

WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

Volume 21, Number 18

September 6-12, 2002

LOOKING BACK



JOANNE S. LAWTON / STAFF

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Man on a mission

D.C. Hospital Association President Bob Malson got out front in the region's anti-bioterrorism efforts since day one, and pretty much every day since

BY CHRIS SILVA, STAFF REPORTER

The first sentence in the D.C. Hospital Association's 2001-2002 annual report is, "On September 11, 2001, District hospitals were called on to respond in ways none of us have ever imagined."

Bob Malson, president of DCHA for the past five years, led

those responses and helped D.C. to prepare for possible future terrorist and bioterrorist attacks:

In the process — and in addition to his full-time DCHA role — Malson managed to become the most public figure in Greater Washington's emergency preparedness efforts.

■ CLOSE UP

BOB MALSON

President,
D.C. Hospital
Association

■ **Age:** 58

■ **Family:** Wife Deborah Royster; sons Erik, 32, and Alexander, 15; daughter Hilary, 13

■ **Residence:** Northwest D.C.

■ **Education:** Howard University, bachelor's in political science and economics, 1970; Harvard Law School, 1973

■ **Hobbies:** Sailing, gardening

■ **Favorite book:** "Shogun," by James Clavell

■ **Day or night person?** "Definitely day"

■ **Favorite vacation spots:** Outer Banks and Nantucket

■ **Favorite museum:** The Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

■ **On starting bioterror response efforts:** "A vacuum existed among private-sector organizations for regional coordination that went far beyond hospitals and doctors."

He was the guy seen on TV press conferences last fall — usually standing directly behind former director of the D.C. Department of Health, Ivan Walks, and D.C. Mayor Tony Williams — that addressed the anthrax attacks on Capitol Hill.

With Walks now departed from DoH and Williams scrambling with other facets of running the city's government — not to mention trying to get re-elected as a write-in candidate — Malson has become the city's de facto leader in stringing together the region's emergency preparedness activities.

He was hardly prepared for how busy the task would keep him the past year.

"I had a full-time job Sept. 10 and, since then, it's doubled and tripled," says Malson, the son of a career soldier and himself a Navy veteran. "I've worked every Sunday for the past year, besides Christmas-time and a few vacations."

In that time, Malson has taken it upon himself to make DCHA the organization to turn to if there are questions about emergency preparedness. And with good reason: "A bioterrorism response is a health system response," he says.

DCHA worked closely with the Metropolitan Council of Governments bioterrorism task force after the Sept. 11 and anthrax attacks, bringing together health care and emergency response officials from the 17 jurisdictions that make up the Washington region. Malson has been the chair of COG since 1999.

Malson also oversaw the development of a group called the National Capital Region Emergency Response, a nonprofit forum of hospitals, physicians and research institutions that formed Nov. 12, less than a month after Sen. Tom Daschle's office received its anthrax delivery. Four committees comprise NCR-ER, addressing emergency preparedness, environmental protection, infectious disease and stress response and research.

Staffing and administrative support of NCR-ER is provided by DCHA. And, besides hospitals and health care sites, Malson has gotten groups such as the Hotel Association of Washington, Rand, the Washington Pharmaceutical Association and Funeral Directors Association of Metropolitan Washington to participate in NCR-ER as executive members.

Malson's COG and NCR-ER involvement, however, doesn't even scratch the surface in accounting for all the Sundays

he's worked since last year.

EVERYBODY WANTS HIM

Malson's post-Sept. 11 activities already are seeming legendary.

"He really helped organize the District's response to anthrax in Washington," says Capt. Tom Sizemore, a physician and staff ophthalmologist with the National Naval Medical Center. "He was the glue that held it together. He made sure everyone was singing on the same sheet of music."

Malson is known for his ability to tie a room together — and it helped, Sizemore says, that Malson had military experience, which lent him credibility when he attempted to get the region's military hospitals and medical centers involved with DCHA (www.dcha.org).

Sizemore met Malson about two years ago when the two were discussing DCHA's monthly meetings. Malson wanted the Naval Center present.

"Bob made it very easy. He's a very friendly, outgoing guy that kind of clicked with the military and made it fun for us to be there," says Sizemore. "And it paid off, because the Naval Medical Center was the primary receiver of 16,000 samples of anthrax."

His reach ever-extended, Malson also has been asked to testify before the House of Representatives about hospitals' preparedness for bioterrorism attacks.

HHS Secretary Tommy Thompson appointed Malson to the Advisory Council on Public Health Preparedness in November.

And Williams appointed Malson to the Emergency Medical Services Advisory Committee, the Commission on Health Services Reform and the Hospital Bioterrorism Preparedness Advisory Committee. Williams also appointed Malson to the Advisory Board on Veterans Affairs for the District of Columbia Aug. 20.

TRUE LEADER

Malson's colleagues say what's impressive is that Malson has managed to stay just as focused on representing the interests of DCHA's member hospitals in the midst of all his other commitments.

"He's maintained his focus on the broader issues that affect health care and hospitals," says Mike Barch, president and CEO of the



JOANNE S. LAWTON / STAFF

Bob Malson, second from right, on Air Force One with President Jimmy Carter in the late '70s.

recently closed Columbia Hospital for Women in the District and a friend of Malson's for 20 years. "He's taken a high moral road relative to health care by serving the interests of the community, and by having that higher moral plane, he's been out in front of the troops rather than behind them.

"And I think that's the same thing you saw with emergency preparedness and the issues surrounding Sept. 11. He's really a true leader."

Malson and Barch co-founded the Washington Regional Heart Transplant Consortium 20 years ago, and Malson is a former chairman of the Children's National Medical Center in the District.

An attorney and corporate executive, Malson has more than 30 years of experience in law, management, public policy and strategic planning. He's no stranger to the White House; he was associate director of the White House domestic policy staff during the Carter administration, and headed transition teams in 1976 and 1992 for presidents Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.

"I think Bob is a tremendous advocate for Washington, D.C., and he articulates the needs of the area well," says Lt. Colonel Ed Lucci, a physician at Walter Reed and head of NCR-ER's emergency preparedness committee. "His efforts have been tireless. He manages to maintain a positive attitude and inspire the people around him, despite all the obstacles and stress that people have felt in this area."

■ E-MAIL: CSILVA@BIZJOURNALS.COM
PHONE: 703/816-0306