

# The Holiday Rush

by Jennifer G. Williams

As the holidays fast approach, we in the military are in a pickle.

And while the majority of Reserve and National Guard members live near their families and friends, many of us still live far from what we call home — whether for our civilian jobs or for a military deployment or assignment.

I don't know about you, but wherever we have moved, I have thought we would have no shortage of guests. From the Washington, D.C. area with its countless monuments and museums to Colorado Springs, where skiing and gorgeous vistas are commonplace, my husband and I figured our loved ones just couldn't wait to come visit.

And while we did have several visitors, when the holidays rolled around each year, the refrain we heard most often from families and friends was (and is): "When are you coming to see us?"

The problem with going to see family around the holidays is that so much is going on, it can be hard to actually enjoy a visit with the very people you came to see. Add that to the constant requests from other family and/or friends who live a few miles apart for you to come and see them, and it can get downright overwhelming.

My husband and I laugh a bit at the mere fact that we would drive 700-1100 miles, and people 10-20 miles away would clamor for us to come and see them — honestly, the last thing we want to do is get back into the car with kids and pets once we have arrived. Especially when my husband is on a time schedule with

his leave and we only have a few days to enjoy.

We talked about the added stress and strain to try and see everyone on our lists, and finally decided to create our own tradition at home with our girls. We now try to spend each Christmas morning at our home, and if any of our family chooses to make the trip, they are more than welcome. We try to make a trip away while our girls are off from school, but even that seems to be shrinking each year.

I prefer to save our actual visits for non-holiday times, when we can spend more time and see more friends and family.

Either way, it can be hard to deal with the separation from loved ones during the holidays. But today's technologies have made it a little easier to bring the comforts of home to those who are living far from it.

We have enlisted the incredible invention of web cams and video calls to open presents and to see our loved ones — all in a lot less time than it would take to drive to each house. And social media allows us to instantly upload and share photos of the girls with everyone on our list.

On those holidays when we do go home, we tend to stay in just one place and let those who would like to see us come to us. But today's gas prices and wavering economy mean that many of us cannot afford to drive or fly home for the holidays, so more and more of us will be relying on those phone calls or webcams for that holiday visit.



We have friends who have been through the same trials and tribulations (which seem to get so much worse once you have children — we joke that our parents are no longer interested in seeing us at all), and they seem to adopt one of two responses: they either suck it up and do the whirlwind travels to see everyone they know and love or stay home — wherever that may be — and let the friends and family come to them, either in person or by phone calls or the Internet.

There is no one way to get it right, and each year may be different. But it is wonderful that we today have so many choices to utilize as we create our own family traditions. ●

*Tell us what you think! What are some of your favorite ways to keep in touch with your loved ones from far away? What new traditions have you created in your own families to weather deployments or other separations? Tell me at [Editor@AmeriForce.net](mailto:Editor@AmeriForce.net). We may use your suggestions in a future article for Reserve & National Guard Magazine.*