



Association of Army Dentistry (AAD)

Fall 2025

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"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." – Winston Churchill

As we transition from summer to autumn, I hope everyone had a restful and enjoyable summer. This has been a year full of transitions in more than seasons. We celebrated the 250th anniversary of our Army and recalled the 24th anniversary of 9/11. Our military installations have been renamed and then again renamed. Our Dental Corps has also undergone many transitions over the last few years, and especially over the last few months as many of our Dental Activities and Commands have been inactivated and transitioned under different leadership.

As Dental Corps officers, we remain resilient and committed to serving the Soldier in the most efficient and comprehensive manner. The Association of Army Dentistry also remains committed to honoring our past, supporting the present and inspiring the future of Army Dentistry. We welcome the new officers who have completed their summer training and are now being actively incorporated into their first roles as Army dentists. We congratulate and salute those who completed residencies, fellowships and command courses. Continue to selflessly serve and find ways to excel whatever your role.

I would like to welcome Maison Kennedy to the AAD – as an HPSP dental student member of our organization, he brings a wealth of enthusiasm and energy that will continue to make our organization relevant and active. We need all members of our Army Dentistry family – past, present and future – to join us in preserving our legacy, advocating for our profession and guiding our future!

Karen M. Keith, COL, USA (Ret)
President and Chair of the Board

"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity." – **George S. Patton**

Members

Welcome to Fall – Membership Recruitment Season!

By Frank Nasser

Each fall, we reach out to members and readers of our Newsletter with one simple message: **Help Us Grow!**

The mission of the AAD depends on the strength of its membership. Your support allows us to continue morale-building activities that directly benefit those in uniform, while also sustaining the Newsletter, website and the Army Dentistry Monument.

Looking ahead, there is much more we hope to accomplish — but we cannot do it without your continued involvement. There is strength in numbers.

We ask you to invite a friend or colleague to consider joining the AAD. Membership is open to all who support Army Dentistry and the goals of the association: Active and Reserve officers, enlisted Soldiers and NCOs, spouses, surviving spouses, family members and civilians.



Want to give the **Gift of**

Membership? We can set that up for you — just contact us at the AAD email address.

As an added incentive, anyone who joins during the final quarter of 2025 will receive full **credit** for 2026 membership.

If you were once a member but let your membership lapse, now is the perfect time to renew. We don't just want to **grow** our membership — we want to **keep** our members engaged.

And finally, no recruitment season would be complete without a **Call for Volunteers**. The AAD needs your energy, initiative and skills to preserve and strengthen the legacy of Army Dentistry.

The AAD is Your Organization!

Congratulations to COL (Ret) Peter Tan!

The AAD is proud to recognize a former AAD board member on his selection for induction into the U.S. Veterans Hall of Fame. COL (Ret) Tan has long been a dedicated supporter of Army Dentistry. This honor is a well-earned tribute to his service and contributions.



The U.S. Veterans Hall of Fame



6th Annual Induction Ceremony Class of 2025 Nov. 8, 2025

COL Peter M. TanUnited States Army

Category – **SERVICE**

https://www.usvetshalloffame.org/2025-ceremony



Active Component News



Army Dental Corps Chief

Submitted by COL Scott Rankin, Corps Specific Branch Proponent Officer (CSBPO)

On Sept. 2, 2025, CPT Dennis Chung (left photo) and CPT Cody Lee were welcomed into the Dental Corps during the AMEDD Basic

Officer Leadership Course (BOLC) Dental Track. Additionally, during the session, senior dental leaders and subject matter experts presented on graduate dental education, the

AMMED Personnel Proponent Directorate (APPD), Corps Specific Branch Proponent Officer (CSBPO), 63A consultant duties, DC careers, leadership opportunities, operational opportunities and much more. A BOLC social was held later that evening where both incoming officers had the opportunity to talk one-on-one with local Army Dental leaders in a more casual setting.





New War College Graduate



COL Min C. Kim graduated from the Army War College on June 6, 2025. His fellowship was with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR). His research project was titled, "In Case of Emergency: Planning for a Health Care Draft."

