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Cardiothoracic Surgeon Returns to Army Roots on 9/11/01 Anniversary

For Dr. Fred Lough, the seeds of service to country were sown when he was very young.

He grew up in a family with a history of service. His father, Brig. Gen. Frederick C. Lough, was a U.S. Military Academy graduate, who served during World War II, helping battle the Axis powers in several North African and European campaigns, who went on to complete a 40-year career with the Army.

“His experiences in war, and the caliber of people we associated with when I was growing up impressed me,” he said. “They were just the best kind of people, who served their country, and I decided to follow them.”

He applied to and was accepted at West Point. Upon graduation, he served in the Army Corps of Engineers, and attended both Airborne and Ranger training. In 1971, he entered The George Washington University School of Medicine. He did residencies in both general surgery and thoracic and cardiovascular surgery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.

After gaining several valuable years of experience as an Army surgeon, Lough left the service, and took employment in the civilian world.

His years of Army training and clinical experience paid great dividends. He rose through the ranks of several hospital surgical staffs, rising to the position of Director of Cardiac Surgery at his alma mater, The George Washington University Hospital.

“I accumulated a lot of experience in those intervening years,” he said. “I participated in no less than 15,000 open heart procedures during that time.”

But after 9/11/01, and with America becoming embroiled in two hot wars, the call to service began to tug at him. So, over the process of a few years, he began working with Army medical recruiters, and, in 2007, signed up to serve in the Army Reserves.

He didn't have to wait long for a chance to go into harms' way.



Lough deployed as deputy commander of a NATO hospital at Camp Arena in western Afghanistan in 2010 in support of the 4th Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division. He was exposed to a truly international cavalcade upon arrival: the base was overseen by the Italian Army, the medical facility was under the command of the Spanish, and the surgical team was Bulgarian.

“Our assignment was to establish U.S. Army medical style care in a facility run by our coalition partners,” he said. “It was a challenge at times overcoming the various language and cultural barriers, but we came together as a unit and succeeded in our mission to provide quality care in a demanding environment. The practice of medicine is universal, and we were able to treat numerous Spanish, German, and American servicemen and women, as well as Afghan nationals. If you came into our facility alive, no matter the injury, you left alive,” he said.

His deployment to eastern Afghanistan in the summer of 2012 was in stark contrast to his deployment in 2010.

“It was a very violent experience,” Lough said. “The base was attacked. We had casualties and some deaths. The Forward Surgical Team (FST) facility was destroyed, but we were able to quickly rebuild it, and continue our support of combat operations,” he said. “Later, our entire unit was awarded the Combat Action Badge,” which is unusual for medical support units.

“I was very proud of the work done by the 628th Forward Surgical Team, and our surgeons and staff,” Lough said.

Upon his return to the United States and The George Washington University Medical Center, Lough was in a meeting with Col. Leon Moores, a senior staff member of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) in Bethesda, Md.

“He asked me what my plans were, and I told him my dream job would be to go back on active duty and teach at USUHS, and he said, ‘Well, let’s make that happen,’ ” Lough said. “So, I began to work with the Army medical recruiters, and here I am today, coming back full time to serve in the Army I love,” he said.

In his new position on the Department of Surgery faculty at USUHS, Lough hopes to convey to military medical students some of the practical wisdom and experience he has accumulated.

“We want to preserve the medical lessons learned in both Iraq and Afghanistan, convey those lessons to the students at USUHS, and prepare them for service in both peacetime and



wartime,” he said. “I’d also like to share principles of leadership that I have learned as both an Army officer and physician and surgeon,” Lough said.

“Dr. Lough is a great addition to the Army and to the military medicine team,” said Col. Karrie Fristoe, commander of the Army’s Medical Recruiting Brigade, based in Fort Knox. “He has many years of training and experience in both civilian and military settings which make him a great asset and resource for students, faculty and other military medical professionals he comes in contact with,” she said. Col. Fristoe served as the officiating officer during Lough’s swearing in ceremony on the USUHS campus on 9/11/2013.

“Being a military physician is a great way to serve, not only our wonderful Soldiers, but our fellow man, including civilians during humanitarian missions such as in Haiti. You can experience high adventure, and positively affect the outcome of many lives at the same time,” Lough said. “Where else can you have those kind of experiences?” he asked.

“A civilian physician colleague once asked me if I had any regrets about serving in the Army, traveling around, etc. I thought about it for a moment, and then responded that I did have one regret,” Lough said. “He leaned forward and asked, ‘And what was that?’ I said ‘I can only do it once’! “

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This release was written by Randy Lescault

Photo caption: Dr. Frederick Lough, right, a cardiothoracic surgeon, takes the Oath of Office during a ceremony at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Md. on 9/11/2013. Col. Karrie Fristoe, commander of the Army Medical Recruiting Brigade, officiates.

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