

# ARMY WEDDING VOWS

Debbie Ann Stohlman

Dear Family and Friends, we are gathered here today in the sight of God and the Department of the Army to witness this exchange of vows and see the love that these two dedicated, loving people have for one another.

"Wilt thou, Robert, take Debbie (who was once referred to as the "dependent"), as your Family Member, to dwell together in so far as the Department of the Army will permit?

"Wilt thou love her, comfort her via the Postal Service or over the phone, make sure she knows where the commissary, PX., and church are and what time she is scheduled to use the laundry room the day she arrives, wherever you are stationed?  
"Wilt thou attempt to tell her more than 24 hours in advance that you will be leaving for two weeks, beginning the next morning? This especially applies to the years you will live in a foreign country!"

"Wilt thou, Debbie, take this soldier as thy wedded husband, knowing that he is depending upon you to be the perfect (well, almost) Army Wife, running the household as you see fit and being nice to the Commander's wife?

Further, you understand that your life with your husband (little that you may have together) will not be normal, that you may have to explain to your children, not once, but twice, and more often in the same day, that mothers do have husbands, that children do have daddies, and that the picture of the man on the refrigerator is not the milkman, but the same individual who tucks them in at 2200 hours, long after they are asleep. This soldier is their daddy, who loves them very, very much.

"Wilt thou love, respect and wait for him, preparing his favorite meals when he does come home, freezing them when he doesn't, send him all his favorite cookies and pictures of yourself and the kids, so he can remember what you look like? And last but not least, put on the outside of your door his "Welcome Home" sign when he's due to arrive?"

"I, Robert, take thee, Debbie, as my independent wife from 1900-2200 hours or as long as allowed by my Commanding Officer (subject to change without notice) for better or worse, earlier or later, near or far, and I promise to look at the pictures you send me, maybe not when they get to me in the field, but before I turn the lights out.  
I will also send a letter if time permits, and if not, to somehow, some way, make time."

"I, Debbie, take thee, Rob, as my live-in/live-out husband, realizing that your coming and going and 0330 staff meetings are a normal (although absurd to me) part of your life as a soldier. I promise not to be shocked or taken by surprise when you inform me that, although we've just arrived at our new duty station, we will be leaving within the month.

Yes, I'll have you as my husband as long as while you are away, my allotment comes through regularly, and you leave me a current power of attorney and the checkbook at all times. I am a Family Member and proud of it, dependent upon myself and my resources. Although I miss you when you are away, I know I can handle whatever comes across my path."

Now then, let no man or woman put asunder what God and the Department of the Army have brought together, only for them to soon say "Good-bye" to one another.

Robert leaves for his duty assignment to Germany tomorrow. Debbie will be joining him whenever the approval arrives. The Army hereby issues you this lovely, dedicated, independent woman, knowing that she'll be an asset not only to your marriage, but also to the Mission of the United States Army, which is, as you all know, to remain in a state of "Readiness."

By the authority vested in the Bible, elaborated in the regulations and subject to current directives concerning the aspect of marriage in the Army, you are now a Soldier with Family Member. Best Wishes and Good Luck.

