

What it means to love a soldier

By Jamie Reese, Special to American Forces Press Service

She stands in line at the post office waiting to send a package to her husband, a U.S. Army soldier serving in Kuwait. Envelopes, pens, paper, stamps, sunscreen, eye-drops, gum, batteries, powdered Gatorade, baby wipes and Twizzlers.

He said he needed the sunscreen and baby wipes. She threw in the Twizzlers.

There's a common bond at the post office in this military town. People aren't just sending letters and packages; they are sending smiles, hope, love and just a touch of home. People look around at the others, sharing their concern, fear and pride. They take comfort knowing they are not alone.

Passing through the gate leaving the Army post, she enters another world. A world filled with pawnshops, surplus stores, barbershops, fast food galore and, of course, "Loans, Loans, Loans."

This is a life that includes grocery shopping at a place called the Commissary. A life that has her venturing to the Post Exchange, referred to as the PX, instead of

heading to Wal-Mart. This is where you come to learn, appreciate and respect the ceremonial traditions of Reveille and Retreat, and of course, the National Anthem from a completely different perspective.

At 6 a.m., or as the soldiers call it, 0600 hours, Reveille can be heard across post. The bugle call officially begins the military workday. At 1700 hours Retreat sounds signaling the day's end. Soldiers render salutes, chatter fades and all eyes are drawn to the nearest flag. At 2300 hours, the bugle sounds Taps, denoting not only the "final hour" of the day, but also honoring those we have lost.

When the national anthem plays in a military town, a special aura fills the air. Men, women, and even children stop to pay their respects. Civilians place their hands over their hearts. Soldiers salute. In this world, the anthem isn't just a prequel to the echo of "Play Ball."

Since she married her soldier and experienced the Star Spangled Banner from this perspective, she's noticed how people in civilian towns react to the national an-

them. She notices the people who continue to talk, the hats that stay on, the beer that doesn't get put down, and even the jeers at the person singing the anthem. The meaning seems to be lost to a majority of people. But if she looks closely, she can see who has been blessed enough to learn this song. Some are grandparents, some are parents, and some are young children.

At first glance, children growing up in this world of artillery, tanks and uniforms are the same as any other kids from any other town. They do the things that kids do. They play sports, go to school, and play with their friends. The difference is that their group of friends may change once a year, or more, due to a change of duty station.

They don't have any say in this. They could be two years old and not remember a thing about it, or they may be 16 years old getting ready for prom and having to uproot and move again. They're known as "military brats," a harsh misnomer for those who learn a lifestyle of sacrifice at such a young age. Yet, it makes them strong.

The little boys become the men of the house and the little girls become the ladies. They adapt to these different situations. They live with the reality that one, or even both parents, may not be around to celebrate birthdays and holidays. They know there will be times when they will look into the stands during Little League games and see only an empty space in the bleachers.

At the same time, these kids have a sense of overwhelming pride. They brag about their daddies and their mommies being the best of the best. They know their Mom's been through deployments, changes of duty stations, and the ever-changing schedules Army life brings. While Dad is away, she takes care of the house, the bills, the cars, the dogs, and the baby.

To cope with it all, she learns military families communicate via the Internet so he doesn't miss out on what's happening back home. But he does miss out. He won't be there for the baby's first steps, and he may have to hear his son or daughter's first words through a time delay across a static-filled telephone line.

She remembers what it was like before he left, when everything seemed "normal." Normal except for the pressed uniform, the nightly ritual of shining boots, the thunder-like sound of the Apache helicopters flying overhead, and the artillery shells heard off in the distance. OK, relatively normal when they occasionally went to the park, spent holidays together and even enjoyed four-day weekends when he could get a pass. But, the real challenge began with the phone call.

She relives the moments before she kissed him goodbye. A phone ringing at 0400 hours is enough to make her heart end up in her throat. They've been expecting the call, but they weren't sure when it would come. She waits to hear the words, "Don't worry, it's just a practice run." But instead she hears, "Here we go."

So, off he goes to pack, though most of the packing is finished because as a soldier, he is "always ready to roll." She gets the baby, but leaves his pajamas on because it is just as well that he sleeps. She takes the dogs out, she gets dressed, all the while trying to catch glimpses of her husband. She wants to cherish his presence because she doesn't know when she'll see him again.

