



DMORT NATIONAL NEWS

Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team

September-October 2002



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DMORT National Commander's Column

By Thomas J. Shepardson

We have to apologize to everyone for the tardiness of this newsletter, but there has been so many things happening that we wanted to include as much information as possible in this edition. Plus our editor has been on an extended trip to England. The Anniversary of September 11, 2001 was a day of remembrance for this nation and especially for DMORT members. Many of us participated in Memorial Services in our hometowns or at one of the locations in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. We may have even elected to quietly stay at home and remember privately. No matter where or how you remembered, rest assured we all were together in spirit. Each of you may hold in your heart the cherished thought that each and every action you performed during this long deployment was completed for the honor of this nation and especially for the victims. If you go to one of the many permanent memorials that have been established around the country, I would ask that you as a DMORT member would consider the following. Many of the Memorials are sections of steel girders or some type of bronze symbol that have arisen out of the depths of destruction to become those beautiful memorials. They stand tall as symbols to the world that we as members of DMORT recognize: First They represent the over 3000 victims that gave the ultimate sacrifice on September 11, 2001; Second: As in the words of the famous American Song "NO MAN IS AN ISLAND, NO MAN STANDS ALONE" it

represents all of you who went from every community in this nation to assist our fellow Americans. Third: They symbolize that we as individuals on DMORT, as well as every other emergency response person or even the citizen that sat quietly at home and prayed, are one nation. As that nation, UNITED WE STAND insuring the rights of each individual to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness

Some of the major items since our last correspondence are: Dr. Robert Knouss Director of The Office of Emergency Preparedness has been diagnosed with a serious illness. He has resigned as director so that he may both overcome this illness and also spend more time with his family. He is undergoing treatment at the present time and has moved to an office in downtown Washington. We would ask and encourage all DMORT members to send a get well card or thinking of you card to Dr. Knouss. He has been a strong supporter of the DMORT Program and it has been through his leadership of OEP (now OER) that we have been able to achieve some of the milestones we are at. Please mail to Robert Knouss, M.D. Office of Emergency Response 12300 Twinbrook Parkway Suite 360 Rockville, Maryland.

Gary Moore, who we all know and admire, has been appointed the acting director until a permanent director is appointed. The permanent director must be a medical doctor.

The Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) has had a name change effect immediately. It shall now be called the Office of Emergency Response (OER). Everything else about the office will remain the same.

We are proud to announce the selection of Craig Caldwell as the new team leader for Region 1. This was a very difficult decision for the OER Staff looking at the high caliber of individuals on the Region 1 Team. Craig has been on several deployments and has been very active in the development of the Regional Team.

The responsibilities of leading both a regional team and a specialty team by one person are enormous. After careful evaluation, by the OER staff, a decision has been made to make the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Specialty Team a stand alone team with a Team Leader, Deputy Team Leader and Administrative Officer and an operating budget. It shall no longer be based with the Region 4 Team. Dale Downey, who has been acting in both capacities, has chosen to lead the WMD Team. He has been instrumental in the development of policy and procedure of the WMD Team since its inception. The WMD Team shall now be more encompassing of all the teams with membership on this specialty team more encompassing of the entire United States. The WMD leadership shall also be responsible for the training and certification of the members but also to develop an expanded cache of equipment for use by the team. Cotton Howell has been selected to be the team leader for the Region 4 Team. Cotton has a vast history of experience both from his position with the State Emergency Management and also from the many deployments he has participated in with DMORT. Many of you have met him on deployments as one of the red shirts.

