

# news THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER AT DALLAS

southwestern medical school • graduate school of biomedical sciences • school of allied health sciences

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*\*\*\*\*\*Former Green Beret medic picked by  
Southwestern Medical School*

DALLAS-- Administrators at Southwestern Medical School did not use a hard and fast formula for choosing this fall's freshman class of 205 from the almost 2,500 who sought admission.

And Pete Van Hoy is glad they didn't. The 27-year-old freshman medical student and former Green Beret medic half expected his application to be "coughed up by the computer into the drop dead file" because of his relatively low grade point average, he says.

But grades are only one of the factors considered by the admissions committee at Southwestern. The applicant's motivations, industry and potential to become an outstanding physician are also considered. Pete Van Hoy met the requirements.

Van Hoy began college in 1967. After changing schools twice and flunking out once, he decided to join the Army. With two years of college behind him, his grade point average stood at 1.8 on a four point scale, about a C-.

"I was doing such a screwed up job in school that I decided to just get away and do something else for awhile," he says. "At that time (1969) it was not a question of whether or not you were going into the military, it was a question of when."

So he enlisted and "it turned out to be very lucky--a blessing in disguise. If I hadn't had that military exposure, I never would have gone into medicine."

He joined the Army's elite troops, the Green Berets, and entered their medic training program. The program began with an intensive, highly competitive training course, "a seat-of-the-pants medicine course," which was completed successfully by only about 25 per cent of those who enrolled. Van Hoy completed the course with the highest grades anybody had ever made.

"The course began with lectures by MD's for about four months," he says. "Next came rotations in hospitals, where we spent a week or two in each of the different departments. The final phase consisted of more lectures by doctors and a lab where we did physicals, lab work and limited animal surgery."

-- more --

first add van hoy

The program also included training in demolitions, weapons, communications and intelligence. "I spent a lot of time playing war games, just walking around in the woods shooting blanks, not bathing and eating C-rations."

The Green Berets operate in small, 12-man teams in isolated areas of the world where they assist local forces in counterinsurgency wars like Vietnam. A medic is included on each team and provides medical care for both the Americans and the indigenous population.

Van Hoy did not go to Vietnam because all special forces were pulled out about a month before he finished training.

"After a year and one half of special training, the Army made me a mail clerk, which is rather typical of the military," Van Hoy recalls. "But later I got a job in the dispensary at Fort Bragg (North Carolina)."

"My work there was similar to that of a P.A. (physician's assistant)," he continues. "I had my own office and saw all of the patients that came in. I tried to diagnose and treat most of them and if I couldn't, there was a doctor there to back me up."

"Despite the fact that I more or less hated the military, I really enjoyed what I was doing."

The exposure to medicine convinced Van Hoy that he wanted to become a doctor. He began attending night school and later, when he left the Army, enrolled as a full-time student. His grades did a complete about-face, with only two B's--the rest were A's--in three years. In May, 1975, he graduated summa cum laude from The University of Texas at Austin and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

Making almost straight A's still did not raise Van Hoy's overall grade point average, including the first two years, to what is normally considered good enough to get into medical school. With a grade point average of 2.9, he was afraid he would be rejected by the computer before the admissions committee even took a look at him.

"I knew that I wanted to practice medicine, but for a very long time it looked like I would never get the opportunity," he recalls.

"Fortunately, I ran into Bryan Williams (the chairman of the admissions committee at Southwestern) almost by accident about one year before I applied. I told him I was worried about being rejected by the computer and he told me that grades weren't the only consideration."

"I never would have gotten into medical school if I hadn't found a place that was willing to consider me as an individual."

second add van hoy

Van Hoy says he is impressed with what he's seen so far at Southwestern:

"I'm very much impressed with the rapport between the faculty and the student body and with the fact that the faculty here is very interested in helping the students in any way possible. I know they are involved in research, but the emphasis here seems to be on teaching and turning out well-qualified physicians."

"The fact that they threw a beer party at the student union, with the students, faculty and administrators all walking around, drinking beer, and getting to know one another, is just super."

"The idea seems to be that everyone is here to do the best job possible. That's hard to beat and that's why I think Southwestern is a school of the caliber that it is."

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