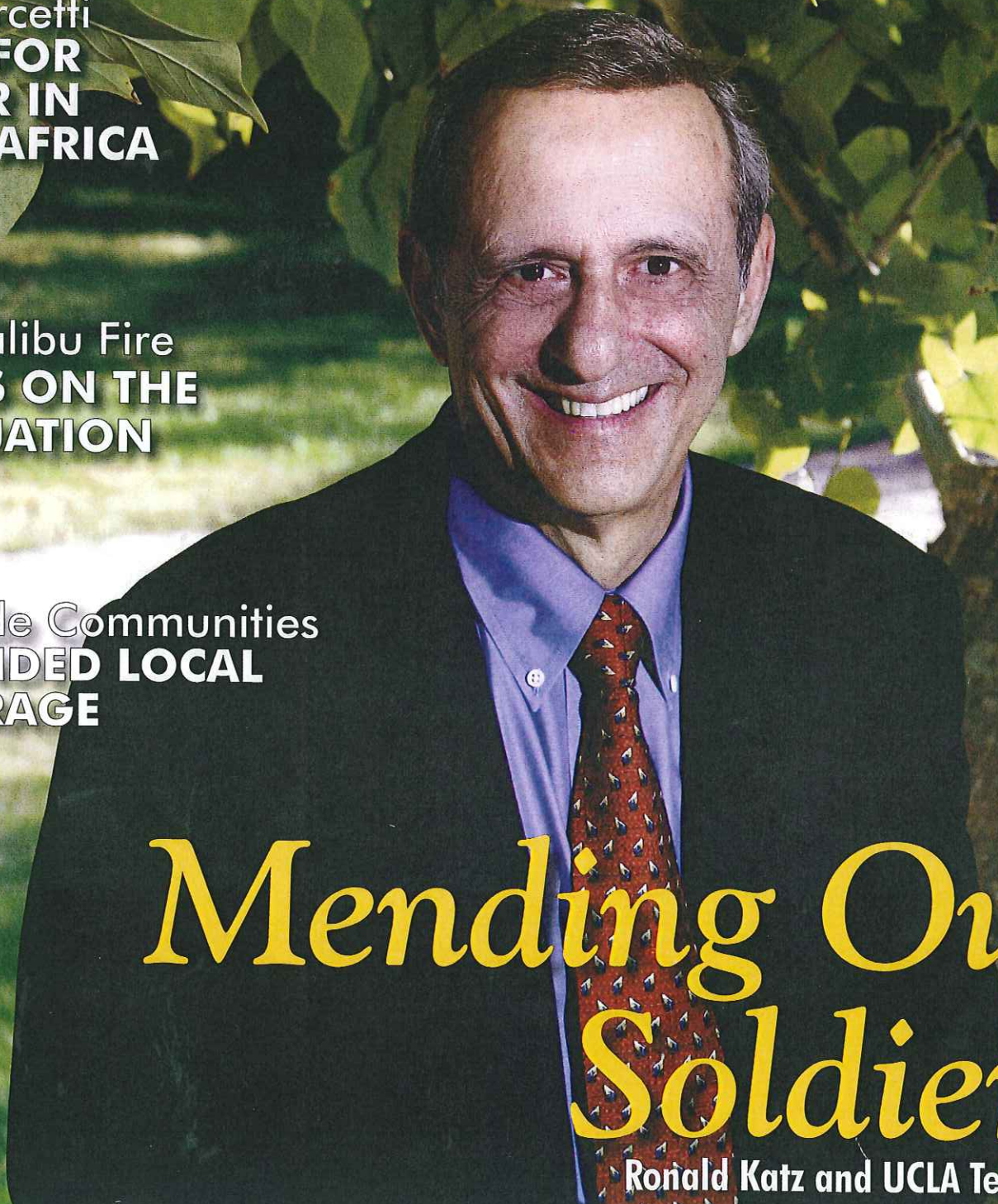


BEL-AIR VIEW

Gil Garcetti
**DIGS FOR
WATER IN
WEST AFRICA**

The Malibu Fire
**NOTES ON THE
EVACUATION**

Westside Communities
**EXPANDED LOCAL
COVERAGE**



*Mending Our
Soldiers*

Ronald Katz and UCLA Team Up

On the Mend

Philanthropist Ronald A. Katz and UCLA Partner Up to Help Our Vets

By CAROLE JABLON

Over the past four decades the prolific and well-regarded inventor Ronald A. Katz has been credited with holding more than 80 patents for various telephonic interface systems that have affected many of the things we use every day, from the first form of on-line credit authorization services and anti-counterfeiting services to voice response customer services. But if you sit him down and ask him what his most prized invention is he'll tell you without any hesitation that it's Operation Mend, his first concept that came directly from the heart and not some computerized formulation. Operation Mend is a program established to help treat soldiers wounded during service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Although never a veteran himself, Katz has always had a deep affection for the military through the eyes and talent of his father, World War II United Service Organization performer Mickey Katz. This respect for our servicemen and women is what brought him to the Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas, in August 2006, specifically to their central burn center and the nine-unit Fisher House facility. "I remember going on a tour of the hospital" he recalls, "and the level of human damage is horrendous because of the devastation that's been brought on them. By the time I came home and discussed it with my wife, Maddie, I knew we had to do something more." True to his word, Katz provided the lead gift to complete the building of a new 42-unit Fisher House at the Brooke Army Medical Center.

