

What is an Army Wife?

What is an Army wife? An Army wife is mostly girl, though there are times, when her husband is away and she is mowing the lawn that she begins to suspect she is also BOY.

She usually comes in three sizes: petite, plump - and pregnant. During the early years of her marriage it is often hard to determine which size is her normal one. She has babies all over the world, and she measures time in terms of places, as other women do in years. "It was at Leavenworth that we all had the mumps." "In Tokyo, Don was promoted ..."

At least one of her babies is born, or one transfer is accomplished, while she is alone, causing her to suspect a secret pact between her husband and the Army, which provides for a man to be overseas or on temporary duty at these times.

An Army wife is international. She may be an Iowa farm girl, a French mademoiselle, a Japanese doll, or an ex-Army nurse. When discussing their Army problems, they speak the same language.

She can be a great actress. Watching her children's heartbreak at transfer time, she gives an Academy Award performance: "Arizona is going to be such fun! I hear they have Indian reservations, and tarantulas, and RATTLESNAKES ..." But her heart is breaking with theirs, and she wonders if this Army life is worth the sacrifice.

One day later, en route to the new assignment and filled with a spirit of adventure, she knows it is. That is, if the baby hasn't come down with a virus, or the twins with the measles.

An ideal Army wife has the patience of an angel, the flexibility of putty, the wisdom of a scholar, and the stamina of a horse. If she dislikes money, it helps.

She loves to gripe. (Why shouldn't the commissary bag my groceries like the supermarkets?) She lets off steam, and then goes back to bagging them again.

She is sentimental, carrying her memories with her in an old footlocker. She often cries at parades, without knowing why. She is a dreamer: "We'll never move again!" an optimist: "The next place will be better!" a realist: "Oh, well, as long as we're together."

You might say she is a bigamist - sharing her husband with a demanding other entity called "Duty." When Duty calls, she becomes the number 2 wife, and until she accepts this fact her life can be miserable.

She is many persons. She is the tired traveler coming down the gangplank with a smile on her lips, love in her eyes, and a new baby in her arms. She is the general's wife smiling in a reception line until her cheeks ache. She is the foreign bride in a strange American world. She is, above all, a woman who married a soldier who offered her the permanence of a gypsy, the miseries of loneliness, the frustrations of conformity - and the security of love.

Sitting among her packing boxes, with children squabbling nearby, she is sometimes willing to chuck it all - until she hears the firm step and cheerful voice of that lug who gave her all this. And then she is happy to be ... HIS Army wife.

