

One Proud Mama

I wish I had some funny enlightening story to tell you about my military parents. I'm pretty boring when it comes to this topic. There's no chaos, no drama, and no "Jerry Springer" moments with my family or even with my husband's family. Believe it or not, they even understand when I tell them that they can't come visit (or at least not for very long) during leave because I want my husband to myself and our immediate family. I guess I couldn't really ask for much more from them they are pretty darn wonderful.

When I think of the topic of military parents though I always think of the first time my mama came to see me at Fort Hood, TX. Her first trip to post was hilarious. She was so confused, perplexed, and just kept repeating that all the buildings looked the same. She wanted to know everything – what each building was, where they actually worked, why they had motor pools, and where the single soldiers lived. It was all a very new and considerably different experience from her civilian life.

I guess she's gotten used to it somewhat. Now, each year my mama comes to visit me no matter where we live. We have a ritual, the yearly trip to the Post Exchange (PX). No, I don't think it's because it's cheaper or anything. It is the one place that she can find her Claire Burke home fragrance. We don't really ever even buy much, but wandering the aisles and having the whole PX experience is her yearly dose of military life. It's also my yearly dose of my very own reality. I guess sometimes we get so used to what we see on a daily basis that they become an unappreciated mundane part of life. You know things like Charley's Steakery, Anthony's Pizza, Cinnabon, and Robin Hood? You're laughing. Every post has one don't they? What about our big AAFES, Commissary, and Class Six signs? Men crossing the streets in Army Combat Uniforms (ACU)? We don't consider any of this special or eventful. But do you think people in "regular" life have experienced all of this? I assure you they wouldn't have a clue where to start. My mama didn't.

Now, she comes to visit and we go have lunch at the PX food court, have our trip around the PX itself, and I smile as she watches our life in amazement. She smiles at every soldier with which she can make eye contact. She asks a million questions like why do they have parking for a volunteer of the year, and who got it this year? We always go tour the post, even if she's seen it before, so she can point out anything new and Wrena (our daughter) can point out Cottrell Field and the huge Marne patch where she says "all the daddies come home." Mama always cries. I always have to tell her it's ok. I used to worry, and think she thought maybe we picked a hard life for ourselves or she wasn't approving of our choice. Then I realized that she cries because on that very post is the epitome of life for the people that work so hard to defend her nation. She always says we make it seem so simple. She appreciates us. Well, that and I am sure she's excited that she's all stocked up on her Claire Burke supply for the year. Oh, and by the way she always reminds me now that we are at Fort Stewart, that she misses the Texas PX. Spoiled rotten I tell her, we probably shouldn't have started her at one of the best PXs there is huh?