A Policy decision has also been made establishing the Family Assistance Core Group (FAC) as a specialty



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team. The team shall have a team leader, deputy team leader and an administrative officer and their own operating budget for training and development purposes. Christie Whitaker has agreed to be the team leader. The additional personnel that will be assigned to this group shall be selected from the other 10 regional teams. Five members from each team will be temporarily assigned when needed, to this specialty team. These additional members will receive advanced training from the core group in the VIP Form and interview procedures. The OER leadership has also made several policy decisions with the intent to give more team members the ability to participate on the specialty teams and develop a more intimate role on the regional teams. The rule establishes the following policy: No team leader or administrative officer may while in that office may be a member of a specialty team. Also regional team members may only participate on one specialty team in addition to being a member of their regional team. At the present time the specialty teams shall be but not limited in the future

to: Disaster Portable Morgue Unit (DPMU), Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), Family Assistance Core Group (FAC). The true realization that DMORT has finally achieved stature in the eyes of the consumer was brought to my attention last week. The Ferno-Washington Company, the largest manufacturer of stainless steel morgue equipment in the United States, has issued a new catalog for 2003. One of the items listed is the stainless steel tables that we have purchased for our DPMU. It is now listed in the catalog as for DMORT and special use only.

Saturday (11/16) Training - 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM @ Police Academy
Dinner @ Hotel
Sunday (11/17) Training - 8:30 AM - 12 Noon @ Police Academy

Presenters and many more details will be announced soon.

Region III

A note from Paul Sledzik



Editor's Note- This was submitted prior to September 11th, 2002.

REGIONAL EVENTS

Region 1 & 2 Combined Training



Region I & II

Combined Training Announcement
When: November 16 & 17, 2002
Where: New York State Police Academy Albany, New York
Accommodations:
Best Western - Albany Airport Inn
200 Wolf Road Albany, NY 12206
Telephone: 518.459.2882
Room Rate:
\$99.00 Single \$79.00 Double
Ask for DMORT Rates when making reservation.

DMORT Team Members from all Regions are welcome.
Spouses and significant others are encouraged to attend.
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE
Friday (11/15) Evening Mixer

Each of us will mark this day in our own way-- in reverence, in silence, alone, at a memorial event, with family and friends, at work, at home. Our ability to choose how we remember this day underscores the American principles of freedom.

Please allow me a short thought on the importance of your involvement with DMORT, regardless of whether you were involved in 9/11 responses. D.H. Lawrence wrote: "Tragedy is like strong acid-- it dissolves away all but the very gold of truth." Your commitment and dedication is a true source of golden truth, both to the families of disaster victims and to the citizens of the nation. Through our individual skills and heartfelt compassion, we each contribute to a deeply important mission.

Please know how thankful I am for your support, dedication, professionalism, steadfastness, and companionship.

Paul

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Newsletter address changes should be sent to your DMORT Regional Team Commander. All articles will be printed as submitted with the approval of the DMORT leadership. Articles should be sent to the address above.



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DMORT Region VIII Training, June 21-22, 2002,



The Spine Education and Research Institute,

Thornton, Colorado

Team Commander, Lance Peterson

Forty-eight members of Region VIII DMORT and presenters from other regions convened in Denver for a conference on June 21 and 22. The conference was an opportunity to discuss team business and receive training from national and regional speakers. The conference was held in the auditorium of the Spine Education and Research Institute in Thornton, CO.

National Message. Tom Shepardson, National DMORT Commander, discussed his experiences in New York City, Somerset, Pennsylvania, and the Pentagon following the events of September 11. He offered some information on the organizational structure of DMORT as it relates to the National Disaster Medical System, the U.S. Department of Health Human Services, and the U.S. Public Health Service. He cautioned team members to refer all media inquiries to the Public Information Officer. He advised members to be professional and represent the team in the most positive manner. Observe a professional code of conduct or risk being returned home. He mentioned the two Disaster Portable Mortuary Units (DPMUs), one located in Rockville and the other in Sacramento, CA. The USPHS, NDMS and the Office of Emergency Preparedness (OEP) maintain these units. Personnel deployed with the DPMUs, or "Red

Shirts", expedite the logistical chain in support of the DMORT.

Site Recovery Diane France, Ph.D., Forensic Anthropologist, discussed considerations in site recovery. She detailed the procedure for an efficient grid system and identification of unattached body part in separate containers. Record anything attached to the body and transport intact. Log the date, time and detailed information carefully. She urged the team to plan for an incident and practice the plan. A standard grid system was recommended for use by all regions. Commander Shepardson accepted the recommendation and it's likely Dr. France's system will be adopted.

