong work ethic and loved his family. Post officials Monday announced the death of Capt. Anthony R. Garcia, 48, of Texas. Garcia, a physician assistant assigned to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 101st Aviation Regiment, 101st Aviation Brigade, was the first person from the brigade to die in Iraq since the division deployed in September.

Garcia's wife, Doris, described her husband of 20 years as an "awesome guy" who was into running and weight-lifting. Most importantly, she said, he was very much into his family. "He really was such a family man. He loved his kids and doing stuff together. We'll just miss him so much," she said. Monico Garcia, Capt. Garcia's father, said his son was a "normal boy" who participated in Boy Scouts and Little League baseball as a child. His father said he worked while he was in high school and was determined to go to college. "That was his thing — higher education, to get a job and pay enough for the things he wanted and needed," Mr. Garcia said from his home in Hudson Oaks, Texas. "He was work-oriented to get the things he wanted. He was a happy person. He liked to kid people a lot and do fun things." Post officials Monday did not say whether Garcia's injuries were combat-related, nor did they release any details about the nature of his injuries. Cathy Grambling, a spokeswoman for Fort Campbell, confirmed Garcia was shot on a military base in Tikrit on Friday. "It's currently under investigation. Until that's completed, I can't answer that," said Fort Campbell spokesman Maj. Chris Belcher. Capt. Garcia joined the Army in August 1989 and arrived at Fort Campbell in June 2001. His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Achievement Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Ribbon, Combat Infantryman Badge, Combat Medical Badge, Pathfinder Badge, Ranger Tab, Scuba Diver Badge, Special Forces Tab, Southwest Asia Service Medal, Kuwait Liberation Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal and Global War on Terrorism Service Medal. In addition to his wife and father, Capt. Garcia is survived by his daughter, Kelly, and son, Garrick, both of Clarksville; his mother, JoAnn Garcia, of Hudson Oaks; two sisters, Monica Ann Schnidman and Lisa Gail Shriver; and a brother, Gregory J. Garcia. Copyright 2006, The Leaf-Chronicle.

In Loving Memory of Arthur T. Olssen

Retired Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 Arthur Theodore "Doc" Olsson, 65, of 3609 Wyatt St., Fayetteville, peacefully went home to be with his heavenly Father, Wednesday, March 1, 2006, in his home. He was surrounded by his beloved wife, Pat, of 45 years; his daughter, Brenda Olsson-Ross; and a granddaughter, Abi Ross. Art Olsson was born Feb. 5, 1941 in the Bronx, N.Y., to his parents, Olof Olsson of Kalisholm, Sweden and Edith Petterson-Olsson of Guttenberg, Sweden.

At the age of 17, Art Olsson entered the Army and became a medic, stationed on Fort Dix, N.J., working in the recovery/intensive care units and met Pat while she was working as an operating room scrub technician. Their marriage took place on March 10, 1961, in the chapel of Walson Army Hospital on Fort Dix. Mr. Olsson was transferred to Heidelberg, Germany, for two years, after two weeks of marriage.

In 1963, he was assigned to Fort Bragg, where he became a licensed practical nurse. In November 1965, Mr. Olsson was transferred to Gelenhausen, Germany, and after a year, transferred to Bad Tolez, Germany, where he joined the 10th Special Forces Group as a team medic. He and his family returned to Fort Bragg in 1967 and remained assigned there until 1973. During that time, he was in the Vietnam War for two tours, 1967 to 1968 and 1970 to 1971. He was in charge of the hospital there, caring for both wounded military and civilians. After serving with Special Forces, Mr. Olsson was accepted into the physicians assistant school on Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

He retired from the Army after proudly serving for 30 years. Never one to sit still, Mr. Olsson worked at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center, where he practiced his specialty and love of orthopedics. After suffering a mild stroke, Mr. Olsson again retired. Again, this would be a short break for him. In April 2002, Mr. Olsson got his dream job, teaching the Special Forces medics. Doc Olsson was a gifted teacher and shared his love of medicine with others. Doc Olsson's legacy will live on with those he trained and those who were saved because of medics he taught. Doc Olsson will be missed by those who loved and knew him.

Mr. Olsson is survived by his wife, Pat; a daughter and son-in-law, Brenda and John Ross; a granddaughter, Abi; a grandson, Clancy; a stepson and wife, Jim and Teresa Zilinsky, Lydia, James and Jon; his son, Danny of Washington, D.C.; two brothers, Eddie Olsson and Roy Olsson; sister, Irene Taylor; and sister-in-law, Marsha Moore. The family would like to thank Liberty Hospice for their support and love, Northview Baptist Church and the men of the Special Forces. Mr. Olsson received numerous awards, including the Legion of Merit, the Bronze Star Medal with two oak leaf clusters, two Purple Hearts, the Army Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Army Presidential Unit Citation, Meritorious Unit Commendation, five Army Good Conduct Medals, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, NCO Professional Development Ribbon and the Army Service Ribbon.

