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THE HEALERS

ALWAYS HEED YOUR LIFE'S HIGHER CALLING

By Jim Schmaltz

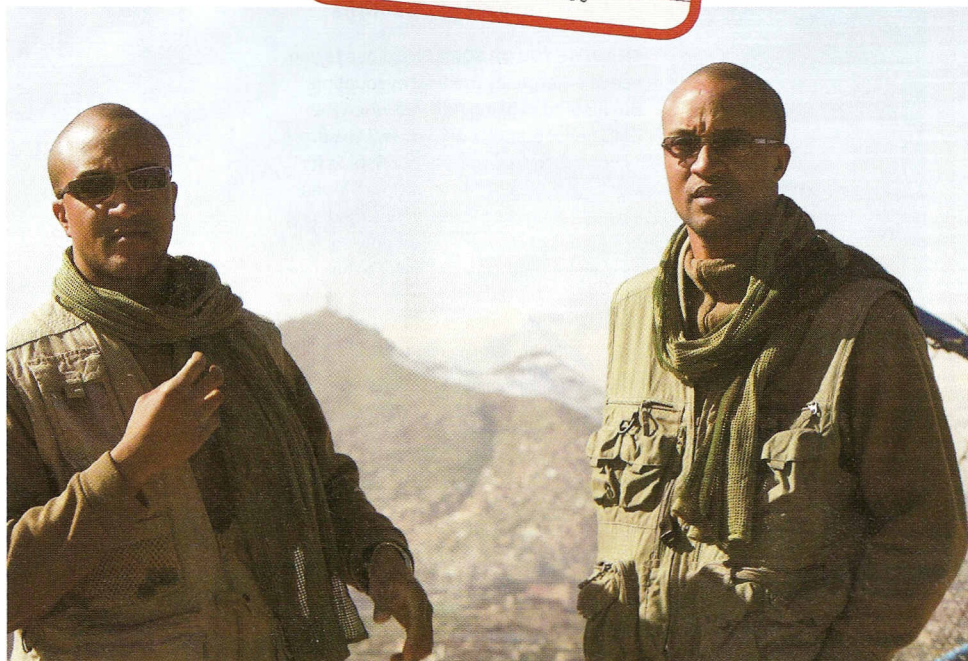
PICTURE an identical-twin pair of 6'2" African American surgeons with stethoscopes draped around their necks trudging through a poppy field in Afghanistan, seeking to heal victims of disease, land mines, and the crossfire of guerrilla war. Any Hollywood screenwriter would reject the scene as implausible.

Vince Moss, a cardiothoracic surgeon, and Vance Moss, a urologic transplant surgeon, are accustomed to writing their own stories, no matter how unlikely the plots. Army reservists since graduating from college, the 37-year-old physicians say they won little support for their mission in Afghanistan from the U.S. Army or the U.S. Department of State. The state department told the Moss twins theirs would be a suicide mission.

Fine. They went anyway. Twice.

"We were always told, 'You can't do this or that,'" says Vance, who shares a practice in New Jersey with Vince. "You can't make excuses. You've got to just make it happen."

They arrived in Dubai, chartered a jet to Afghanistan, hired their own security personnel, and paid for the medical supplies. Once on the ground, they negotiated through hellish conditions, dealing with drug lords and Taliban insurgents and ill-equipped facilities. They sometimes operated in caves for up to 14 hours at a stretch, their only light provided by cellphones.



Names VINCE AND VANCE MOSS
Occupations Cardiothoracic surgeon; urologic transplant surgeon
How they make a difference Operating on kids in war zones

The brothers' mission of mercy is an emphatic statement about the casualties of war, the ones referred to by the dehumanizing phrase "collateral damage." To the Mosses, this euphemism obscures a humanitarian crisis that demands action.

"People fail to realize that children are disproportionately the victims of war," says Vince. "We need to focus on that if we're going to occupy a country and give the impression that we're there to help."

"Once you see the looks on these kids' faces, it's addicting. When we returned home from Afghanistan, we were already planning our next trip."

TAKE-HOME LESSON

Sometimes, you must appease your enemies to achieve your true objectives. "In the mountains of Afghanistan, insurgent leaders and even drug lords would let us operate on children in the villages as long as we operated on the power brokers as well," says Vance Moss.

THE VISIONARY

SEE A VOID? BE THE MAN TO FILL IT

By Joe Kita

TIN 1989, Harold P. Freeman, M.D., was chairing hearings on cancer and the poor. One man who testified was in his late 50s. He had an aggressive cancer, and to pay what his health insurance would not, he had bankrupted himself. "Dr. Freeman," he said, "I lost my job, my house, and my dignity."

Those words and others like them inspired Dr. Freeman, now 75, to develop the idea of patient navigation, in which people entering the health-care system are assigned guides to help them negotiate the bureau-

cracy and secure timely treatment. Today, more than 600 patient-navigation programs are operating around the country. The idea is at the heart of the Patient Navigator Outreach and Chronic Disease Prevention Act signed by President Bush in 2005. "I realized that everything that's local is also universal," says Dr. Freeman.

Name HAROLD P. FREEMAN, M.D.
Occupation President of the Ralph Lauren Center for Cancer Care and Prevention
How he makes a difference Conceiving "patient navigation"