COL Min C. Kim (left) and Dr. Michael Lynch (Army War College advisor)

Reorganization within the Army Medical Department (AMEDD)

Changes are coming to the traditional command structure of the AMEDD and Dental Corps that most of us experienced during our careers within the Army Dental Care System. The deactivation of U.S. Army Dental Health Activities and regional Dental Health Commands are reported below — more information to follow as the reorganization becomes official.

In news related to reorganization within the AMEDD, on Sept. 30, 2025, the Fort Polk Dental Health Activity cased its colors during a deactivation ceremony at the Joint Restance Training Containing Containing

Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

After more than 70 years of dedicated dental support to soldiers and families, the unit has officially inactivated and realigned under Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital.

COL Stefan S. Olpinski, commander of Dental Health Command, West, presided over the ceremony and thanked installation and community leaders for their continued support. He praised the Fort Polk dental team for maintaining readiness rates above 97 percent and achieving the highest wartime task completion in the region.

COL Suzanne L. Jones, commander of the Fort Polk Dental Health Activity, reminded those gathered that the unit's greatest strength has always been its people.

"Through every name change and organizational shift, we have remained a dental family," she said. "Though the colors are cased today, the mission will continue under Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital."

READ FULL STORY: Fort Polk Dental Health Activity cases colors after decades, integrates with BJACH SEE ALL PHOTOS: DENTAC Deactivation Ceremony

MAJ Patrick Arbuckle, outgoing commander, and SFC Samantha Escamilla, senior

dental NCO, cased the Fort Huachuca Dental Clinic Command colors on Aug. 20, 2025, to symbolize the deactivation of the unit and realignment of dental personnel under the Fort Huachuca Medical Activity. The ceremony was hosted by COL Stefan Olpinski, commander, Dental Health Command, West, as part of a MEDCOM directive to reorganize dental health activities.



As the reorganization continues, Dental Health Command, West will inactivate on Oct. 22, 2025, with Dental Health Command, East to follow shortly thereafter. At that time, all Dental Health Commands (formerly Regional Dental Commands) will have been inactivated.

Spouses Corner

By Susan Allen

Remembering a Dental Corps First Lady

Carolyn Lefler, widow of the 20th Dental Corps Chief MG Bill B. Lefler, passed away on

Aug. 16, 2025. Many Dental Corps spouses remember Carolyn with fondness for who she was and for what she brought to the role she held. Carolyn was the first wife of a Dental Corps chief who I knew more than just through a handshake in a receiving line. Her sense of humor, strength and leadership set an example for me and for everyone else who met her. I remember her as someone who listened intently – never looking over your shoulder to see if there was someone else, she should be talking to. And I was most appreciative of the example she set and the solid guidance she shared. She was a quiet dynamo, a gracious hostess and generous mentor. As



Gary was preparing to retire, Bill and Carolyn invited us to their home to chat about the future. It was such an honor to sit at their kitchen table chatting and listening to their thoughts about life after the Army.

Diane Fay, widow of COL (Ret) Jim Fay, remembers Carolyn as a "kind, loving and caring military spouse." Diane goes on to say, "Carolyn made everyone feel welcome in the Army Dental Command. Her love for tennis was evident in her conversations. It was a pleasure for Jim and me to serve with her and her husband at several duty stations. Carolyn was so gracious and never wanted praise for her accomplishments."

Pris Trawick, widow of COL (Ret) Sid Trawick, also shares a fun Carolyn memory. "Sid and I were lucky enough to cross paths often with Carolyn and Bill Lefler during our military years and beyond. One of my early, favorite memories was a visit with Carolyn at her home at Fort Sam Houston. It was a nice sunny day to enjoy coffee and a chat. Sitting in her sunroom at the back of the house I noticed a lot of fluttering in the trees. It took me a minute to realize there were several hummingbirds sipping nectar from hanging jars. I had heard of these birds but had not seen them in action. Carolyn explained how they love the sweet "juice" in the feeders that they had placed outside to lure the entertaining birds close to windows. Fascinated, I observed some birds seemed friendly and welcoming toward their flock mates while others took a military "dive bomber" approach toward those trying to get to the feeders first. When I later told Sid about seeing these feathered flurries, he set up some feeding stations around our housing at various duty stations. No matter where we were in the world, the sight of a hummingbird always reminded me of Carolyn."