He also received three Overseas Service Ribbons, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Combat Medical Badge, Parachute Badge, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross Unit Citation with Palm and Vietnam Jump Wings. A graveside service with full military honors was conducted at 1 p.m. Saturday, March 4, 2006, in Lafayette Memorial Park West, with the Rev. Roger Gafgan officiating.

Job Opportunity

Valley Day and Night Clinic is recruiting experienced military (preferably Army) PAs with background in primary care, minor emergency, family practice, orthopedic experience and minor surgical repairs.

Salary based on experience
Relocation to be discussed during interview.
POC Dr. C. Lynn Anderson and/or Abel Montes, PA-C (956-546-1000)
Valley Day and Night Clinic
1755 W. Price Rd.

ATTN: Abel Montes, PA-C
Brownsville, TX 78520
956-546-1000
fax: 956-504-9808

Human Resources Command Updates

Received By COL Sherry Morrey, PA-C

Non-Physician Board Certification Pay

Since January 2005, graduates of Interservice Physician Assistant Program (IPAP) obtain a BS degree upon successful completion of Phase 1 (didactic) training and a Masters of Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) at graduation of Phase 2 (clinical) training. In doing so, IPAP graduates are now entering their new profession with a master's degree. HQDA Message 211328Z Mar 97, SUBJECT: Revised Eligibility Criteria for Diplomate Pay for Psychologist and Board Certification Pay for Nonphysician Health Care Providers outlined eligibility criteria to receive board certification pay. A strict interpretation of that message by the HRC Special Pays Section deemed IPAP graduated receiving the MPAS as not eligible for board certification pay since the master's degree was the entry level degree. COL DeMars, Chief, Army Medical Specialist Corps, asked HRC to review this issue since there are very few advanced degree options for PAs. A legal review was conducted which resulted in support for a change in policy which would recognize eligibility for board certification pay for IPAP graduates. The legal review also supported a retroactive granting of eligibility to all IPAP graduates starting with Class 1-03 which graduated in January 2005. Mr. Greg Buss from the Army's HRC Special Pays Section will be coordinating the effort to staff this request for policy change with all 3 services and the Coast Guard. IPAP graduated from Class 1-03 and thereafter are asked not to forward their requests for board certification pay to MAJ Balser at this time but to stay alert for a future announcement of approval of the policy change and further instructions on who to apply for board certification pay.

Constructive Service Credit Upon Graduation from IPAP

At the time that the IPAP was advanced to a master's level program, the matter of constructive service credit (CSC) for time in grade (TIG) upon graduation was considered. The Army and Air Force proponents decided their graduates would be granted 12 months on CSC at graduation. This 12 month CSC decision was based on interpretation of the Paragraph E3.1.2.2.2 of DODI 6013, Medical Manpower and Personnel. The instruction states that credit may not include time spent in attainment of a baccalaureate or lower degree. Thus, the 12 months of IPAP Phase 2 training was recognized as

worthy of 12 months TIG as a Second Lieutenant upon graduation of IPAP. On October 1, 2005, the Navy commissioned their first MPAS graduates at the grade of 0-2. In November 2005, the Air Force PA Consultant to the Air Force Surgeon General petitioned Air Force Personnel for accession of IPAP AF PA graduates at the grade of 0-2 and approval was granted.

COL DeMars and COL Tozier addressed this matter at a senior leadership conference several months ago. The SP leadership decided to propose a change in Army policy such that newly assessed 65A, 65C, and 65D officers who have obtained a master's degree in their specialty would enter the Army at the grade of 0-2. A legal review of this proposed policy change resulted in favorable consideration. HRC has initiated the staff action to obtain approval by the Office of the Surgeon General to adjust the CSC granted to these newly accessed officers. This staff action includes a request that this change be retroactive to January 2005, which would result in the adjustment of dates of rank for all IPAP graduates in Class 1-03 and thereafter. The SP community will be notified of progress on this initiative through the SP website and "SP Connection".

