



UW-Parkside Graduate Lt. General Dr. Charles Green Launches Remarkable Career

It wasn't a tightly constructed career strategy that drove Lieutenant General Dr. Charles Bruce Green to the ultimate job with the U.S. Air Force. It was, instead, the unexpected delivery of a 2.8-pound package.

That package happened to be his second daughter, who, born prematurely, required intensive, quality medical care. Knowing where those medical resources could be found, General Green today credits "the value of health-care coverage and the time the military gave me to take care of family issues" as one of the defining moments that led him to commit to another assignment with the Air Force. That decision, followed by a series of other unique assignments, set the wheels in motion for this UW-Parkside graduate to become the 20th surgeon general of the Air Force.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Today, General Green oversees a \$6-billion budget, 42,000 military and civilian personnel, and a worldwide health care network that includes 75 treatment facilities, and 24 hospitals and medical centers. All told, the General delivers medical care to 1.2 million active duty personnel, their families, and retirees.

When speaking about what he considers to be key issues and concerns in the Air Force of 2011, as well as those issues that are of greatest importance to him, personally, General Green's reply is swift and certain. "My job is to support our 1.2 million active duty personnel, their families, and retirees." Citing post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and mild-traumatic brain injury at the top of his list, General Green stated, "The invisible wounds of war have been difficult for physicians since the beginning of recorded history. We still don't fully understand PTSD or brain injuries. Our concern is over the future burden of care for these heroes." General Green asserts that all surgeon generals from each branch of the military have these issues at the forefront of their efforts. "We're partnering with some of the best minds in the country to find answers."

The General also emphasized that these issues are of concern to the nation as well, with Congress granting an additional \$600 million to increase resources available to veterans. General Green says, "Getting veterans the help they need so their lives can return to normal and reduce the stress of everyday life is a major focus of mine. Today, one of my biggest challenges is the increasing suicide rate—the end of that spectrum of people who've been under stress. Again, as we work to understand these invisible wounds, we also work to make early diagnoses, help individuals build resiliencies, and bring our mental health professionals into the process early."

POINT OF PRIDE

When asked of which part of his career he is most proud, the energy in his voice is unmistakable. "In the Air Force, we have developed a medical system through which we can deliver, in a single airplane, American-standard care in 24 hours. I helped build the first 10-bed version of that. It's a system that

One of those assignments routed him to Hawaii to take care of Ferdinand Marcos and his family...

previously took 11 planes to deliver. The knowledge I gained working in those disaster operations early on helped me understand how critical it is to get to a place early with capability. I was able to take what I learned, and then was given the freedom to help build these new, small capable hospitals.” More training was to come. Following the 9/11 attacks, General Green was able to learn from the tragedy of what he saw in New York City and “link our air evacuation systems to those small hospital systems. Since then we have been able to move 80,000 people to safety and put less medics at risk in hostile places.” Modestly, General Green reports, “I am proud to have played a part” in the early development of these delivery systems, and “proud of the many individuals who helped deliver the vision.”

General Green is quick to mention individuals whom he considers to have been mentors along the way. He particularly noted General Charles H. Roadman II, 16th surgeon general of the Air Force. “General Roadman helped shape who I am. In fact, I give him credit for shaping a generation of us to think critically.”

UW-PARKSIDE’S GAIN

Holding the decades-long distinction as being one of UW-Parkside’s youngest graduates, General Green, a native of Illinois, graduated from UW-Parkside at age 18 with a degree in chemistry. When his father’s employer abruptly transferred him from Illinois to Wisconsin late in the school year, General Green was facing an early high school graduation. Having accumulated ample credits, that was no problem. However, with little time to prepare for college one year ahead of the expected schedule, he made an inquiry into Northwestern’s pre-health program only to learn that “we handpick our students well in advance.” UW-Parkside’s gain. True to form, General Green dove right into the challenge of college courses the summer before his freshman year. With an arm load of college credits under his belt, plus credits earned through testing, and soon to be registered with an accelerated course load, so began this first generation college student’s movement toward success.

Looking back to his undergraduate studies, General Green clearly remembers the guidance he received from Dr. Anna Maria



Williams, professor and adviser for UW-Parkside’s early pre-medical program. “She is probably the one person I can credit with getting me into medical school. I really thought I was going to be a dentist and she convinced me to take the pre-med tests. Really, her council was quite sage.” In return, Dr. Williams has fond recollections of General Green and remarked, “I am very proud of Bruce’s (as he was known as a student) accomplishments, both in medicine and in the Air Force. However, I’m not really surprised that he has had such an outstanding career. In addition to his academic ability, Bruce had a practical *get-the-job-done* attitude. At UW-Parkside he was modest about his success. He kept achieving his goals without doing a dance in the end zone.”