Team Business. Lance Peterson, team commander, discussed Region VIII information. There are 104 members currently on the team. They include experts from the disciplines of funeral home directors, morticians, medical legal investigators, finger printers, chaplain, mental health, anthropologists, nurses, clerical, dentists, law enforcement and logistics. He discussed grant opportunities from the Office of Emergency Preparedness. Last year, Region VIII was given \$10,000. During FY-2003, Lance has requested \$98,900 for on-site training, national conference stipends, immunizations, team shirts, and office equipment. Team uniforms, sources and proper wear were discussed. Alan Siddoway, Deputy Team Commander, discussed methods of activation, flight arrangements for a deployment and travel orders. Dave Fulkerson, MT, for use in special individual deployments, is gathering a list of team member's additional skills. Pictures were taken for team ID

cards. DMORT patches were distributed.

VIP Don Bloom, Region V DMORT Computer Specialist, discussed the Victim Identification Program (VIP). The Ante-mortem form was discussed briefly and a demonstration of an interview with the family of victims was conducted. He showed a tribute to the victims of UAL Flight 93.

FAC Christy Whitaker, Region IV DMORT and National FAC Core Team Leader, discussed Family Assistance Centers (FAC). FAC should be located away from the disaster scene and a safe place for family members to meet with professionals to discuss victims or possible victims. It should be easy to locate, accessible, and a place of comfort. Family members must be protected from the press but telephone numbers and locations should be released to the media so family members can find the FAC. The facility is often shared with the organizations that offer assistance to the families. Christy discussed the correct procedure for the interview and how to obtain information in a caring, professional manner. Christy is a very impressive lady who is passionate about her FAC assignment. She emphasized empathy as the ability to understand the other person's world without losing your own. An important part of helping others is to maintain your own balance. She discussed ways to look out for the mental health of the interviewers and staff workers as well as providing care for the families. She said you must make decisions quickly. If you make a bad decision, you'll know it sooner and can make another to correct it.



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Forensic Odontology. A briefing was conducted on the history of forensic dentistry and use in victim identification. Graphic pictures helped illustrate the procedure for obtaining this important information. Dental charts and pantographic x-rays are useful tools in determining the identity of victims.

Summary. It provided an opportunity for the team to discuss deployments, administrative information, receive outstanding instruction and to get acquainted. I found the members to be a very cohesive organization dedicated to the DMORT mission. During a disaster, they have a very difficult job to perform. The motivation for their selfless service appears to be the appreciation of the family members when the remains of a loved one or their personal affects are returned to them providing a sense of closure. I was impressed with the friendliness of DMORT members.

Region 9 Training



Region IX Annual Training Session Summary

By Fred Corral, Region Commander

Region IX held their annual training session at the River Palms Hotel and Casino in Laughlin, Nevada from June 17-20. Over 80 participants, including DMORT members, coroner, fire, law enforcement and military personnel attended this informative and entertaining session. The theme of this year's meeting was "**Remembering 9-11.**" All of the notebooks and Certificates of Attendance were labeled with this sincere dedication.

The guest of honor at the session was former Los Angeles County Coroner, Dr. Thomas T. Noguchi, who presented an audience-acclaimed interesting lecture on death investigations. I should mention that I met Dr. Noguchi a few years ago at a meeting, where I spoke about DMORT. After my lecture, Dr. Noguchi commended me on my presentation, and expressed his admiration for DMORT and its members. He then offered to speak to the team, assist me or help out DMORT in any way, whenever contacted. I never forgot that generous offer: I asked Dr. Noguchi to speak at this year's training, and he enthusiastically agreed. Little did he know: the trip to Laughlin would take longer than anticipated. Dr. Noguchi and his wife were driving from Los Angeles, and were expected to arrive in Laughlin on June 16. But en route, there was a forest fire that closed the Cajun Pass off of Interstate #5 in San Bernardino, CA; this is the only connection between Los Angeles and Laughlin! Dr. Noguchi was forced to turn around and drive back to Los Angeles, where he and his wife

proceeded to catch a flight out of LAX into McCarran Airport in Las Vegas. In Las Vegas, they rented a car, and drove to Laughlin. They finally arrived on June 17 at 2:00 a.m. I want to express my deepest gratitude for Dr. Noguchi's dedication and persistence in order to attend our DMORT training session: the meeting benefited from his presence and contribution.