Beware of the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit Scam Received from American Academy of Physician Assistants Reimbursement Watch

You may want to warn beneficiaries about a scam, known as the **\$299 Ring**, which uses the Prescription Drug plan as a way to bilk money from seniors. Reports are coming into Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services from Georgia, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania alleging that seniors are being contacted by a company asking that the beneficiary pay \$299 and provide personal checking account information to enroll in the prescription plan. Enrollment into the drug plan, of course, is free. Legitimate drug plans will not ask for payment or bank account information over the phone. The beneficiary is responsible for the monthly premium after enrolling. That premium is typically set up as an automatic withdrawal from the beneficiary's Social Security check, but may be set up as an automatic deduction from a checking account. Depending on the plan, beneficiaries may also elect to write a check each month to pay the premium.

Reports of this type of activity should be made to local law enforcement agencies or by calling 1-877-7SAFERX (1-877-722-3379). Complaints registered thus far have led to investigations. It appears the companies engaging in this illegal activity are based outside of the United States.

Inventory Initiatives By COL William Tozier

Several initiatives to resolve the PA inventory shortage were proposed at a workshop convened by COL DeMars, SP Corps Chief, in May 2005. The following is a report of their progress:

1. **Critical Skills Retention Bonus (CSRB)** – This is the first ever retention bonus proposed for PAs. This initiative was quickly formulated and approved by TSG in July 2005. Since then it has progressed through a series of approval stages. CSRB monies are already allocated to the services, thus no special funding was required from Congress. The CSRB, if approved, would pay a bonus

that increases with every year of obligation, ranging from 1 to 4 years. The amounts have not been announced and are subject to change until the final time of approval. This is a temporary measure, instituted for FY06, FY07, and FY08. All PAs in the active component would be eligible. The amount would be paid in a lump sum at the beginning of each fiscal year. Accepting the CSRB would incur an obligation to be served consecutively with any other obligation. Even though PAs would be receiving the money in this fiscal year, if they had outstanding obligations such as incurred with the IPAP, they would have the additional CSRB obligation tacked on the remaining current obligation time. At this time the CSRB is on the desk of the final approving agency with one of the Assistant Secretaries of the Army. The TSG continues to actively push for it's approval.

2. **Special Pay** – At the same time the CSRB was proposed an action was initiated for PA special pay. Unlike the temporary CSRB, this would be a permanent pay, like the physicians receive. Also, this requires Congressional approval and then Congressional funding. So this measure will take at least two years. This measure has been staffed, but is awaiting approval to move forward to Congress. A special note. Mr Craig Buss who works Special Pays at Human Relations Command (PERSCOM now HRC) has been instrumental in finalizing and coordinating both the CSRB and Special Pay. Mr. Buss is also a practicing PA in his spare time!

3. **Civilian Accessions and Health Professions Loan Repayment Program (HPLRP)** – The US Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) was given a mission last fall to access 20 civilian PAs. A loan repayment program, HPLRP, was also established to entice recent civilian graduates on active duty. The average civilian PA incurs a \$47,000 debt while attending PA school and has the potential for a starting salary of \$67,000. Loan repayment is one way to equalize the money differences for the first few years on active duty. To date, USAREC has accessed 14 PAs on active duty. Only a couple have utilized the loan repayment. Over 95% are prior military (various branches and components), so this has been a successful program

4. Finally, a big issue has been the low number of applicants to the IPAP. With lower numbers of applicants the program has had to accept minimally qualified students. This has resulted in a high attrition rate at the IPAP, and lower numbers of graduating students. Since the mission has been increased from 55 active component PAs starting a year in 2004 to 95 in 2007, a great marketing campaign was initiated. PAs held meetings on their posts, advertising increased in various journals and newspapers, and recruiters and PAs went to PA programs and CME events. The efforts started by CPT Ron Carden and now CPT James Jones at USAREC have almost overwhelmed the system. It is expected that between 500 and 700 applicants may be screened for the IPAP this year, as opposed to less than 100 over each of the last 5 years.

Commentary – As I close out my four years as Senior PA, during which we went from 100 PAs over strength to 100 PAs under strength in two year, I have some observations about our future.

First, the inventory shortage will be resolved. When will we be back at full strength? There are many factors that affect a prediction – the rate of losses from retirement, release from active duty, and

medical losses; the rate of accessions, both from the IPAP and civilian recruiting; and the rate of retention. Variables that affect these rates will be the continued operational tempo and success of the CSRB if passed. Considering all these factors I believe we will fulfill requirements some time in 2010 and may again have an excess inventory by 2011. While that seems a long way off, each year starting with this year, will be better than last. That means more PAs to share the workload and more training opportunities.

Second, Army PA growth is a clear testimonial to the excellence of our performance. No other AOC in the AMEDD has grown or is as much demand as PAs. While this popularity and success have brought a strain, one should always remember the positive image that we have in the Army and the AMEDD.

