

D. Johnson

Why my Dad/Mom is a Hero

My father began his career as an ROTC student at the Central Washington University. After commissioning, he was stationed at Ft. Richardson, Alaska where he met my mother. He managed to balance his time in the field and time with her and my siblings and I love hearing stories of their adventures in the Alaskan wilderness. I admire the fact that despite a demanding career, my father made sure he was a good husband and in turn my parents have one of the strongest marriages. I believe that this is due to the fact that they work hard at everything they do and are not willing to give up when the going gets difficult. This "never say die" attitude carried my parents from the winter wonderland to Virginia where I was born. There are beautiful pictures of my father still wearing his field glasses, with a tiny little child sleeping on his chest.

We moved to North Carolina next where my dad spent even more time away from the family. He served with the 82nd Airborne and would be out in the field for long periods of time and deployed to Saudi Arabia when his unit participated in Operation Desert Storm. His favorite story to tell is of the time his commander came to him with exciting news. My father knew it was time to change locations, but his commander was more excited to inform him that he had a new daughter, my sister Rachel. It's easy for him to remember the day they invaded Iraq, as February 22, 1991 is my sister's birthday. After his deployment, my dad received his master's degree at the Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey, California. Between studying, he found time to take us to the aquarium, train for the Big Sur Marathon, and bike ride with my mother. If there is anyone who understands time management, it's my father. He went on to teach math to the cadets at the United States Military Academy. While he was creating leaders of the future, he still took us trick-or-treating, attended school events, and carpooled to gymnastics. My dad continued to challenge himself, earning his Ph.D. in Industrial Engineering before returning to USMA where he taught again and worked as the Director of Institutional Research.

My father is a hero not only because of his dedicated military career, but because of the father and husband he is. He worked for years to improve the Army, working long hours to ensure that he was properly trained, that students learned what they needed, and that he was the best leader he could be. I admire my father's extreme dedication to everything he believes in, career, family, physical fitness, and excellence in all aspects of life. He is my family's hero, sacrificing a promotion to ensure that we didn't have to change high schools or live in bad areas of the country. My father always puts his family first, and for that, he is a true American hero.