

Family, friends, and Chemical Corps Soldiers gathered to watch as Colonel Thomas Spoehr, Commandant of the U.S. Army Chemical School and Chief of the Chemical Corps, was promoted to the rank of brigadier general. The ceremony was held at the Maneuver Support Center at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, on 27 November 2006.

Obtaining the rank of brigadier general is a pivotal turning point in an officer's life. Certainly, the leadership role changes and the responsibility increases, but receiving a star represents so much more. "Generalship is more than wearing a belt, more than a fancy star and a flag. It is something that says this man has unique vision, unique courage, and the ability to communicate with others," said Major General Stephen Speakes, Force Development Director, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff.¹

With 27 years of Army service, obtaining the rank of brigadier general was something that the Chemical Corps' top Soldier thought would never happen. "My beginnings in the Army were not particularly promising. In fact, one of my [Reserve Officer Training Corps] ROTC instructors commented in my written records that 'Cadet Spoehr shows little to no aptitude for military service,'" Spoehr said. But Major General Speakes reiterated that the Army made the right decision. "Our Army has made an important decision and an important commission. When we have taken a look at him and all of the Army's leaders, we have elevated him to a very new and significant rank. It is one that he will wear proudly. It is a great day for our Army." Major General Speakes also identified numerous qualities that Brigadier General Spoehr possesses that will help him transition to his role as general. "We will, in this Army, continue to make hard choices. We have to. We are a nation at war. The choices that generals make these days are not easy. Tom has the ability to balance things and the ability to think things through with a sense of dignity. These are all qualities of generalship that I see in him."

Brigadier General Spoehr thanked everyone for attending the ceremony, but he also thanked the numerous people he has encountered during his career. "When I look back on the years in the Army, I see an unbroken chain of leadership lessons. Individuals like these and the examples they have lived have, over the years, instilled in me the understanding that this rank is not a symbol of privilege and entitlement, but rather symbols of responsibility and obligation," Spoehr said.



By Ms. Allison Choike

After Brigadier General Spoehr's wife removed the rank of colonel and replaced it with a star and his daughter and son presented him with a new beret and his general officer belt, Brigadier General Spoehr gave a pledge: "As Spiderman's uncle, Uncle Ben, once said, 'With great power comes great responsibility.' I pledge to you that with this bigger responsibility that the Army has invested on me, I will help Soldiers to make our Army and Chemical Corps as strong as possible to protect our nation." 🐼

Endnote:

¹Major General Speakes has since been promoted to lieutenant general.



Mrs. Spoehr replaces wings with a star.

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