

## Some people just never learn.

I survived being an “Army Brat” only to do the unthinkable: become an Army spouse.

I thought I was well prepared. I’d watched my Mom go through countless moves with grace and humor—including the one for the “easy” assignment at Fort Polk, La. My stepfather was assigned to work with deployments, but of course, nothing was happening in the military world—the Cold War was over and everything was quiet. That was the summer of 1990. That August, as most people know, Iraq invaded Kuwait and it seemed every soldier heading to the Middle East came through Fort Polk. Those dreams of lazy days spent golfing quickly faded.

When I married my husband Brian, he was a National Guard officer. One weekend a month and two weeks a year...that was their motto. That didn’t last long, either.

Soon after our wedding, he asked me what I thought of his going into the military full time as a Title 10 officer. We would move to Washington, D.C. Heck, I’d lived in the same city for four whole years! I was getting restless, so why not?

In the coming years, our two daughters were born into the Army life in true Army brat fashion—each child born in a different state. We moved a few more times, the last time being out to Colorado...mainly to escape the DC-area craziness that keep sucking us back.

The move to Colorado was exciting, but it also took us the farthest away

from family. This, of course, was the perfect time for Brian to get orders to go to Afghanistan for a year.

We prepared for his deployment as most families do: planned our method of communication, even though we had no idea what type of conditions he’d be facing; updated our wills (that was hard) and made sure I had Power of Attorney to handle everything while he was gone.

He left for training at Fort Riley, Kansas the day after Easter, 2007. I remember trying not to cry—my oldest daughter was doing enough for



Editor Jennifer G. Williams and daughters Katie Beth and Alleigh welcome home husband and Daddy LTC Brian Williams from a year-long deployment to Afghanistan in Spring 2008 at Fort Riley, Kansas.  
Photo by Amy Marshall

the both of us. The younger one, barely three, really didn’t grasp what was happening, and for that I was thankful.

Brian trained for several weeks before leaving in the summer. We made the eight-hour trip a few times to see him before he left, then I made one more big trip when he did leave.

I went home.

I stayed gone for the entire summer, visiting family all over the South and the East Coast. It was extremely helpful to be surrounded by family, especially my mom, who could most closely relate to what I was going through.

I think it was helpful for my daughters, too, to be surrounded by so many people who loved them. I must admit, it was hard coming back to Colorado in time for my oldest to start kindergarten that fall.

My approach to Brian’s absence was to get myself and my girls as involved as I could. They took dance, gymnastics and soccer, while I threw myself into my work and a charitable group I had joined when we first moved to Colorado. I also formed a close bond with a friend whose husband left on the same deployment as Brian, and we tried to get together several times a month just for fun.

Of course, when Brian finally came home, we were thrilled, but it was also somewhat of a challenge to adjust our new, busy lives to having Daddy home again (What do you mean I can’t watch Project Runway because a hunting show is on now? You expect me to actually cook meat and potatoes...every night? What’s wrong with cereal for dinner?)

But we talked (and joked) about the adjustments to coming home and having him home, and I think we have become stronger than ever.

And not that I want Brian to leave on another deployment ever again, but I have to admit, I do enjoy the occasional TDY trip so I can watch Project Runway in peace. ●

While military family members experience the same issues, joys and sorrows, we each are different in our approaches and responses. Please share your stories with us! Send in along with your contact information to [jenniferw@ameriforce.net](mailto:jenniferw@ameriforce.net)