She knows that in other homes nearby, other families are enacting exactly the same scene.

Within 15 minutes, the family is in the car heading to the "rally point." As they pull up, they see soldiers everywhere, hugging their loved ones. While people love to see tearful, joyous homecomings, fearful, anxious, farewells are another story. Too soon, with his gear over his shoulder,

der, he walks away. She is left behind, straining to keep an eye on her soldier. As the camouflage starts to blend, only his walk distinguishes him from the others.

She takes one last look and takes a deep breath. She reminds herself she must stay strong. No tears. Or, as few tears as possible. Just words of encouragement to the children, to her friends and to herself. Then she turns, walks back to the car, and makes her way home to a house that is now eerily quiet.

She mentally prepares for the days, weeks, even months ahead. She needs to focus on taking care of her love while he is overseas. Her main priorities will be the care packages, phone calls, e-mails, and letters sprayed with perfume. And, she can't forget to turn the stamp upside down to say, "I love you."

Taking care of her family, her friends, even strangers, this is her mission as an Army wife to do these things without a second thought. At the ripe old age of 22, she knows the younger wives will turn to her for advice. "How do you balance a checkbook? How do you change a tire? When are they coming home?"

Only when she knows everyone else is OK, the bills are paid, the cars maintained, the lawn cut, the kids asleep, the pets calmed down, and the lights are off, does she take time for herself.

Alone at night, she runs the next day's events over in her mind to make sure it will all get finished. She reviews her checklist of things to do, things to buy for his care package. Once again, she checks the calendar to count down the days. Before turning in, she checks to make sure the ring is on for the late night phone call that might come in from overseas.

Before she falls asleep, a few tears hit the pillow. But even as the tears escape, strength enters her mind, body, spirit and soul. She remembers why she is here. She remembers the pride and the love that brought her here in the first place, and a sense of peace comes over her, replacing, if only for a second, the loneliness, the fear and the lingering heartache she feels while her soul mate is away.

This is what it means to love a soldier. She wouldn't have it any other way.

Law

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violating the City ordinance.

Oct. 31, at 1:33 a.m., Officer Alderete was dispatched to the 500 block E. Union St. in regards to a case of trespassing as well as a civil matter. Case closed by issuance of trespass warning.

At 9:54 a.m., Officer Cole was dispatched to the 300 block of N. Lake in regards to subjects disturbing the caller's trash that had been set out for removal. Information was received.

At 10:55 a.m., Officer Cole provided an escort for Dulany Funeral Home.

At 2:35 p.m., a complainant in regards to trespassing contacted Investigator Wiese. Information was received.

At 2:47 p.m., Chief W.E. Lattimore was contacted by a subject in regards to a past auto accident. Information was received.

At 5:20 p.m., Officer Terrazas was dispatched to Dewey St. in regards to criminal mischief. The complainant was not located.

At 5:25 p.m., Sgt. Lasley was dispatched to the 500 block of Westmoreland in regards to a juvenile throwing rocks. The juvenile, as well as an adult caregiver, were located and given a warning.

At 5:40 p.m., Chief Lattimore, Sgt. Lasley and Officer Terrazas were dispatched to the 500 block of W. Prairie St. in regards to a "lifeline" check. Emergency entry was made, the residence was checked, but no one was located. The subject was later found to be all right.

At 8:25 p.m., Officer Terrazas was asked to contact a subject via phone in regards to a theft. Information was received.

At 8:55 p.m., Sgt. Lasley and Chief Lattimore were dispatched to an activated residential alarm. Contact was made with a resident who had set the alarm off by accident.

At 9:10 p.m., Officer Terrazas and Sgt. Lasley were dispatched to Buc-

ee's in regards to a trespasser. Case open for investigation.

At 10:43 p.m., Officer Terrazas was requested in the 700 block of S. Austin Rd. by the ambulance to assist with the loading of a patient.

At 10:55 p.m., Sgt. Lasley was dispatched to the 700 block of E. Street in regards to loud music. The source was located and it was turned down.

Nov. 1, at 1:08 a.m., Officer Terrazas and Sgt. Lasley were dispatched to the 800 block of Campbell St. in regards to an activated residential alarm. The officers arrived and discovered a burglary had occurred. The scene was processed and evidence was recovered. Case open for investigation.

