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Doctor takes dose of Basic Combat Training as prescription for self-improvement

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – As if completing seven years of schooling to obtain a medical degree isn't hard enough, a physician is trying to add Soldier to his list of accomplishments.

Spc. Raul Medina, Company E, 1st Battalion, 48th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Chemical Brigade, said he became a medical doctor to take care of others, but his military quest is something he is doing for himself.

“My father has always had an appreciation for the military. He said it is a great and honorable job. That has always stayed inside me, and after all of these years, I decided I wanted to do it,” Medina said. “This is something that I am doing for me. I want to feel the pride of being a Soldier in my heart.”

Medina is from Puerto Rico. Before leaving for the United States, he worked in the Dominican Republic for the NORCECA (North, Central America and Caribbean) Volleyball Confederation as a medical doctor and coordinator of their anti-doping control program.

“I am working on my licensing here in the United States. I hope to serve as a health-care administrator for the Army one day. This is my first step,” Medina said.

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With the help of a Spanish-speaking battle buddy and platoon sergeant, Medina is picking up English rather quickly – another reason Medina said he chose to join the military.

“It is helping me learn the language. It is good, because I plan to get a master’s degree in the states one day,” Medina said.

Sgt. 1st Class Diana Perea, Company E platoon sergeant, said it is obvious Medina wants to be a Soldier more than any of the others.

“He is always taking notes. He is very dedicated. I can tell he wants to learn,” said Perea, a native of Santa Rosa, California.

When the company picked up a new class in February, Perea was told she had a doctor in her platoon, but she wasn't told who it was.

“Medina stood out. He displayed leadership skills from the very beginning,” Perea said.

She said, though Medina is a well-educated doctor, he treats the drill sergeants and cadre with respect.

“He could have taught first-aid to us, but he didn’t interrupt. He wants to learn exactly what we are trying to teach him,” Perea said.

Medina said he enjoyed the first-aid class and it made him realize he would be expected to be a Soldier first, no matter what his previous schooling had taught him.

“The military works completely different from civilians in medicine. We are Soldiers first. Then, we help the injured. We cannot get hurt, because we can't help save another life if we are injured, too,” Medina said.

He said he already understood how the chain of command works before he got to Fort Leonard Wood, thanks to all of those years he spent interning in hospitals.

“As an intern, I couldn't talk to a third- or fourth-year resident, only first or second,” Medina said.

Discipline is why Medina said he enjoys military life, but there are some things that have been a hard adjustment – like the weather and bunking with other Soldiers in training.

“It was snowing when I got here. I hate the weather. In my country all year is summer,” Medina said.

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“I am 32. I am a professional. I understand the rules. It is easy. When the drill sergeants say, ‘do that’ I do it.”

Medina said over and over how lucky he felt to be at Fort Leonard Wood in Co. E, 1st Bn. 48th Inf. Reg., specifically proclaiming his leaders are perfect examples of what he expected Soldiers to be.

“The drill sergeants have won my respect. My command and first sergeant participate in all of our training events. When we ruck-march, our commander is in front of the company. Capt. (Blas) Martinez shows us he can do it, so we can do it, too.”

When Medina graduates in May, he will be headed to Fort Lee, Virginia, to become a 92M Mortuary Affairs Specialist.

“I chose this because my Family has a funeral home in Puerto Rico, and I am already familiar with the business,” Medina said.

“With this military occupational specialty, I will be able to get a license in Puerto Rico to work in the funeral home,” he added.

But for now, Medina said he is looking forward to his second phone call home to his pregnant wife and, of course, graduation.

“I want to be Army strong,” Medina said.

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For more information, contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at 573.563.4145.

Encl(s): Photos

Cutlines:

Raul_Medina_1.jpg: Spc. Raul Medina, Company E, 1st Battalion, 48th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Chemical Brigade, takes notes while he waits his turn at the engagement skills trainer April 3. Medina, a medical doctor from Puerto Rico, is attending Basic Combat Training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. (Photo by Melissa Buckley, Fort Leonard Wood Guidon)

Raul_Medina_2.jpg: Right, Spc. Raul Medina takes aim during training at the engagement skills trainer April 3 at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. (Photo by Melissa Buckley, Fort Leonard Wood Guidon)

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains about 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.