Dr. Noguchi reviewed the history of NAME, the National Association of Medical Examiners, and the origin of the Medical Examiner's role in death investigations. He also went over some of the celebrity deaths, which he investigated while LA Coroner. The next speaker was Dr. Gerald Vale – well renowned forensic odontologist – who gave a presentation on the function of odontology in a disaster.

Then, Patricia Andrews, consultant for the California Bureau of Vital Statistics, spoke about death certificates when mass casualties are involved. Later, Professor Paul Stein spoke on the significance of DNA in the identification process. Hope Morrow, our team mental health specialist, discussed the debriefing process, following a mass fatality incident. She also introduced the updated DMORT Deployment Information Form, which thoroughly records vital information about each individual upon activation. Dates of deployment, team assignments, qualifications, and expertise are among the useful data readily available with this form. Don Bloom, Bob Shank, Jr., and Tom Shepardson have reviewed it, and agree that it will be of communicative value.

The next morning, I reviewed some of the highlights from the 2002 NDMS Conference that was held in Georgia this past April. The team

Do You Have An Article
of interest to DMORT members, or news about an upcoming event in your region? Has a team member received special recognition or achieved a new level of certification? Is there a training program or conference that team members should know about? We are looking for information like this for the newsletter. Let your Regional Team Leader know and they will make it available for the next edition. This is YOUR newsletter and we can't do the job without you. *Dennis McGowan - Editor*



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was pleased to hear about the \$100,000 grant opportunity, offered by OEP to all DMORT regions. The Funds are available for purposes, such as training, equipment and supplies. Members were also satisfied about the Homeland Security Act inclusion of the new Bioterrorism bill, allowing NDMS members the same rights as military reservists. I also reminded everyone that the 2003 NDMS conference would be held in our own region, at Reno, Nevada March 8-12.

I was honored that Tom Shepardson, founder and National Commander of DMORT, attended the training session. He gave an outstanding presentation about DMORT and its history on up to the events of 9-11. We are grateful to Tom for traveling to our training session, considering his busy schedule.

The video about DMORT from the Discovery Channel was shown. And the meeting concluded with Region IX presenting Plaques of Appreciation to all of the speakers.

During the lunch breaks and after hours, everyone tried their luck on the casino floor: Tom Shepardson and Leland Moore were big winners! All who attended the training had a great time. And as always, it was a pleasure seeing old friends and meeting new ones.

Overall, the training session was a success, largely due to those who lectured, those who attended, and those who helped organize the entire conference. I would also like to acknowledge Nancy Palmer, from the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office, and our sponsors, Jerry and Patti Turner, from the NTSA (National Trauma Scene Awareness Foundation).

Region X Annual Training Session

Duane Bigoni,
Region
Commander



Region X held their annual training session in conjunction with the Washington State Dental ID Team on July 27-28, at the Washington Criminal Justice Training Facility, just south of Seattle. Over 75% of the team attended the meeting.

The training concentrated on the two DMORT computer programs. Bob Shank, Jr. and Dr. Jim McGivney reviewed the VIP and Win ID programs. DMORT computers were sent from the stored Maryland DPMU, for hands-on training purposes. Due to their skills, several individuals were chosen to be our designated primary data entry team and family assistance center interviewers.

Additional speakers included Chuck Hutchins, who explained the function of OEP and the Management Support Team. Bill Ambler informed us about the two portable morgue units. Frank Ciaccio gave a review on the NTSB. Jennie Thommen spoke about the Family Assistance Core Team. And a fingerprint expert from the FBI demonstrated the difficult task in victim identification.