Ranger Recognized for Excellence by Army Surgeon General

By Kim Laudano

75th Ranger Regiment Public Affairs Office



Capt. John F. Detro, Physician Assistant, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, receives the Surgeon General's Physician Assistant Recognition award from Colonel William Tozier, Assistant Corps Chief, Physician Assistant Section, Army Medical Specialist Corps, during a ceremony at Fort Benning, Ga.

FORT BENNING, Ga. (USASOC News Service, Mar. 27, 2006) – An Army Ranger was presented the 2006 Surgeon General's Physician Assistant Recognition Award during a ceremony here Mar. 24.

Capt. John F. Detro, Physician Assistant, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, received the award for outstanding contributions to military medicine. Detro was nominated for the award by Col. James R. Ficke, who was the Deputy Commander of Clinical Services at the 228th Combat Support Hospital during Detro's last combat deployment.

The Physician Assistant award is given to one active duty Army physician annually. Commanders nominate Soldiers for the award and then the submissions are reviewed by an appointed board that makes recommended selections for the Surgeon General to approve. A Soldier may only receive the award once in his or her career.

"(Capt. Detro) distinguished himself as one of the U.S. Army's finest medical providers while deployed with the (3rd Ranger) Battalion to northern Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from July through November 2005," he said in Detro's nomination packet. "He clearly exemplifies the selfless service, leadership and dedication that have given Army physician assistants their sterling reputation in combat casualty care."

During that deployment, Detro participated in more than 40 combat missions. His role was to provide immediate responsive casualty care if Soldiers were injured on en-route to, on or returning from an objective.

Sgt. Webster J. Slavens, a senior medic assigned to 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, also helped nominate Detro for the award. "Capt. Detro is an excellent physician assistant with a vast knowledge of his job," he said. "His most important concern is for his men."

Despite Capt. Detro already having one Purple Heart before this deployment, he refused to stay behind at the aid station during missions. "He went on many hazardous missions to provide the most medical coverage that he could," said Slavens.

Detro's nomination packet described several such dangerous missions, one of which was highlighted during the ceremony. The element Detro was traveling with had just conducted a structure breach when troops were immediately injured by enemy gun and grenade fire. Detro rushed in to the room under enemy fire to treat seriously wounded Rangers. He protected the wounded from shrapnel by covering them with his body as grenades continued to explode in close proximity around them.

Ignoring wounds he himself received, Detro helped to evacuate the injured Rangers from the objective to the medical transport aircraft. He then treated the Rangers en-route to the combat support hospital and stayed with the men into the next day to assist with patient care and surgeries.

"Even after receiving his second and third Purple Hearts during this deployment, he continued to run hazardous missions," Slavens explained. "This just showed his continuous commitment and concern for his men and their safety."

Detro said he was extremely honored to earn this award, especially because one of his medics helped to nominate him. "There are several outstanding physician assistants on the recipient list (for this award)...seeing the list of names on the Web site was very humbling."

In the 25 years that this recognition has been awarded, five recipients have been from the 75th Ranger Regiment.

Detro feels that the Army is full of physician assistants deserving this award. "They are leading the training of medics and first responders which has been critical in decreasing preventable deaths

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on the battlefield,” he said. “This is important because a physician assistant is generally the first medical officer to see a combat patient.”

In addition to combat experiences, Detro has also made contributions to the medical community as a leader through academic training. He instilled this importance with each of his medics. “One product of this was that not one Ranger died during this intense combat deployment,” said Ficke in Detro’s nomination packet.

One of Detro’s medical non-commissioned officers to whom he was a mentor, Slavens, was recognized as the 2005 U.S. Army Special Operations Command and U.S. Special Operations Command Medic of the Year.

Detro recognized the sacrifices of his family in support of his career. He currently lives in Columbus, Ga., with his wife Moraima. They have three children, Xaviera, Jose and Anthony, and two grandchildren, Mark and Micheala.

“My family has given a lot over the last 18 years and I am looking toward retirement,” he said. “I could not see another place to be for that purpose than with the Army’s finest fighting force. I feel extremely lucky to have served with such a great group of men.”

Detro was recently selected to be the next 75th Ranger Regiment Physician Assistant.

Right: *Captain John F. Detro, Physician Assistant, 3rd battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, receives the Surgeon General’s Physician Assistant Recognition award from Colonel William Tozier, Assistant Corps Chief, Physician Assistant Section, Army Medical Specialist Corps, during a ceremony at Fort Benning, Ga.*