Carolyn – you will be remembered and missed.

Memories that Never Fade

The hearts and minds of Army spouses are full of memories. Remember ... Packing household goods for that first assignment. The quarters and government furniture that every other family also had, and with which you developed a love/hate relationship. Your children's fourth (or was it fifth) school and helping them make friends. Moving 15-years' worth of stuff, one or two pets, two cars and your children to a new post across the country while maintaining your sanity, helping your kids adjust and figuring out the housing, schools, shopping, job, etc., etc., etc.

Some memories are so distinct they form graphic images. I call these my "picture memories" because they are mental snapshots of specific moments in time that have

been stored in my memory for eternity. For example, I can still vividly see myself sitting at my desk in Mr. Purcell's Spanish class when the principal announced over the PA system that President Kennedy had been assassinated. And, of course, I also have a picture memory of Gary and me getting married in front of a sandbox in the beautiful backyard of the house in which he and his dental and medical school friends were living. These are such strong images that even insignificant details never fade.



Such a memory is September 11, 2001.

In the fall issue of the AAD Newsletter, Sterlene Hapner, Department of the Army Civilian (Ret), and I recounted our memories of September 11 from our perspectives living on opposite coasts of the United States. That day intimately affected Sterlene because she was working at the Pentagon Dental Clinic and participated in the medical response for those injured in the terrorist attack.

She and her husband, COL (Ret) Art Hapner, an MSC officer, live in Burke, Va., and have made numerous trips to the Pentagon for 911 remembrances and to visit the National 911 Pentagon Memorial. This year, Art and



Sterlene paused for a moment at the bench dedicated to one of Sterlene's patients, SGM Larry L. Strickland, who lost his life on 911. As Sterlene says, "He was a good man. The emotions of that day always grow stronger each and every time I return to the memorial. In many ways it doesn't feel like it has been 24 years."

Some memories will never fade.

AAD Pillars

Recruitment and Retention

One of the six pillars of the Association of Army Dentistry (AAD) is **Recruitment & Retention (R&R)**. This pillar is all about inspiring people to connect with Army Dentistry, celebrating with those who serve or served, and making sure that connection lasts for life.

Membership in the AAD is the heart of this effort. A strong community allows us to support one another, share experiences and keep Army Dentistry growing for the future.

To make this happen, the new **Membership Team (MT)** is reaching out to expand the AAD family. We're using platforms like Instagram and Facebook to spread the word and share stories about the people and purpose behind Army Dentistry.

You can help, too. Following, sharing and joining in keeps the message alive and shows others why Army Dentistry matters.

Check us out on Instagram: @aad_1911

Or visit us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/AssociationofArmyDentistry/

Be part of something special — stay connected, support one another, and help us **Grow**!

Honoring Service

Why I Serve

The Association of Army Dentistry thanks the Military Officers Association of America for allowing it to reprint the following article, which appeared in the July 2025 issue of *Military Officer*.

Maj. (Dr.) Frederick "Fritz" Dawson, USA, had two goals: Serve in the military, and pursue a career in dentistry. The Army is providing him with the opportunity to achieve both. He received his commission in 2013 after graduating from the Virginia Military Institute where he was a ROTC cadet. He entered active duty service in 2017 after graduating from dental school. He is currently the comprehensive dentist with the 167th Medical Augmentation



MAJ Dawson outside the dental clinic during the 24-8 MEDREX in Burundi.

All photos taken in Burundi are by 1LT Kiki Sibilla, SETAF-AF PAO. Detachment, 512th Field Hospital, 30th Medical Brigade, at Rhine Ordnance Barracks in Kaiserslautern, Germany.

