

Four Chaplains *Legion of Honor Award*

**CAP Major Receives
National Recognition
for Helping Others**

By Sandra Tindoll

Civil Air Patrol Maj. Edward Patrick Rohan has never forgotten about a promise made to his Lord 12 years ago. Since then, he has dedicated his life to serving him, and to helping others.

Rohan's selfless service includes helping at least six World War II veterans receive medals they had waited decades for, supporting people awaiting an organ transplant, participating in CAP search and rescue missions, counseling alcoholics, helping the elderly and veterans with their taxes, giving communion to patients in hospitals and providing a lifetime of service and financial support to the Boy Scouts of America.

His service recently earned him the prestigious Four

Chaplains Legion of Honor Award.

The Legion of Honor Award is presented annually to individuals whose selfless deeds exemplify the sacrifices made by the four World War II chaplains aboard the USAT Dorchester. When the Dorchester was torpedoed in 1942, chaplains of four different faiths sacrificed their lives by giving up their life jacket to passengers aboard the doomed ship.

Previous recipients have included Presidents Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan, Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm and entertainer Bob Hope.

Rohan, a moral leadership officer with the United States Air Force Chaplains Service and character development instructor for Civil Air Patrol's New Jersey Wing, was nominated for the award by a previous recipient, Ted Rabens.

CAP Maj. Edward Patrick Rohan, left, stands with Anthony Modzelewski, center, vice commandant of the Marine Corps League, and Korean War hero Charles Wentzell at the Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Award Ceremony. In front of the men are portraits of the four World War II chaplains for whom the Legion of Honor Award is named.



Photo courtesy of Ted Rabens

A Life-Changing Experience

Rohan grew up in a military family and was a Boy Scout and altar boy. He also served his country in the National Guard as an officer during the Vietnam War, which is when he contracted hepatitis B. The disease ravaged his liver so badly, only a transplant could save him. While hoping for a donor, he agreed to self-inject up to 562 2 1/2-inch doses of the then-experimental drug Interferon.

Finally, on July 22, 1996, a donor liver became available from a 19-year-old on life support. Time was of the essence, because the transplant had to be performed within 24 hours. Unable to find anyone to provide transportation for the three-hour trip to the hospital, Rohan made the desperate drive himself.

This lonely journey on Route 70 to Philadelphia was a defining moment in his life. As the sun rose brightly that morning, tears streamed down his face as he prayed for grace, realizing this might be the last sunrise he would ever see. His prayer included what Rohan humorously describes as a “Bronx Deal” with the Lord. If allowed to live, he promised to spend the rest of his life in benevolence and service and to bow to God’s will, whatever the cost.

Rohan arrived in time, survived the 18-hour surgery and many follow-up procedures and, along the way, remembered his promise.

Today, Rohan spends countless hours in trauma centers encouraging those awaiting and receiving transplants, and he is working on a self-help book on the transplant experience that he plans to publish and donate to trauma centers across the nation.

A certified financial planner, Rohan extends his expertise to veterans and the elderly, giving them a 25 percent discount and even making home visits to the disabled. Through this service, he discovered that Jack Wichnovitch, a World War II Army veteran who fought

in the Battle of the Bulge, had never received his medals, including the Bronze Star for heroism in action. Rohan helped secure the long-overdue medals, which were presented to Wichnovitch’s widow, Doris, “on behalf of a grateful nation.”

Rohan also helped retired Air Force Tech Sgt. Charles Wentzell, whom he met at Vineland (N.J.) Veterans Home, receive his military service medals. Wentzell survived 30 bombing missions on B-17s over Germany during

World War II, but he became a prisoner of war during the Korean War. He was wounded while fighting with the Army’s 7th Infantry Regiment. He led a small band of infantrymen who held off the enemy long enough to allow many members of the regiment to return to safety. Though captured by the Chinese, he escaped after three months in captivity.

After the war he was discharged from Walter Reed Hospital without his uniform or his 14 prestigious medals, including the Air Force Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross and Purple Heart.

Sharing the stage with Rohan when he received his Legion award was Wentzell, 86, who was recognized then as well with presentation of every medal owed to him, thanks to Rohan’s commitment to the cause.

Rohan’s community service is multifaceted and limitless. He spends much of his time at hospitals giving communion to those unable to participate in the traditional way. He counsels alcoholics and has even donated priceless family memorabilia to the Alcoholics Anonymous archives. In addition, as a CAP observer, he has helped rescue nine survivors of plane crashes.

Having never forgotten his sacred promise, Rohan, 66, finds endless joy in helping others.

“It is not about me. We are here to lift up others,” he said, adding, “every day is a blessing!” ▲

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— CAP Maj. Edward Patrick Rohan,
a 2008 recipient of the
Four Chaplains Legion of Honor Award