Two years later, General Green entered the Medical College of Wisconsin, commissioned through the Health

Professions Scholarship Program. Not meeting the Air Force’s minimum 21-year age requirement for commissioned officers, a special dispensation was needed. A decision the Air Force clearly cannot regret.

THE EARLY YEARS

While serving as a military family doctor for 15 years (which included delivering nearly 400 babies), General Green was, at the same time, developing expertise in humanitarian and disaster relief operations. He would take leave from his regular practice to provide assistance whenever and wherever called upon. One of those assignments routed him to Hawaii to take care of Ferdinand Marcos and his family during their period of evacuation from the Philippines. From that experience, General Green says,

“One thing led to another,” and he accepted training at Harvard University, adding a master’s of arts in public health to his doctorate in medicine and surgery.

Not long after completing his Harvard studies, General Green was called to the Philippines—and his next defining moment. Tapped to lead humanitarian relief efforts in the immediate wake of the Baguio City earthquake in 1990, followed by the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991, General Green remembers it this way, “It allowed me to be a part of something that was immense, with multiple nations responding.” That experience was followed by a series of new assignments with increasing responsibility. First there was the charge to build a new hospital at Mountain Home, Idaho, (a facility put to the test during Desert Storm and Desert Shield). Next came his command of the air evacuation program at Scott Air Force Base. Looking back on those years of service, General Green said, “I really was able to do some things that, because of my experiences in the Philippines, I probably wouldn’t have been able to do otherwise. So that’s what *kept* me in the military.”

A MAN OF MANY INTERESTS

An avid reader, the General enjoys fiction and laughingly refers to himself as “an action junkie.” Yet, the books that are highest on his current reading list include: Zander and Zander’s “The Art of Possibility,” Taylor and Sanford’s “Let Go to Grow,” Friedman’s “The Next 100 Years,” and Christensen’s “The Innovator’s Prescription.” Clearly, the job rarely leaves the General. Yet when the day arrives with some hours to spare, amateur photography, two-string kite flying, and travel are on the list of leisure time interests. The Air Force has already obliged him in fulfilling some of his travel interests. His favorite place to visit? Jordan. A place he’d like to bring his wife? The William Holden Wildlife Sanctuary in East Africa. Most recently he enjoyed spending time in Plymouth, England, with his counterpart in the Royal Air Force.

Noting that his current position doesn’t allow much time for personal interests, General Green happily confesses that “The reality is, my four daughters have kept me balanced. When I’m not working, our lives have been all about them.” With a career that has involved 14 moves in 32 years, that can’t be an easy. Yet, General Green has much to be proud of concerning his four daughters as each pursues her own challenging career. The oldest is a pharmacist, the next works in banking, the third is in officer candidate school with the Navy (and is a pilot), and the youngest is in nursing school.

WHAT’S NEXT

The shelf life of an Air Force Surgeon General is all too short with the average length of service around three years. Two years into his assignment, the question is inevitable: What’s next? “I enjoy running a large health care system. I’ll soon learn whether my skill set will transition to the private sector,” remarked General Green, “There is a lot of work to be done in health-care reform—partly in alignment of incentives, but also in health professional training. I hope to either be training physicians or health care professionals, or working in a large health care system where I can help everyone get the kind of health care they want.” Clearly, General Green is the man for the job.



EDUCATION

- 1974 Bachelor of science degree in chemistry, University of Wisconsin-Parkside
- 1978 Doctorate in medicine and surgery, Medical College of Wisconsin
- 1981 Residency in family practice, Eglin Regional Hospital, Eglin AFB
- 1987 Air Command and Staff College
- 1988 Master’s degree in public health, Harvard University
- 1989 Residency in aerospace medicine, Brooks AFB
- 2000 Air War College

FLIGHT INFORMATION

- Rating: Chief flight surgeon
- Flight hours: 1,200
- Aircraft flown: B-52, C-5, C-9, C-21, C-130, C-141, H-53, KC-135, T-43, F-15, F-16, P-3, T-37, T-38, UH-1, UH-60

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS

- Distinguished Service Medal with oak leaf cluster
- Defense Superior Service Medal with oak leaf cluster
- Legion of Merit
- Defense Meritorious Service Medal
- Airman’s Medal
- Meritorious Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters
- Joint Service Commendation Medal
- Air Force Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters
- Air Force Achievement Medal
- National Defense Service Medal with Bronze Star
- Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal
- Humanitarian Service Medal with Bronze Star
- Philippine Bronze Cross

Dr. Charles B. Green will receive the honorary doctorate of science at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside during the university’s May 14, 2011, commencement ceremonies. Dr. Green will give the commencement speech at both the morning and afternoon ceremonies. Remarking on the upcoming occasion, Dr. Green said, “I consider this invitation and award to be an extraordinary honor.”