

**Life as a Military Brat can be wonderful**

The military often gets a bad rap, especially from the children of military parents. Many so-called military "brats" long for a more stable, "normal," life like their peers whose parents don't serve in the armed forces. I understand this viewpoint, even agreed with it for a period of my life. I now see, however, that my upbringing as the son of an Air Force officer has been an invaluable education and influence on the man I have become.

Everyone's story as a dependent of a military parent is different. Some people are lucky enough to have a fairly stable life, with little abrupt change or turbulence. Others, however, move often, to places that could be anywhere from Alabama to Germany to South Korea. I have fallen into the latter category, having moved numerous times and attended 4 different high schools on three continents over the course of my teenage years. Understandably, these years were not always the happiest of my life, but they may have been the most influential. Living in three different countries, meeting new people and experiencing new cultures, I gained a tolerance and world-view lacking in many American teens.

If my father were not in the military, I am sure I would not have had this life-changing experience. I have traveled all over the world, seen things many people have only read about. I have learned to overcome the hardships and barriers of having to get used to a new home, new people, and a new school. Living in all these different places and having to adapt has given me an independence and sustainability that will doubtlessly help me in my college and adult life, just as it helped me in high school.

I was not always grateful for the type of life we lived, but I now see how influential and important in my growth it has been. Looking back I would not wish to have lived any other way. The experiences I've had, places I've seen, people I've met – they have all been instrumental in making me into the person I am today. The life of a military brat is not a normal one. It is not always a happy one, either. But it is a life with merits that vastly outweigh the downsides.