

Reagan Anderson

D.O. Touching *the spirit*

By Hector Contreras



On the fifth floor of the Gutensohn clinic, where it is quiet and the temperature is controlled, there is a bed, a shower, and a toilet. It is a modest, even spartan, living arrangement. But for Reagan Anderson, D.O., this room was a personal haven while he completed a two week rotation with Dr. Lloyd Cleaver.

Anderson was back from two tours as a Medical Officer in Iraq. "It is just so nice to be safe at night, not to worry about the men under your medical privilege, and be able to call family and friends when the mood strikes. Being back in America is awesome. Being in Kirksville is healing. Being able to sleep without interruption is wonderful."

Anderson's experience in Iraq has had a major influence on his life and career. He began his military service by going to Undersea Medical Officer school, also known as Dive Medical Officer School, for six months to get an elite position in the Marine Corps. He graduated as the Honorman at the top of his class. After that, he volunteered for combat deployment because, he said, "Everyone else in my class was married and I didn't want someone with a family to go."

Both tours were in Camp Fallujah. When he first arrived in Fallujah, Anderson said, "It was crazy." His first mission, which included kicking down doors and clearing buildings, was "extraordinarily scary" and "an unbelievable experience." And it never got much better.

The realities of combat changed Anderson's outlook "after seeing the death and dying and horribleness of war, I found I was a physician who didn't want to see that on a day-to-day basis anymore." But he was a doctor with a job to do, so Anderson turned to his knowledge of the

mind, body, and spirit. "I could not have been an effective doctor without it." Anderson said.

Anderson's osteopathic training helped him "with reaching out and touching somebody." The human element was essential, because sometimes, as Anderson discovered, what some Marines needed most was "to put your hand on their shoulder and tell them what's going on with their bodies." Anderson said he often realized "there are other people taking care of the trauma" and his job was to "take care of this guy's spirit."

As Anderson worked on his patients, he began to monitor soldiers' health by the condition of their skin. He noticed when

soldiers who never had issues with their skin suddenly started having problems, it indicated that the stress of the situation was more than they could handle. Anderson said this realization was "invaluable." While Anderson had never really

had an interest in dermatology, his war time experiences intrigued him, his interest in the field grew and he now knows he wants to pursue dermatology as his career.

Looking back on the war, Anderson says "Iraq was Iraq and even though there were physical discomforts, they did not match the psychological battles that were fought on a day to day basis. Being in America is calming, regardless of the situation."

And being back in Kirksville after two tours of duty is suddenly "very appealing," a change from the young medical student who first moved to Kirksville from Vancouver, British Columbia and found "tremendous culture shock."

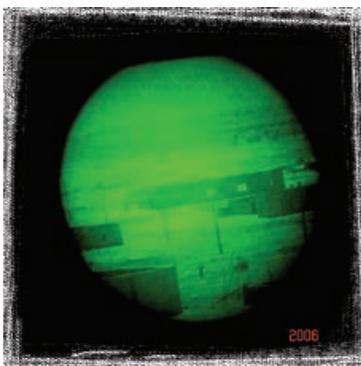
As he reflects on the road ahead, Anderson says "It's time to start transitioning myself." There's no particular place he

"I want to be reminded. I think it's important for people to hold onto those experiences to help shape the future."



calls home and his next step is to complete his rotations. He'll spend time in Kirksville, Michigan, and Florida. After that, he'll finish up the year and get a residency "somewhere." Somewhere quiet.

Dr. Anderson, '02, attended undergraduate school in Vancouver, British Columbia, receiving a Bachelor of Science degree in general biology. He continued his education in Vancouver at Regent College, earning a master's in theology. He came to KCOM in 1998.



Nightvision image

Military Scholarships

ATSU receives more Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP) scholarships than any medical school in the country according to Steve Jorden, Director of Student Financial Services. ATSU currently has 80 HPSP scholars at both the Kirksville College of Osteopathic Medicine (KCOM) and the Arizona School of Dentistry & Oral Health (ASDOH). HPSP scholars serve as military personnel—the Department of Defense covers tuition, the cost of books and supplies, and pays recipients a monthly stipend. In return, recipients serve as active-duty doctors or dentists in the Army, Navy, or Air Force after completing their medical or dental training. There is a minimum service of two years.