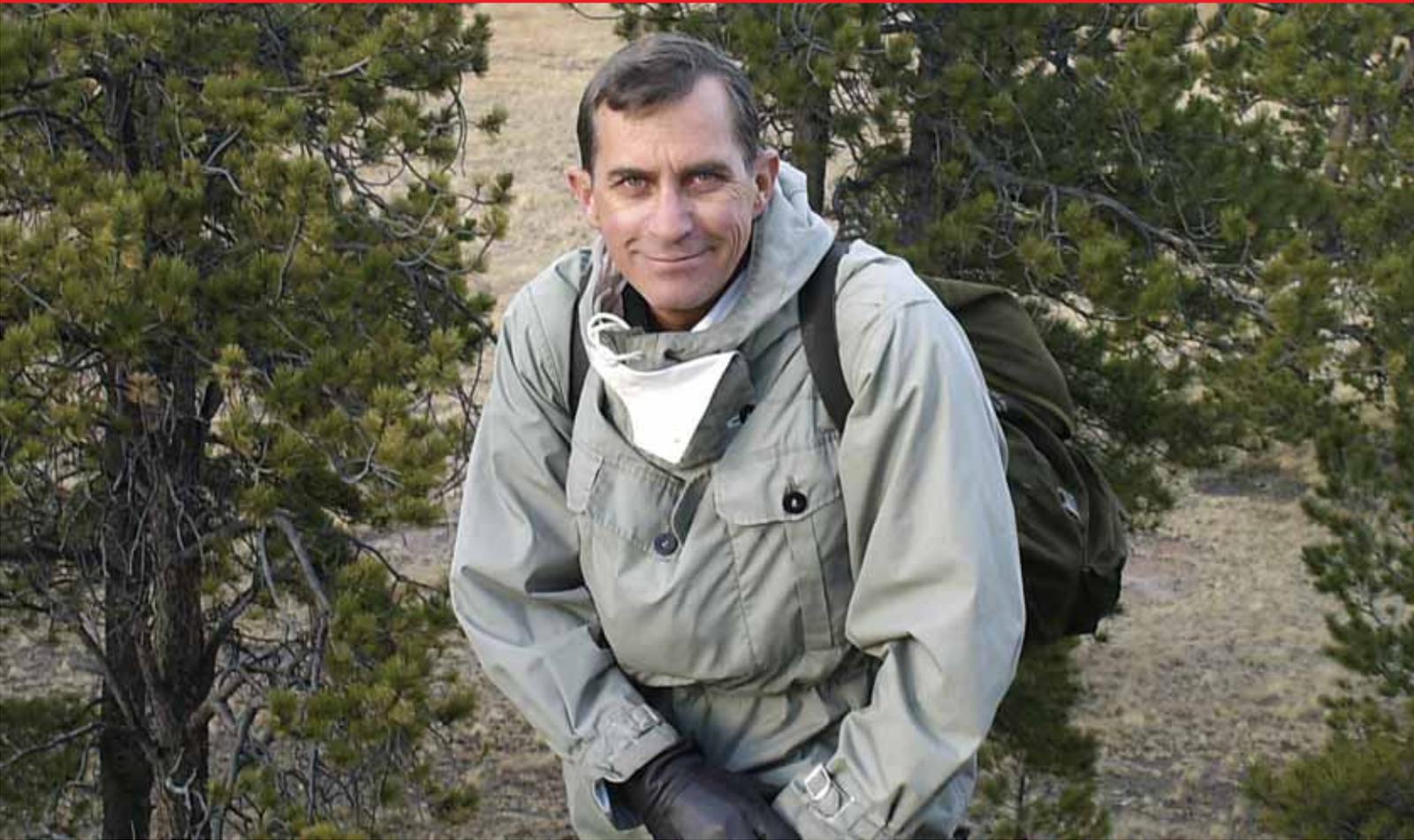
A military helicopter is shown in flight, hoisting a person from the ground. The helicopter is positioned in the upper half of the frame, with its main rotor blades blurred from motion. A thick rope extends from the helicopter down to a person who is suspended in the air. On the ground, several soldiers in full combat gear are visible, some crouching and others standing, observing the operation. The background consists of a grassy field with a line of trees in the distance under a cloudy sky.

Serving His Country



How a green beret survived colon cancer and went on to improve the lives of others

By Ian Settlemyre

"How long did the surgery take?" Gordon Scott asked this all-important question as soon as he awoke from surgery in November of 2003. Under three hours would be a good answer. Anything longer would be suspect. Over five hours and his worst fear would be realized.

Scott was in the operating room over nine hours. He went into surgery thinking they would simply remove the cancerous tissue and reconnect his colon. He thought he would come out basically as he went in.

Only during surgery did the doctors realize the full extent of his condition. The tumor was huge and invasive. After five nervous hours of waiting for her husband to come out of surgery, Scott's wife Gillian,

was told the news and charged with making a life or death decision.

