



## *May 11 is Military Spouse Day*

Commentary  
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GRN Public Affairs

***COB Speicher, Iraq***—I can't speak for military husbands out there, but to military wives everywhere ... you are Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, Marines and Coasties. You just don't get the uniform.

Ahh, the wives of our military ... drawn to the pomp and circumstance by the thrill of serving their country through their men, right?

Wrong. They each have their own war story, but chances are very good their military lives began with promises of exotic travel or bribes.

He said, "So, do you want to go to Germany with me and pick up a cuckoo clock?"

She said, "I do...and I'm packed." And, so begins her life as an Atta-girl.

An Atta-girl is the woman who follows her big lug around the globe for at least 18 of his 20-plus years in uniform; unaccompanied tours and sea-duty considered. She memorized her husband's social security number as soon as she learned she couldn't cash a check in the exchange or have a baby in the military hospital without it.

The woman has changed jobs so many times asking her to keep her resume to the preferred two pages is like asking her which kid she wants to keep.

Oh yeah ... the kids ... the little darlings ... mini-Family Members. They're born everywhere between Spokane and Savannah, except for twins, who always seem to debut in a foreign country when there's no extended family around to help pull sleepless night shifts. Maybe there's a west coast baby or an accidental east coast baby. Often the kid is on solid food before Dad lays eyes on it for the first time, but that's another story.

The Atta-girl is not just another shop-til-you-drop woman, although she can ask "how much?" in several languages. She is strong and flexible. She has to be to survive that last-minute change to orders, sending her and her family to Walla Walla, Wash., when the household goods await them in Rota, Spain, and the family SUV is on a barge somewhere.

An Atta-girl can spot the box with the wall hangings in it while it's still on the moving van, tear it open with her teeth, and get Grandma's "home-sweet-home" needlepoint up on the wall before Little East Coast baby can wail, "Mommie, where's the bathroom in this house?!"

She's forever prepared. She learned long ago to have some culinary creation ready to pop into the oven at a moment's notice for those battalion pot-lucks or bake sales. She can buy a low-cost, low-grade rump roast at the commissary, tenderize

and pulverize it into something edible, and entertain guests that night in her new government quarters.

She is a Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine and Coastie without the uniform. Nothing stops her and she doesn't ask for much. She sometimes fails, but usually succeeds. She knows the only constant is change. She gets lonely, but makes friends easily. She lives and learns, and all that is important to her is having her teenagers and her big lug on the same continent. If they're all speaking to each other, that's a perk.

They are Atta-girls. Together they form neighborhoods, communities, and long lines at the commissary. They work and volunteer for charities and together they laugh, cry and sometimes swear.

All of this and a cuckoo clock, too. Who could ask for more? *You can*. Tear this out and stick it on the refrigerator. This is your official "Atta-girl award". Thanks for everything!

**Note:** LuAnne Fantasia is the Public Affairs Officer for the Gulf Region North District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iraq. For more information, contact her at 540-542-1437 or email requests to [CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil](mailto:CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil). For more information on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq, visit [www.grd.usace.army.mil](http://www.grd.usace.army.mil). BTW, LuAnne was an Army wife for 22 years and she never did get that cuckoo-clock!