At 8:24 a.m., Officer Cole was dispatched to the 700 block of Church St. in regards to a 9-1-1 hang up. Cole arrived and learned the number had been dialed by mistake.

At 11:53 a.m., Officer Cole was dispatched to the 1200 block of E. State in regards to criminal mischief. The matter was settled at the scene.

At 3:32 p.m., Officer Cole was dispatched to the 300 block of N. Austin Rd. in regards to subjects burning trash. The burning was taking place outside the City limits and was under control.

At 10:56 p.m., Officer Terrazas was dispatched to the 500 block of Clay St. in regards to a possible runaway. The child returned while Terrazas was on scene. Information was received.

Nov. 2, at 12:40 a.m., Officer Terrazas was dispatched to the 1300 block of Murphy St. in regards to suspicious activity. Terrazas did not locate the described activity.

At 4:33 a.m., Officer Terrazas was dispatched to the 400 block of S. Austin Rd. in regards to stray dogs. No dogs were located.

At 11:45 a.m., Officer Cole was dispatched to the 400 block of West A Street in regards to loud music. No music was located.

A 1:41 p.m., Officer Cole and Investigator Wiese were dispatched to the 300 block of Third St. in regards to a man chasing a woman. The man, identified as Terrance Jackson, was located and arrested for unlawfully carrying a weapon (pistol). He was processed at the PD and transported to the CCDC for confinement.

Nov. 3, at 9:53 a.m., Officer Sebastian was dispatched to the 500 block of Fairview St. in regards to a vehicle which had been loaned out and not returned. Information was received.

At 11:05 a.m., Officer Sebastian was dispatched to the 1000 block of E. Main in regards to an activated alarm. The building was found to be secure.

At 6:39 p.m., Officer Alderete was dispatched to the 200 block of Boothe Dr. in regards to a welfare concern. All was found to be in order.

At 8:24 p.m., Officer Alderete was dispatched to the 500 block of E. Main St. in regards to meeting the victim of a possible assault which took place in Wharton County. Arrangements were made for the victim to get a ride to Wharton County to report the matter.

At 9:45 p.m., Officer Alderete was dispatched to the 600 block of E. State St. in regards to a sick bird that appeared to have been mauled by a cat. The bird expired while Alderete was on scene.

Show

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will be sold if the item is labeled for sale. An entry will consist of a whole pie, cake, loaf of quick bread, two dozen or more cookies, or the entire recipe for candy, muffins, etc. One individually wrapped cookie, candy or muffin should be attached to entry.

Blue and red ribbons will be awarded on the merit of each entry. Grand and reserve champion rosettes will be awarded in each class.

Entries and recipes must be pre-registered at the Colorado County Extension Office no later than 5 p.m. on Nov. 14. Recipes for each entry submitted by the pre-registration deadline will be included in the Pecan Food Show Cookbook. All persons turning in their entries by the Nov. 14 deadline will receive a cookbook. Late entries can only be registered at the Colorado County Ag Building by 2 p.m. on the date of the show. Late entries will not be guaranteed a cookbook.

All entries will be received by 2 p.m. Monday, Nov. 24, at the Colorado County Agriculture Building conference room in Columbus. Judging will begin at 4 p.m. and will be conducted by out-of-county judges.

Entries will be displayed and sold from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 25, at the Columbus State Bank Park. Copies of the 2003 Pecan Food Show Cook Book will also be sold at that time. Not for sale items may be picked up by exhibitors at the Colorado County Ag Building on Tuesday. Items not sold at the bake sale will be returned to the Ag Building and may be picked up by the exhibitor if they choose. Any items remaining after 5 p.m. Nov. 25 will be disposed of if not picked up by the exhibitor.

Pictures of all winners will be taken for publicity at 5 p.m. Nov. 25, at the Colorado County Extension office in Columbus.

For more information, contact the Colorado County Extension Office at 979-732-2530.

MILITARY NEWS

Peroni seeks a challenge

Rhonda Peroni, a 2001 graduate of Rice High School, went to the University of Houston for two years. She recently interrupted her studies to join the Army Reserves.

Oct. 17, 2003 PFC Rhonda Peroni graduated from Military Police training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. Rhonda received the PT Award for outstanding performance in her physical training. Her parents, Ron and Joy Peroni, her grandmother Edweina Peroni and her uncle Ricky Newby attended the graduation ceremony.

