

Reflections Midst the Journey

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Last week, I stood in my living room at 9:30 at night staring at the plant shelves, lack of wall space, and cluttered floors. I've never considered myself a minimalist, so I found it odd when the sensation of "desired simplicity" overcame me. My home is decorated in primitive Americana style, so clutter (I prefer it called "eclectic") is something that is common with that style of decor. All of the sudden though, I couldn't get it clean, de-cluttered, minimal or simple enough.

I stood in the foyer thinking, "What can I get rid of? What can I move to the attic?" My eyes started to scan each individual piece of my "collection." My "God Bless Texas" box from Fort Hood? My tiny painted combat boots hanging from a peg that I bought at the gift shop at Fort Sill? My small wooden house display each boasting a significant event in our lives; Southwest Missouri State University; Fort Sill, OK; Fort Hood, TX; the birth of our daughter at Darnall Army Community Hospital; Tarleton State University; Fort Sill, OK (again); Camp Hovey, Korea; Fort Stewart, GA; Camp Paliwoda, Iraq. There is the "I love my soldier" green heart hanging on another peg? Or maybe my "proud Army wife" pillow? No way! I love these things. My eyes continue to scan and lock on the Americana afghan crocheted for me by my best friend and neighbor that lie draped across my dog's favorite chair....

Then I lost it. I broke down into tears. I knew why I was feeling such a urge to change and minimize. Directly across our street, are the single best neighbors we've ever had in our lives. They are not only the best neighbors but our best friends. Rarely do you find a couple with whom you bond with both the husband and the wife. My husband and I consider each of them, individually, our friends. They have taught us how to have fun. They have heard us yell, hugged us when we've cried, and spent exorbitant amounts of time with me when Kevin was deployed. They are dual military, so their son and I "held down the fort" when 3ID was deployed last year. Countless care packages, emails, and phone calls kept us constantly in touch. They are the

common thread behind most of our good stories, fun times, and memorable events. They are family, chosen family. But now, in their yard, stands a sign "Sale Pending." They're leaving.

The tears continued as I realized *everyone* around us is moving. They are all moving on to different places; PCSing or retiring, going back to school, moving back home, or entering the civilian world. Where did that leave me? We've always been the first to leave, never the last. Here we stand with everyone buzzing all around us -moving, purging, preparing - and our home remains the same.

Soon my husband will put on his desert uniform, pack his bags and deploy. I'll start all over again. So I better prepare; gather myself, clean up house, and minimize. Each of these tasks a symbol of starting anew.

Every installation you visit, each path life brings you along, teaches you something. I reflect on our life, as I toss the insignificant items into the garage sale pile, careful to keep each small "piece" of our journey rightfully in its earned and proper place. Those items represent memories, and memories are the things that last.