

The American Dream

By Tara Puckey

Most girls grow up picturing a romantic proposal, a beautiful wedding, and a happy marriage; the epitome of the American dream. They envision a picket fence, two or three diapered children running around, and a dog named Spot. As they grow, there are challenges and hurdles, their goals change and form into a more realistic dream, but not without the longing for what happiness "should" be.

Often, I've been asked how my happiness translates into being a military wife. How I can handle raising two children alone, cutting the grass, learning how to fix the shower when it is clogged, and even abstaining from intimacy for such long periods of time. They often ask if this is how I envisioned my life, essentially alone. Truth be told, it's not. As I stand here for the second time in five years, I'm reminded of all the things I must face on my own over the next coming months. It doesn't get any easier; time can't teach you how to eliminate your loneliness com-



Family photo of Army wife, Tara Puckey with her husband, SGT Bryan Puckey, and daughters Alexa and Brooklyn.

pletely or to become used to an empty place in your bed. Time does, however, show your strength, test your endurance, and prove to you that your sacrifice, not only that of your spouse, is making a difference. I still falter in my darkest hours; I am only human. Some days I sit just to watch the very news that I don't want to hear or find myself in my closet smelling a sweater that I still can't bear to wash.

I don't deny that it is sometimes hard, or that I sometimes question my ability to cope on a daily basis. I do tell them that, in the end, it is worth it. The trials and adversities become small and

insignificant when I glance at the tan boots littered around my house that bring a sense of pride that is unexplainable. I know I am where I should be when I picture the back of a uniform turning to offer one last wave before a long absence. Even as he walks away, I am more proud of him at that moment than if he were standing next to me. So when they ask how I feel about not living their idea of the American dream, I just smile and reply: "We are the American dream." ●

Tara Puckey is an Army wife who lives in Indiana with her husband and two daughters, Alexa and Brooklyn

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