The Unexpected

Early on in my active-duty career, I realized that military dentistry offered equal, if not better, quality of life compared to civilian counterparts. I have traveled the globe, and I have arguably more control over my career trajectory than I would in private practice. I never would have expected that before serving. The medical recruiters need to put that on the posters.

MAJ Dawson performing dentistry in full body armor in the dental tent inside a former Soviet Union missile bunker during DEFENDER 25 at Vepriai Rocket Base, Lithuania.

All photos taken during DEFENDER 25 are by SGT Devon Canada, MAJ Dawson's dental assistant.

Opportunities for Growth

When I was a brigade dentist in the 101st Airborne
Division, I earned the air assault and expert field medical

badges and got to participate in a Joint Readiness Training Center rotation. With the 30th Medical Brigade, I was able to participate in a medical readiness exercise in support of the Southern European Task Force, Africa, in Bujumbura, Burundi. In May, [I participated] in Defender 25. I've had the ability to collaborate with 50 military dentists from 14 different NATO countries.

'A Transformative Process'

Service isn't a one-way street, but it isn't purely transactional either. Serving your country is a transformative process. You'll meet people, go places, and do things you never could foresee or have the power to manifest alone outside of military service. And even when your career is over, the benefits will last a lifetime.

- by Blair Drake, managing editor, MOAA











Top row left: MAJ Dawson performing dentistry during MEDREX 24-8 in Bujumbura, Burundi.

Top row right: Interacting with the Royal Drummers of Burundi.

Bottom row left: The Dental Team in front of a former Soviet Union missile bunker during DEFENDER 25 at Vepriai Rocket Base, Lithuania. Left to right: SSG Haydee Cruz, 68EX2; MAJ Dawson; SGT Devon Canada, 68E; SPC Cherel Kamlo, 68E.

Bottom row center: MAJ Dawson (left) scrubs into the OR tent to work with Slovakian Armed Forces oral surgeon MAJ Maria Hurajtova for DEFENDER 25.

Bottom row right: MAJ Dawson and fellow dentist and Virginia Military Institute graduate CPT Conor Snyder after completing the Nijmegen 4-Days March. Photo by CPT Shane Hansen, a U.S. Army dentist assigned at Vilseck, Germany.

MEDREX – Testing military medical readiness capabilities

The Southern European Task Force, Africa (SETAF-AF) has planned and executive Medical Readiness Exercises (MEDREX) annually for more than 10 years. These medical exercises allow military medical personnel from the U.S. Army and its African partners to build strong relationships, while sharing medical practices, procedures and techniques. MEDREX enhances military medical capabilities for operations in Africa and around the world.

The first MEDREX, held in Ghana in 2014, established the groundwork for this recurring annual medical readiness program. In 2024 SETAF-AF held medical readiness exercises in Senegal, Ghana, Angola, South Africa, Burundi, Rwanda and Chad. Over the years Morocco, Chad, Cameroon, Gabon and Ethiopia have been MEDREX partner countries. During each two- to three-week MEDREX, military medical personnel from the U.S. Army and its partner countries collaboratively provide care to military and civilian patients.

DEFENDER – Comprehensive exercise in support of large-scale combat operations

DEFENDER (Dynamic Employment of Forces to Europe for NATO Deterrence and Enhanced Readiness) is the Army's largest exercise to practice moving personnel and equipment in support of large-scale combat operations. U.S. Army Europe and Africa plan and execute DEFENDER exercises. While DEFENDER focuses on the deployment of CONUS-based forces, military personnel from Europe and Africa are also tasked with support operations, including field medical services.

DEFENDER 25 (April 10 – July 24, 2025) involved approximately 12,000 U.S. service members and 13,000 troops from 29 partner nations who were deployed to Lithuania. The exercise included airborne operations, medical readiness exercises and command-and-control training. The purpose was to test rapid deployment of personnel and equipment, and to strengthen readiness and interoperability of the U.S. and its NATO allies.