Then he caught Lou Dobbs doing an interview on CNN. "That's when I first saw Corporal Aaron Mankin. Here's this kid with this blown away face from an IED (improvised explosive device) and it simply broke my heart. His spirit still remained and when asked about future surgeries, he said with a little laugh, 'they've still got to make me beautiful again.' I knew then I had to do even more and bring in the best resources available," he says with great conviction. After attending the unveiling of the new Fisher House facility in

January, attended by Katz and his entire family, he pulled out all the stops and brought in the UCLA Medical Center, where Katz holds a seat on the Medical Center Advisory Board.

It didn't take a lot of convincing. Once Gerald S. Levey (Vice Chancellor of Medical Services), Amir Rubin (COO of UCLA Medical Center) and Dr. Timothy Miller (Department Head Plastic Surgery) heard Katz's idea and visited Brooke Army Medical Center, it became a general consensus that it was "their duty" to do something. The army does an excellent job of taking care of these young people but this was an excellent opportunity for them to get not only the best the army had to offer, but the best the country had to offer. This became a sort of motto, one that especially held true for Dr. Miller, who had interned at Brooke and was

"These are our soldiers, these are our countrymen, these are our neighbors."

a Marine veteran himself. "No" just wasn't an option.

Arranging a partnership between two excellent medical centers meant bringing together two giant bureaucratic organizations, Brooke Army Medical Center and UCLA. Irrespective of these bureaucracies, they reached an immediate agreement, which is usu-

ally unheard of. From this partnership came Operation Mend, a program that gives returning service members with severe facial injuries access to the country's best plastic and reconstructive surgeons in the private sector. Cpl. Aaron Mankin was Operation Mend's first patient, and the first representative of what they hope will be an ongoing rotation of successful surgeries. Mankin has undergone three surgeries this fall and will receive a final surgery this December.

Katz admits that there is a fascinating sidebar to be shared: "This

program brings young men and women, who have literally been in the dark of San Antonio at the burn center at Brooke, into an enlarged community of interest and compassion. To see the love and affection that has been passed on to Aaron, it's remarkable. Westwood and UCLA are now on the map as a community where patriotism and volunteerism flourish-

es." Operation Mend resonates with such passion amongst everybody that comes in touch with it, and bodes well by helping one victim at a time.

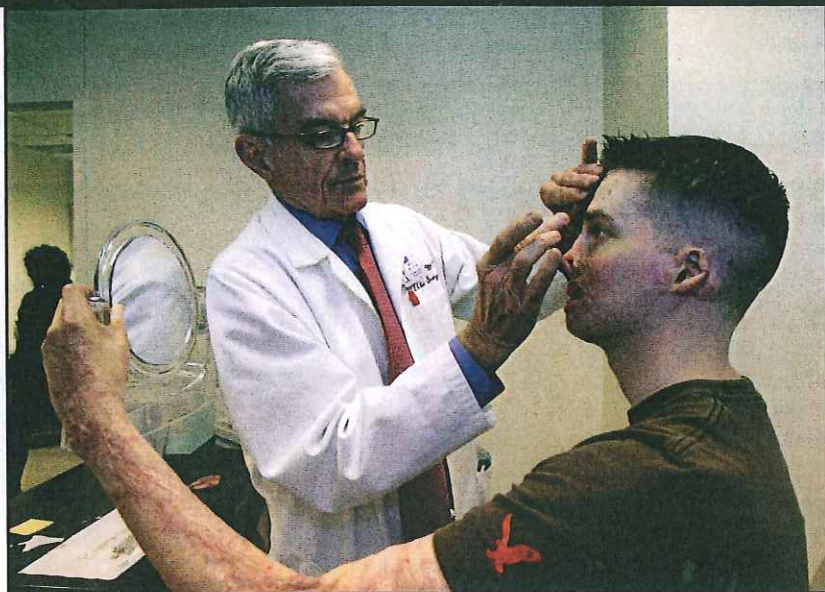
"If we can help Aaron Mankin it'll be a great thing. If we can help two patients it will be won-

derful, if we can help five or more, it'll be fantastic. We don't need to make it on such a grand scale that it can never happen. We need to make it so it can work and that we can continue to express our appreciation and patriotism through charity, contribution and volunteerism," says Katz.

Helping these soldiers is something retired Army Nurse (and UCLA clinical nurse) Patti Taylor (63) knows about better than most. "I've spent many years at the bedside of many soldiers," she says, "I know what happens to them when they come home and what a community means to them." Taylor has presented Mankin with a patriotic quilt sewn together by at least a dozen pairs of hands in a local Reseda fabric shop to help his healing process.

Katz feels he's made a contribution on behalf of our wounded soldiers and doesn't cringe when confronted about the country's barometer reading when it comes to the war. "Irrespective of your political position on the war," he says, "these injured soldiers transcend those positions. These are our soldiers, these are our countrymen, these are our neighbors. If they're injured, whether you approve of the war or don't, it's our responsibility to take care of them."

If you would like to contribute to the Operation Mend program at UCLA, please visit: <https://giving.ucla.edu/plasticsurgery> or contact Adrienne Walt, Director of Development, UCLA Medical Sciences, awalt@support.ucla.edu, (310) 267-1835.



Dr. Timothy A. Miller, Professor of Surgery and Chief of Plastic Surgery at UCLA, examines Operation Mend's first patient, Cpl. Aaron Mankin.



Ronald A. Katz, Diana Mankin holding 8-month-old Maddie Mankin (Cpl. Mankin's wife and daughter), Cpl. Aaron Mankin, and Amir Dan Rubin, COO of UCLA Medical Center.

Photo Credit: Scott Stahl/UCLA