

“Life as a Military Brat”  
By Pam Hicks

Military life is different than the way most kids grow up. Only those of us who have lived it really understand what that means. We’re trained well from the start and we each share the same approach toward life. We stop what we are doing every day for the National Anthem, and again we stand for our song while it’s playing before the feature film at a movie theater. We never try to go anywhere without our base IDs.

We count the stripes on the sleeves in front of us before we open our mouths. And we have fierce loyalty to country that just cannot be matched.

There are other subtle differences. “Going shopping” does not refer to a mall or plaza, but rather to a trip to the PX. Running to the convenience store for beer, Dad’s cigarettes, or maybe to rent a carpet cleaner is “going to the shopfitters.” And let’s not leave out going to the Commissary on payday. Honestly, every mother stationed on that air base will be in the Commissary on the same day. The lines for checkout run all the way down the aisles, and every single register’s open. It was always the same adventure every single week. I would drive the shopping cart, I would run over Mom’s heels, she would yell and/or give me the look, and a few minutes later we’d start our routine all over again. I remember the biggest concern I always had was making sure that my Flintstones Vitamins and chicken patties made it into the cart. And every young military child’s big dream is to one day become a bagger.

The biggest difference, however, is in the way that we are not surrounded with our family members; at least not our biological family. You have no grandparents or cousins just down the road sharing your special events or even just a weekend outing to the beach. Your family instead becomes all of the people that surround you in the same rootless situation. In the end, your neighbors and fellow servicemen and women's families became your own.

I didn’t realize when I was little how scary this must be for a new mother ... not to have their own mother or sister’s help with their newborn. Actually I didn't realize that anyone spent time regularly with their extended families until we moved off the air base. I (like you) thought my life was completely normal.

Everyone, however, is without their family members and let’s face it; everyone needs help raising a household. I firmly believe our military bases are where the saying “it takes a village to raise a child” still holds the most truth in today's society. I have so many aunts and uncles to this day that I acquired through our years in the service.

It’s common knowledge to every kid in the military that no matter where you get stationed you are going to have a lot of new aunts and uncles watching over you. In my own experience we met only the greatest people. Everyone there always supported one another any way that they could, being it carpooling, holidays, moving (again) or missing someone that was shipped away.

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