Prior to deployment soldiers participating in DEFENDER must meet dental readiness standards to ensure they are Class 1/worldwide deployable. This standard ensures that soldiers receive treatment that will keep them risk free for dental emergencies for at least 12 months. Soldiers who require significant dental care or have an unknown dental status (Class III or IV) are non-deployable and, therefore, cannot contribute to the Army's warfighting capability.

Coaching and Mentoring

From Dental School to Active Duty: My Journey Through DCC/BOLC and Beyond

By CPT Holly Weber, 63A General Dentist, Fort Riley DENTAC

I am CPT Holly Weber, a 63A general dentist at Fort Riley, Kan. I graduated from the University of Iowa College of Dentistry in June 2025, and after completing my doctor of dental science degree, I attended DCC/BOLC before reporting to my current position at Fort Riley. I'd like to share a brief account of my journey and the lessons I've learned along the way within Army Dentistry.

Before arriving at DCC/BOLC, I was fortunate to have been mentored by two exceptional individuals who significantly shaped my path in Army Dentistry. During my time in dental school and undergraduate, I had the privilege of being mentored by COL (Ret) Karen Keith and MAJ (Ret) Kristopher Hart, both of whom played pivotal roles in my development as a dentist and an Army Dental Corps officer.

Dr. Keith's extensive experience in Army Dentistry, particularly in oral surgery and command roles, helped me understand the broader mission of Army Dentistry. She emphasized that the role of an Army dentist extends far beyond clinical procedures — it's about supporting Soldier readiness and contributing to the overall mission. Her leadership inspired me to recognize the importance of not only providing excellent dental care but also supporting Soldiers in maintaining their health and readiness for duty. Dr. Keith instilled in me the critical skill of leading with purpose, empathy and adaptability — qualities I rely on every day as I navigate my role in Army Dentistry.

In addition to Dr. Keith's guidance, Dr. Hart offered invaluable mentorship on the clinical side. I had the privilege of working alongside him in an office setting, where he helped me hone my technical skills and develop the ability to function as part of a cohesive team. His mentorship also played a crucial role in my decision to pursue a scholarship through the Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP), which opened doors to numerous opportunities within Army Dentistry. His practical approach to patient care and emphasis on teamwork have left a lasting impact on my career.

The foundation I built under the guidance of Dr. Keith and Dr. Hart has been instrumental in my transition to active duty. Their influence continues to guide me as I now serve as a 63A general dentist at Fort Riley.

The shift from dental school to active duty was a significant one. Arriving at Fort Sill for DCC/BOLC, I had my first taste of Army life — from eating an MRE on my first night to adjusting to barracks living. Early morning PT at 4 a.m. was a wake-up call after the flexibility of dental school, but it helped me grow both physically and mentally. The most

memorable part of DCC/BOLC, however, was the people. I met fellow dental students from across the country, all motivated and driven to succeed, and their enthusiasm pushed me to elevate my own standards. From navigating military customs to going through the gas chamber for the first time, the challenges were tough but fostered lasting bonds.

At Fort Sam Houston, the pace became more familiar. The leadership training provided there, along with a deeper understanding of the Army Health System, was invaluable. Despite the relentless Texas heat, I found moments of respite with fellow classmates, whether it was running on the track or walking to the dining facility for meals.

The final week of training at Camp Bullis was the most challenging and rewarding. We spent the week in the field, living in tents and learning key skills like land navigation, combat lifesaving and the use of an M4 rifle. The experience was eye-opening, and though the conditions were challenging — complete with a scorpion sighting on the last day — it was an experience that I will always carry with me.

Now, at Fort Riley, I am encountering a new set of challenges. The pace of Army life is fast, and the sense of responsibility is immense. But the leadership training and discipline from DCC/BOLC, as well as the mentorship from Dr. Keith and Dr. Hart have made a profound impact on how I approach my role as a dentist. Reflecting on the journey from dental school to DCC/BOLC, and now as an active-duty dentist, it has been a process of continuous growth. I've been tested physically, mentally and emotionally, and I'm grateful for the resilience I've developed along the way.