PFC Peroni is now a member of the 302nd MP Co. located in Huntsville, which is currently deployed.

Presently, it is undecided whether or not she will be deployed, so she is

living in Houston and helping her recruiter until her future is decided.



Chief Petty Officer Coby D. Cosper

...son of Penny M. Dodd of Sheridan, recently made a port visit to Singapore while assigned to the amphibious assault ship USS Peleliu, home ported in San Diego.

More than 2,600 sailors and marines from Cosper's ship spent their free time touring Southeast Asia's "City of the Lion" which is home to a unique blend of cultures. They also participated in a soccer tournament with local teams during their stay. This was the first time since Feb. 2002 the Peleliu has visited a foreign port.

Cosper, a 1989 graduate of Eagle Valley High School in Gypsum, Colorado, joined the Navy in July 1989.

E-cards

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can receive the special cards. Creating the card is quick at the American Legion's website, www.legion.org. "Our troops serving overseas often have access to e-mail and they look forward to the cards that do not take up a lot of bandwidth," Brieden said.

The American Legion site offers e-mail cards representing each military service along with the service song that plays when the card is opened. Each card provides plenty of space to compose a personal message.

The free service is being offered for the fifth consecutive year. Cards may be sent now through Nov. 12.

Greeting cards may be sent direct to active duty service men and women if their military e-mail addresses are known.

Views On Dental Health

WHY FLOSS?

The basic objective of flossing is to mechanically remove plaque from between the teeth, especially near and under the gumline. Flossing does three things: cleans teeth of plaque and food debris, freshens the mouth, and fights plaque buildup.

Why floss? Why not just do a thorough job of brushing and be satisfied that your teeth and gums are really protected? Well, even careful brushing reaches only three of the five tooth surfaces exposed to the damaging effects of plaque and plaque microorganisms. If you brush but don't floss, you are really doing part of the job!

Those inside surfaces between teeth are the real problem areas. Brushing effectively cleans only the top, front, and back of your teeth. This means that 40% of your tooth surfaces do not have plaque removed from them if you only brush.

Once gum disease gets a head start, it is precisely in these between-the-teeth areas that it is the most severe.

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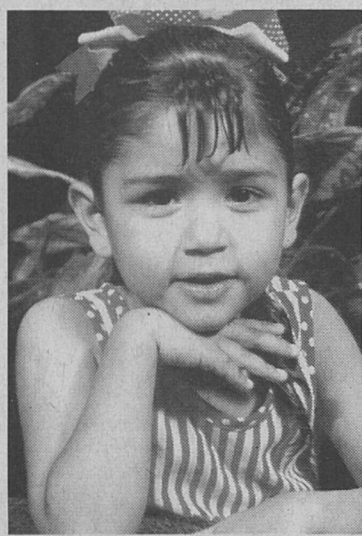
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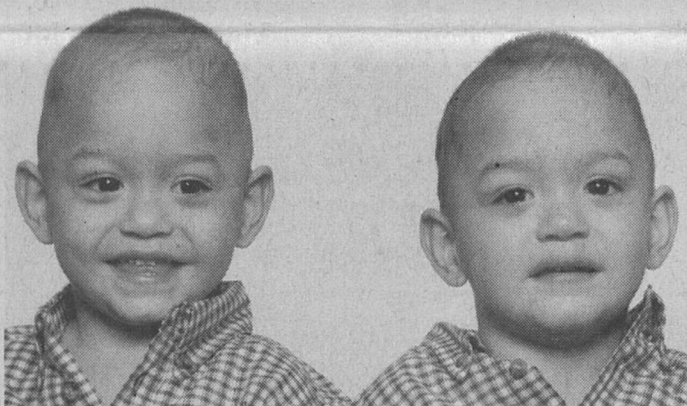


Happy Birthday Lupita

From, Mana, Mommi, Gonzalo & Grandma

Happy 3rd Birthday

Nov. 4th



Jonathan Jr. & Stephen Aguilar

Our Love, Mom, Dad, Carlos, Hillary, Popeye & Hailey

Avalon Place Nursing & Rehabilitation Center

Getting Your Loved Ones Prepared to Return Home After a Hospital Stay!



Carolyn Hundt, PTA, Charlotte Ellis and Chris Workman, OTR Rehab Director, as Charlotte prepared to return home.

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Charlotte Ellis Going Home

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