The doctors gave her two options: completely remove the tumor and surrounding tissue, colon and rectum that would give Scott a permanent colostomy or remove the tumor, but leave some tissue in the hopes he could be reconnected in the future - this would require a temporary ileostomy. The doctors explained that any remnant tissue would most likely metastasize and Scott would be dead within three years.

Gillian told the surgeons to go ahead with the colectomy and give her husband a permanent colostomy. "It is better to have a colostomy and be alive than risk the cancer coming back."

A self-described beach bum growing up, Scott was born in 1960 and raised in Santa Ana in Southern California. While attending Santa Ana High School, he enrolled in the Junior Navy ROTC (reserve officer's training corps). "My whole mindset was that if I was going to serve my country, I wanted to do the very best



Scott in his WWII re-enactment clothing.

that I could."

After graduation, Scott signed up for the Army and found a communications role with Special Forces. He went on to "jump" school where he learned how to parachute and then Special Forces school.

He immediately felt that he made the right decision. "Special Forces allowed me to think on my own. It was the best place that I could go to serve my country."

Scott learned some important lessons about overcoming adversity and what he was capable of accomplishing during his first tour of duty.

"I figured out that my body is going to do what my brain tells it. You'll be amazed at what the body can do."

While on a training mission, Scott almost drowned swimming across a lake when he was 21. Exhaustion and hypothermia set in and he went under the surface three times gagging. His buddy turned around and Scott grabbed onto the rucksacks as a lifesaver.

"Training was very strenuous and almost killed me twice. They try to force you to quit by having hot coffee and donuts in front of the formations."

After his first four years in the Army, Scott took a dual pass: remain active in the Army one weekend a month and two weeks a year via the national guard, or reserves, and find a civilian job. He was able to serve for over 26 years.

In 1985, Scott was attending Santa Ana College when

his father, Allen, a three-war Navy veteran (WWII, Korea, Vietnam) passed away. He soon dropped his studies and began running the family business, Scott X-ray Service. Scott became a proficient technician diagnosing, repairing and maintaining hospital x-ray equipment.

Scott moved to Texas a year later and started a family. His daughter Jessica was born in 1987 and son Stuart was born three years later. He worked for Radio Shack for two years and his career really took off when he got his aircraft mechanic certificate.

Scott began restoring old war birds: F86 Sabres, T33s, MIG 21s and Huey UH-1, one of which is on display in the Smithsonian Museum. He ran a museum that imported the last three F86 Sabres that were still flying. His clients were very wealthy individuals interested in preserving the history of aviation.

Following the terrorist attacks of 2001, Scott was recalled to active duty in the Armed Forces. He left his restoration business behind and resumed training full-time with the Special Forces, also known as Green Berets in Fort Carson, CO.

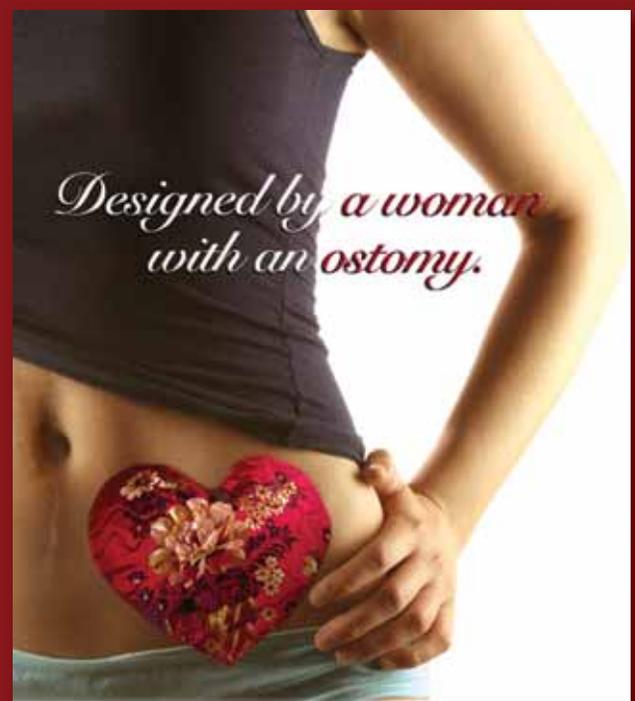
It was during this intense training that Scott first noticed symptoms of ulcerative colitis. He was 42 and experiencing loose stools and bleeding. A military doctor made the diagnosis. Scott describes the military's reaction as "guarded."

"Their whole mindset, along with mine is, if you can run, shoot and jump and do all that kind of stuff, if you can do your job, they basically leave you alone."

Scott started taking prednisone and Sulfasalazine to manage the condition. They seemed to help, although, "It would come and go on its own." Eventually, his unit was demobilized and Scott returned to the National Guard. He found civilian employment working on active military helicopters like the AH-64 Apache and the UH-60 Black Hawk.

In 2003, Scott was sent to work as a civilian assigned to a military unit in Iraq. He went through a detailed medical screening process and was cleared. Scott says they are looking for non-deployable conditions. If they find anything, "They'll shut you down. They don't let you go. You're stuck at home" Scott said.

