

## “Closing in on a Killer: Scientists Unlock Clues to the Spanish Influenza Virus”

A 1997 temporary exhibit at the AFIP’s National Museum of Health and Medicine on the 1918 influenza pandemic and efforts by AFIP pathologist Dr. Jeffrey Taubenberger to recreate the genetic structure of the 1918 influenza virus are featured in a new virtual exhibit on the museum’s website at [www.nmhm.washingtondc.museum](http://www.nmhm.washingtondc.museum). Today, Dr. Taubenberger’s work on 1862 influenza is made possible through his use of the AFIP’s Tissue Repository, the largest and most comprehensive tissue repository in the world, which includes cases dating back to 1917 and more than 3 million medical cases, in the hope that the knowledge gained could help prevent or defend against another deadly pandemic.

*“Spraying the throat as preventive treatment against influenza at Love Field in Texas” is one of many 1918 influenza pandemic images in the collections of the Otis Historical Archives at the National Museum of Health and Medicine, and is accessible online on the museum’s website.*



MIS 05-118

## Local news radio interviews author at museum book signing

By Courtney MacGregor  
NMHM Public Affairs Specialist

The AFIP’s National Museum of Health and Medicine hosted a lecture and book-signing by author Michael Sledge, who discussed his book, *Soldier Dead*. The book examines why recovering the remains of US service members is important and also provides an analysis of the processes of recovery, identification, return, burial, and remembrance of the dead. The book addresses the handling of the fallen soldier, how it has evolved over time, and how these changes have advanced technology and capabilities and affected the shifting attitudes of the public, government, and military.

The lecture and book-signing was promoted in *The Washington Post* prior to the event in an article that featured an interview with Sledge. The event was covered by a reporter from WTOP-AM news radio, who taped the presentation and interviewed Sledge afterward for her audience. Copies of the book are available for sale in the museum’s gift shop.

Sledge spoke for an hour on his reasons for writing the book and how it is organized. He discussed each chapter, highlighting important facts and stories. He noted the great service that soldiers provide to the nation and the courage that is shown when soldiers are enlisting. “When you join the military,” Sledge said, “you sign your name in blood. Literally.” The DNA Repository of the Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner takes and maintains a sample of blood from all soldiers, should there be only remains left with which to identify a body.

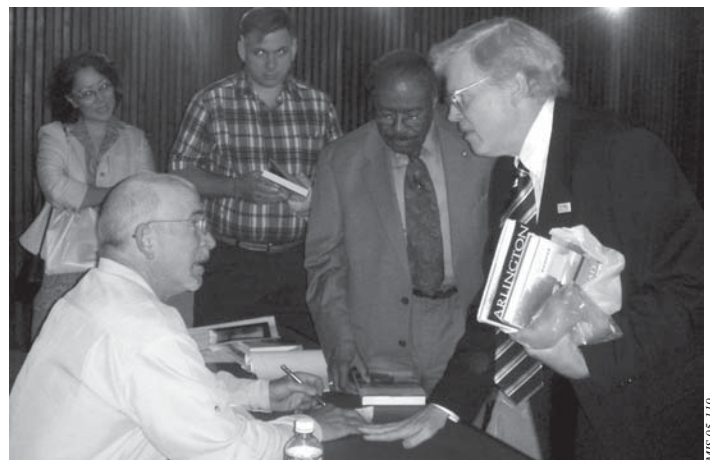
The title, *Soldier Dead*, is a Civil War phrase, Sledge explained, that was often placed at the top of a list of men who had

died in battle. The term was replaced in the 1930s with “war dead,” to refer to casualties. Sledge explained that “soldier dead is more personal and real,” which is why he chose it for the title of his book.

The lecture was attended by many military personnel who were connected to the topic in many ways— families, medical examiners and soldiers were able to ask Sledge directly about his feelings on when families should be notified of a soldier’s death, what rights the media and the country have concerning fallen soldiers and how repatriation should be handled by the Office of the Armed Forces Medical Examiner.

Sledge answered questions and entertained comments for about 30 minutes before sitting down to sign copies of his book. He felt that it was “important to write personal messages that will further convey the strength of the book’s contents and will thank the readers for their support.”

*Author Michael Sledge signs copies of his book and discusses it with the audience after his lecture.*



MIS 05-119