

Young Lives, BIG Stories Contest

I remember watching my dad put on his boots every morning- left before right, green socks, brown boots. He would rise at 0600 hrs, shave, down his coffee and stomp those boots out the door. The only thing I knew of his work, at age seven, was that it was “top secret” and it kept my daddy from me for weeks, even months at a time; though he never missed a birthday.

Besides successive TDY’s, my father’s role in the military required frequent PCSing. As a result I grew up on fantasy continents- more of Asia and Europe than the United States underneath my feet. I’ve eaten dishes made from abstract animal parts, ridden camels and dallied across blue mosques. I’ve surfed the coasts of multiple continents and climbed the Great Wall of China. In short, life as a “military brat” has proved a truly worldly experience. As such, the hardest question a military child has to answer is “where are you from?”; I’ve made home wherever the Army sends us. Where am I not from?

In addition to this global adventure, my military childhood has instilled me with a set of unshakable values. I grew up learning tried and true methods of a leader: my father marched me out the door to the bus each day; the morning alarm was the resounding sound of “Reveille”. Lying was not tolerated, timeliness was key. Dedication was prized in our household. This lifestyle motivated me towards a military career. I took steps forward, testing my potential through my school’s JROTC program and camps.

Within my corps I flourished. I saw myself as part of a stimulating course that teaches responsibility, accountability and integrity. Similarly, my attendance of military-affiliated camps inspired me; I found myself surrounded by individuals who, too, yearned to be the best physically, intellectually, mentally and morally. I could see what my father loved about the military. I knew then, junior year, what I wanted out of my future: I craved an environment in which I knew I’d contributed to a cause greater than myself. These experiences as a military child made service as an active duty officer my objective.

I’ve recently been accepted into the United States Military Academy at West Point, and will begin in t-minus 60 days. This has been a dream in the making. My father proved a wealth of experience, and has supported my endeavours, unboundedly. JROTC and camps introduced me to the opportunities of ROTC. As a military child, I feel my upbringing has prepared me for

anything and everything. Leaving high school and my home overseas, I'm ready to take on the world.

My father just retired. He served 34 years active duty and now works as a Department of the Army civilian. He still rises at 0600 hrs- a creature of habit; still a soldier, though he no longer shaves. His boots are different. I cannot wait to see him in the crowd as I commission.