

The SP Corps says farewell to COL Forman and welcome to LTC Worley as the new Chief Dietitian

On 25 May 2004 at 1000 hours, LTC Maria A. Worley was sworn in as the 20th Chief, Dietitian Section and Assistant Chief of the Army Medical Specialist Corps.

Her comments:

I am honored to be sworn in as the 20th Chief Dietitian and Asst Corps Chief. I am indebted to so many good people who have invested a lot of patience and time to help me learn and grow as an officer, dietitian, sister, daughter, wife, mother and friend. Not for one day, do I take for granted the blessing of having wonderful people to journey with and for the gift of God's grace and love through which all things are possible.

I thank God each morning that I live in a nation where it is possible for a woman to put on a pair of pants in the morning, now work with me, you can thank God for your own thing but this is my list and I'm a woman, drive her own car which she bought by herself, speak openly and freely while looking others in the eyes, get an education, make a good a living, live in a beautiful home, send her son to a great school and go to worship without the fear of retaliation for my Christian beliefs. Oh, and I never under value a few other things that might not be permitted in other cultures and countries but that make my life more fun and interesting. Things like the freedom to play Bunco with the girls, argue about politics in the office, voice my opinion to the soccer refs and slow drivers in the left lane, testify in court, vote, and last but not least, select my own wonderful spouse.

It is because I value these things so much that I feel beholden to America and our Constitution. I am glad to raise my right hand today to do my small part of "support and defend."

It's rare and exciting to combine work and passion. In this job, it is possible for me to act on my passion for the benefits and healing power of nutrition and my zeal for the courageous and patriotic Warfighter who protects our American ideals.

When I selected nutrition as my major, it was because I loved the restaurant and food service business. Coming from a small town south of the Mason Dixon, I value food as a social experience and for the health that mom's golden rule of "meat starch and vegetable" at every meal brought to my family. That's right CARBS at every meal!!!!

From the beginning of my studies, I was convinced of the negative health impacts of poor or unbalanced nutrition and on the need for the earliest nutritional intervention possible to speed the healing process in injury and disease. These biological truths cannot be disputed and as of yet, science has not found a pill or patch that will provide macro and micro nutrients with the same relaxing benefits of a meal shared amongst friends, be it on the table of fancy restaurant, in the family van or SUV, in a tent in Kosovo or Stryker vehicle in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The American Dietetic Association seal bears the Latin motto "QUAM PLURIMUS PRODESEE" which means to benefit as many as possible. I believe our profession is vital to the Athlete as well as the burned Warrior in the ISR.

That is what Army dietitians will focus on in the coming years. How do we use our knowledge and skills to improve, maintain or regain, optimum health for the full spectrum of needs of the Soldier in his job at home and abroad? This is where our challenge comes in and where I get a bit nervous.

There is no doubt that the transformation of the military is a much needed and warranted change. Structure, equipment, joint fighting and doctrine have been lagging behind the fast moving world of terrorists, hackers, the arms black-market, and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction into some pretty unstable and fanatical regimes.

Change is difficult but as LTG (P) McNeil said, you have two choices with transformation, "run with it or be run over by it." He says this because sending our soldiers out to fight this war and others like it to come, requires evolution beyond where we are.

Now the problem I have with figuring out what to do with transformation is that I'm not sure where existing military occupations fit into the big the picture. Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen Schoomaker says that 18,000 soldiers will be transferred to different MOS's and that by FY07 the Army will create 149 new Military police, 16 Transportation, 11 Bio-chem, 9 petroleum/water purification, 8 civil affairs and 4 psyop units. He also mentioned 22 new Infantry and 22 new Armor units. He said everything is on the table except Army Values and quote "I am getting rid of the Finance Branch because they don't do anything but screw-up our pay anyway." I sure hope he has good medical experiences!!!

He also stated that HRC had too many people and not enough work.

Now it seems that the message is pretty clear about the needs of the Army. You either carry the weapon, drive, fly or navigate the weapon or you directly touch or hold up a Warfighter. If you do this, you better be able to prove that what you're

doing positively impacts the Soldier, or you don't have a place in the green suit anymore or maybe not even in civil service.

I think all of us can ask ourselves if we fit into an outdated occupation, military or civilian. Is the government spending money for our salary that could be used to buy a soldier an Interceptor bullet proof vest, while we sit idly at our desk surfing the web or putting in a 5-6 hour day because, well, that's all there is to do? What I hope for the AMEDD is that we will not point aimlessly, or because it's easy to do, take the "low hanging fruit" as targets for transformation until we have all done the honest look at the real medical care of the soldier and keep that foremost in our minds. In the least we need to honestly assess value of our own job, or the jobs within our organization, if we are the OIC/ NCOIC.

I see dietitians at this very moment as ready and willing to "fight our way out of the kill zone." We are ready to take on the challenge of determining what we can do with our knowledge to impact a soldier but it will mean a new set of skills and the jettison of some old outdated and non-effectual tasks that we perform right now. It might mean that we aren't structured the same or that our work environment changes drastically but whatever the final word is, we have to be brave and honest enough to do the right thing for the AMEDD health care team in it's efforts to care for the Soldier and for the Army. My motto is "Move out, or move out of the way."

COL Forman leaves with the ground work set for us to accomplish this difficult task. I'd like to thank her for her efforts and battles won over the last three years and for giving me something to build upon. I look forward to working with all of you intelligent and caring members of the AMEDD and SP and mostly to serving the dietitians as we "move out."