On the first evening of the session, 94 attendees listened to motivational speaker, retired Captain Al Haynes, who heroically crash landed a "non-flyable" airplane in Sioux City, Iowa. Overall, the meeting was a great success. Thanks to all of the speakers and everyone who participated

Somerset, PA Reunion

With nearly 50 replies into Angie Hensley about dates for the reunion, it appears that the majority of people can attend on Nov 16/17. These will be the dates for the reunion event. We are still working out details on what will take place where, but the consensus is to meet in the afternoon of Nov 16 in/near Somerset, have dinner and take over a bar/pub. Then, those that wish to attend a service can do so on the morning of Nov 17. After that, we can meet at the crash site. Wally has graciously offered to allow us in the site. I'll be speaking with him about other details and ideas. We will also supply a list of hotels in the Somerset/Johnstown area, as there were some concerns about the cost of lodging at the 7 Springs resort. So at this point, please mark your calendars for Nov 16/17 as the reunion date. Anyone wishing to volunteer to assist in coordinating the dinner and events for the evening can drop me and Angie a line (ahens@gremlan.org). More to come....

Speedy Recovery

Gary Moore, acting director of the Office of Emergency Response, had emergency bypass surgery on October 11, 2002. He is doing fine following the surgery and should be at home recuperating in several days. Please send cards to: Gary Moore, Office of Emergency Response, 12300 Twinbrook Parkway Suite 360, Rockville, Maryland.

Congratulations

Carter Jackson (Region 4 Southaven, MS) and his wife Pam are the proud parents of their first child Benjamin. Ben was born May 20th and was a healthy 6 pounds 11 ounces.



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Condolences

The father of Cal Corson, at member of the Region 7 DMORT team passed away. Funeral services were held in Waverly Iowa. DMORT team members are asked to keep him in your thoughts and prayers. Cal, we love you and share your grief.

Salvation Army Salute

Duane Bigoni, Region X Commander

Following the events of September 11th, Dan Rohling - a Mortuary Officer from Boise, Idaho and Region X member - was deployed several times to New York City. While there, he was extremely impressed by the efforts of the Salvation Army. He wrote a letter to Ann Landers, praising the work of the Salvation Army, and it appeared in her column on March 2002.

Those of us who were deployed share Dan's sentiments towards the Salvation Army, especially their support, dedication and humanity. They were the most stable part of my experiences in New York: their smiles and concern really helped me withstand some difficult moments.

This is Dan's letter:

Dear Ann Landers:

I am part of the National Disaster Medical System and have been deployed to New York three times since the attacks last September. Each day that we worked, a bus brought the medical workers into the city at 7 am and took us back at 7 pm. Every time we arrived at the medical examiner's office, we were greeted with a hot breakfast, hot coffee, tea, hot chocolate and the smiling supportive faces of the Salvation Army volunteers. Through breakfast, lunch and dinner, these volunteers worked tirelessly, sometimes for 12-hour shifts, to feed

the hundreds of volunteers from the many agencies working in the city. Often, the volunteers were already at their stations when I arrived and were still there when I left. These people always took the time to ask, 'where are you from?' and 'have you called home since you've been here?' They made sure we had access to a calling card and encouraged all of us to call home. A chaplain was available for those who felt the need to talk. I will be back in NY shortly, and I know I can count on these volunteers to be there. My hat is off to the Salvation Army, not only for what they have done for me, but for what they are still doing. I will never pass another bell ringer without placing money in that red kettle.

Signed,
Grateful in Idaho

After tragedy, mortuary workers step up for families A response team like no other

*06/19/2002 By MARK WROLSTAD /
The Dallas Morning News*

Amid a sea of debris strewn with human remains and an almost endless line of families searching for loved ones, the thing that most struck David Patterson was a tiny tree, less than a foot tall, standing at the edge of the World Trade Center collapse.

"That was the only thing that wasn't dead," the Dallas embalmer said, "a little bitty tree."

During his grimly frustrating and ultimately rewarding work as a volunteer helping to identify victims of the terrorist attacks, he came to see the tree as an analogy for human resilience.

"It's going to come back. It's going to grow. We're going to recover," said Mr. Patterson, a faculty member and technician at the Dallas Institute of Funeral Service, a mortuary school. "Out of death, life must rise."

The countless thousands who served in perhaps as many ways after Sept. 11 included federally coordinated emergency teams of funeral directors who stepped up to the line of duty with better-known professionals.

The 15 team members who went to New York City's ground zero from Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas were honored Tuesday in Dallas. They're part of the Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team, known by the descriptive initials D-MORT.