Each experience — from Fort Sill to Camp Bullis — has shaped me into the dentist I am today, and I am eager for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

In Memoriam

In memory of our fellow service members, civilians and friends who gave so much to Army Dentistry and to our Nation. Together we celebrate their accomplishments and contributions.

Sproull, Robert Christley, COL, USA (Ret) 11-5-1920 — 4-8-2025

COL Sproull passed away peacefully in his home in Boerne at the age of 104 on 8 April 2025. He served during WWII in the 80th Infantry Division in Patton's 3rd Army in the 313th Field Artillery. Following his discharge, he earned his dental degree and returned to the Army, serving in the Korean War, before becoming a ground-breaking prosthodontist. A summary of his remarkable life is included in his obituary. **COL Sproull Obituary**

Lefler, Mrs. Carolyn

3-12-1934 — 8-16-2025

Please read the tribute in Spouse's Corner to Carolyn, which appeared earlier in this newsletter, if you have not already done so. Carolyn Lefler Obituary

If you know of someone who served in or supported U.S. Army Dentistry, please send the obituary by email to: assoc.army.dentistry@gmail.com, or by regular mail to: Association of Army Dentistry, 18203 Rim Drive 101 #1146, San Antonio, TX 78257.

Social Media

LTC Michael Hoffman, the AAD's Facebook and Instagram page administrator, was featured in the latest edition of *The Dental Corps Bulletin*, Vol. 9, No. 1, on pages 6-8. At the annual meeting of the Academy of General Dentistry (AGD) this summer, he concluded six years of leadership for the Army Constituent of the AGD, serving as treasurer, president-elect and president.

The AAD greatly appreciate Mike's support and expertise in developing and maintaining the content on the association's social media platforms.

The Dental Corps Bulletin, Vol. 9, No. 1

AAD Facebook Page

AAD Instagram Page

From the Editors

The Association of Army Dentistry was formed to advance Army dentistry through six strategic pillars: promoting morale and esprit de corps, supporting recruitment and retention, providing continuing education, providing coaching and mentoring, honoring the service of those, past and present, who serve the Nation via Army Dentistry, and being a repository for the accomplishments and history of Army Dentistry.

In this and in upcoming Newsletters, we will focus on one of these strategic pillars. With October being the main recruiting time for AAD, it is no accident that the first pillar we focused on is membership recruitment and retention. Our organization is meaningless without our members. It is not only a great way to support Army dentistry, but it is also an excellent way to stay in touch with former colleagues. As a reminder, the AAD is not for dental officers only, nor is it only for retirees. We have enlisted Soldiers, spouses and civilians as well, and some of these even serve on the AAD Board of Directors.

We want to encourage your colleagues, past and present, to consider joining the AAD. We can do so much more as a larger organization. Please reach out to people whom you know and ask them to join. It would be great to see many more familiar faces connect with us and support Army dentistry.

Editors — Jay Etzenbach, COL (Ret); Ron Lambert, COL (Ret); and Susan Allen

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Ms. Wanda Kavanaugh, USA Civilian (Ret) – Treasurer

Association of Army Dentistry

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The AAD is <u>your</u> organization!

The Association of Army Dentistry is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. We are a philanthropic organization dedicated to honoring the past, supporting the present and inspiring the future of Army Dentistry.



The Association of Army Dentistry



VISION

"The Association of Army Dentistry honors our past, supports the present, and inspires the future of Army Dentistry."

MISSION

"The mission of the Association of Army Dentistry is to advance Army Dentistry by promoting morale, esprit de corps; supporting activities focused on recruitment and retention; providing dental education, and coaching/mentoring; recognizing those who serve and have served the Nation via Army Dentistry; and fostering an appreciation of the history and accomplishments of Army Dentistry."

STRATEGIC PILLARS

- 1. Morale and Esprit de Corps
- 2. Recruitment and Retention
- 3. Dental Education
- 4. Coaching and Mentoring
- 5. Honoring Service
- 6. Army Dentistry History

Association of Army Dentistry

Honoring the Past, Supporting the Present, Inspiring the Future