Proudly serving alongside U.S. Forces, Scott experienced severe symptoms after only two months overseas. Rapid weight loss and heavy bleeding could not be ignored. Scott struggled inside with the decision to leave and was depressed about letting down his team, but he knew something bad would happen if he stayed. Eventually, he flew to his mother-in-law's in England where he rested for a few weeks before



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Gordon Scott with wife Gillian

returning home.

Back at Fort Carson, a military doctor found a tumor during a colonoscopy. Lab tests revealed it was malignant for cancer. Upon hearing the news, Scott said, "Am I still going to be able to serve my country?"

Scott would have to find the answer on his own as the doctor couldn't commit one way or another. His wife shook her head and told him he must be out of his mind. It was a typical reaction, even in the face of mortality, from Scott: "Priority #1 is serving my country. That's been my life."

After the surgery for a permanent colostomy, Scott was impatient to get back to his active life. Only six months before the operation, he was jumping out of airplanes, shooting, climbing and mountain biking. It was a shocking change of events that felt like hitting a wall going 100 MPH.

Scott was so determined to get back on his feet he went skiing two weeks after surgery despite being advised against it. He was putting into action what his military training had taught him: the body will do what the mind wants. This theory was put to the test as Scott's mind was ready to move on, but his body needed time to heal.

"I could not conceive of just laying down and quitting. I'm just not wired that way."

During recovery, Scott restored a horse-drawn carriage. The work was a distraction from the recovery process and for those in recovery, Scott advises: "Find

something you really want to do and grab onto that to help pull yourself through it. It's very important to have some kind of goal to help get yourself through."

During this time, his Commanding Officer from Special Forces would call often, "When you are ready to come back and start jumping again, your job is here." This encouragement was a big reason he was able to pull through. His desire to serve his country again kept him going.

Despite the encouragement from friends and family,

Scott thought, "I've got to fix this. I can't live the rest of my life like this."

he had no follow-up care at all. "At home I was on my own. I tried to figure things out on my own. I'm not the type to seek out help, support group or advice." Ostomy care was discovered by trial and error. Being hard headed, Scott simply told himself to figure it out and make it work like he had done countless times as a helicopter technician.

Soon, too soon in fact, Scott went back to working on helicopters and training with special forces. He had chemotherapy for almost a year post-op and remembers the "chemo brain" effect that left him dizzy and unable to concentrate. One afternoon while working on a helicopter, Scott got dizzy and was hanging on to the main rotor for dear life. His wife was called to take him home after coworkers got him down safely.

While working on "the torpedo," an old Chevy Suburban, Scott slipped off the front bumper and banged his stoma site badly when he collided with the front of the Suburban. At first, the result was a mess and a lot of colorful language. After calming down, Scott thought "I've got to fix this. I can't live the rest of my life like this."

Only a few hours later, the idea for Ostomy Armor popped into his head. The next day he built a prototype and adhered it to his body with duct tape! "That was fun," remembers Scott. The following day he made another prototype. This one had foam backing that featured a cutaway for the output to drain into the pouch. "It worked pretty good," Scott said.

"At that point, all I was thinking about was how can I keep myself in the game." In the Green Berets, Scott knew his colostomy would be reason for the medical review board to "come after him." As a condition of being in the Special Forces, members must be "deployable"

at all times. Although he stayed under the radar and wanted to stay in the Army, Scott came to realize that having a colostomy put him and his fellow soldiers at risk if deployed. He was a liability.

"I cannot quit unless I realize I have to stop or someone else is going to get hurt. It was my decision to stop, not anybody else's," said Scott who received an honorable discharge in 2006.

During this time, Scott built ten Ostomy Armors and went to a local support group where someone bought one right on the spot. He did a patent search and found out there was nothing else like it.

Motivated to "get people back on their feet," each product is basically a custom order that is hand made by Scott who's delivered over 400 stoma protectors to date. Recently, a customer called to thank Scott for such a great product - her husband was dragged by a horse for twenty feet and had no trauma to his stoma.

Scott went to the 2006 Wound, Ostomy and



Continence Nursing convention in Minneapolis with his first professional version of Ostomy Armor. These were uncharted waters for Scott as he tried to let others know about a product that helped him stay active. At the convention, he got positive feedback from nurses and other ostomy product manufacturers.

He then contacted Liberty Medical who reviewed a sample and is now selling Ostomy Armor. Scott also sells direct at www.ostomyarmor.com.

Scott decided in 2006 to work full time on Ostomy Armor and stopped working on helicopters. He also got involved in historical re-enactments of military battles, mostly WWII hand to hand combat. "It's been an interesting thing to pull me through," Scott remarks.

Through Ostomy Armor, Scott has found a way to serve and help others in the ostomy community. A self-described hard head to the end, Scott's drive to figure it out and make it work is helping ostomates "stay in the game" after surgery. ☺

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