"The firefighters and police officers who've gone to help have gotten a lot of publicity, but our funeral directors from all over the country who've also gone have been without much recognition," said Karen Grice of the Texas Funeral Directors Association in Austin. "They performed a great service as well."

The funeral group's annual convention acknowledged the response team's contributions in helping identify about a third of the New York victims - just more than 1,100 of nearly 3,000. Funeral directors from other states went to Pennsylvania after a hijacked jet crashed there Sept. 11.

Large tragedies

The nationwide response team, organized under the U.S. Public Health Service's National Disaster Medical System, has been around for a decade.

Members are mobilized as temporary federal employees to assist medical



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examiners and local authorities handling large tragedies just as they help with family tragedies each day, said Todd Ellis, the head of the regional team.

"It's about helping people," said Mr. Ellis, who's the coroner, a justice of the peace and a funeral director in Muleshoe, Texas, near the New Mexico border. "That's the reason we're involved."

Among the 13 Texans who went to Manhattan was Richard Burton, a Denton funeral director who also did stints after the Oklahoma City bombing and a plane crash in Guam.

"We're not in it for any glory or any monetary thing," said Mr. Burton, who has worked at Goen-Hudgens Funeral Home for half of his 40 years. "We're in it to help our fellow man, and whatever it takes, we'll do."

Mr. Burton, now in his second 16-day tour in New York, helped refine the record keeping in an operation that involved recovery of thousands of body parts and releasing identified remains to relatives.

"This whole thing has kind of opened my eyes that we're pretty privileged in this country, and we've got to start worrying about our neighbor," locally as well as internationally, he said.

Emotional work

Last fall, Mr. Patterson had the emotional task of gathering identifying information about victims from their families. Then he worked in the identification unit, processing DNA information.

"Anything that belonged to a human, we collected," he said. "The devastation and the destruction wears on you. I don't care how long you've

been in this business, it wears on you."

He returned home in October feeling that he hadn't finished his job, he said. The first time he tried to convey his experiences to students at the Dallas institute, he failed.

Mr. Patterson eventually sorted things out. "I finally realized there are some things I cannot paint a picture of," he said. "I know I did the best job I could."

The work also put some balance into the workaholic outlook of the husband and father.

"Family and friends are oh-so-important," Mr. Patterson said. "They've got to be taken care of while you can because, at some point in life, this could happen to any of us. "It made me realize that life is a lot more important."

DMORT Benefactors for WTC Victim Family

Frank Saul

Region V Commander



Mugaba Woodside & Julie Saul

While serving as DMORT Night Watch Commander at the New York City Medical Examiner's Office in September, I was notified that one of their employees had lost his mother, who was a cook at the World Trade Center. Mugaba Woodside, a 20 year old immigrant from the

Bahamas and a full-time engineering student, was now the sole support of his infant son and two younger siblings.

Region V's Bob Stevens had recently made arrangements for the fabrication of a DMORT WTC commemorative T-shirt with the understanding that all sales profits would go to a WTC-related cause. We now had our cause. We were able to give Mugaba an immediate \$500 check.

Julie Saul, my wife and a Region V Forensic Anthropologist who served on the night shift at Freshkill Landfill and Ground Zero, and I returned to NYC in late May. Mugaba's mother had still not been found, but this extraordinary young man is doing well at school and at work and is even excelling at track. (His mentor was his mother, who was a track star in the Islands.) We felt privileged to give him a Region V check for an additional \$1500 to help him fulfill his mother's dreams for her children

We were also able to visit with Amy Mundorf, Forensic Anthropologist, and Ivan Steigman, Motor Vehicle Operator, and other friends at the NYCMEO and then go on to view a much-changed Ground Zero. It was a very strange experience to see these places in daylight, but comforting to know and be told that DMORT had made a difference.

Incidentally, some of you may have wondered about the origin of the DMORT patch displayed at Memorial Park. I provided it very early one morning when a NYC detective who was setting up the display asked if I could obtain one for him. I called for a DMAT medic who removed it from my sleeve with a scalpel – hence the bits of thread around the edges.