

Commentary

Military wife shows marriage is all it's cracked up to be

JACEY ECKHART

Special to The Monitor

My husband celebrated our 20th wedding anniversary by giving me my favorite gift: words. Lots and lots of words. At one point, he got all expansive about his theory of young marriage.

"Marrying young is like investing in an aggressive mutual fund," Brad told me. "The risks are enormous. You can put everything you have into it and still lose all you've got, right quick. You could lose things you didn't even know you had. You could get stuck paying off the debt of it for years."

"That's your happy thought of the day right there," I said, thinking that maybe I should have asked for a nice, big diamond anniversary band instead.

"On the other hand, if you do marry young and it all works out, the payoff is huge. It's huge."

I'm glad he thinks so. I know I do. But sometimes, I look back at that initial investment in such a young relationship and shiver. We had only scant evidence we could make this marriage pay off. We had no clue what the military was all about. Surely someone should have talked us out of it – or not.

It seems that this kind of lucky foolhardiness is common to an awful lot of long-married couples. This was really brought home to me a couple of weeks ago when I wrote about Lacie and Chad, a Marine couple in their very early twenties who were getting married. I worried that maybe you shouldn't encourage such young people to get married – especially in the middle of a war.

I did get a couple of letters from commanders who had 19-year old husbands in their units: miserable, with a wife who had filed for divorce. But the vast majority of readers were quick to respond in favor of young marriage.

So many people wrote to tell me how they, too, had married young and could afford only popcorn and Kool-aid at the beginning of their relationships. They dealt with all the poverty and separation the military deals to very young couples and now they wouldn't change it for the world.

In this week's column I want to focus on the Army Child and Youth School Transition Services available here and at many other installations. Locally, school liaison officers and the garrison commander meet regularly with representatives from the school districts to address and resolve issues of concern regarding military students in this area. Every parent should be aware and take advantage of the services provided.



The Army Child and Youth School Transition Services consists of a variety of programs and initiatives that provide strategies and resources to help garrisons, school districts, and military parents and guardians face the changes associated with transitioning from one school to another in support of the Army's mission.

Those services include School Transition Services, School Liaison Officers, School Transition Specialists, and the Army Senior Stabilization for Soldiers with high school seniors. The Transition Counselor Institute provides professional development of counselors; Special Education Leadership Institute promotes awareness transition challenges of children with special needs; Student-to-Student program establishes campus-based, student-led, and faculty-sponsored program to support transitioning students; and Parent-to-Parent Cadre Teams is an initiative that empowers parents to be informed, positive and proactive transition specialists at home.

The Secondary Education Transition Study Memorandum of Agreement encourages school districts to sign the agreement to develop reciprocal practices to support transitioning school-age students. All nine school districts in the El Paso area have already signed the MOA with Fort Bliss. We are ahead of many other areas in the country. These are win-win programs to assist students and families who transition in and out of local schools. For more information about the programs, call the SLO at 568-1132.

Maj. Gen. Robert P. Lennox
Fort Bliss Commanding General

Troop Talk

Web sites of interest

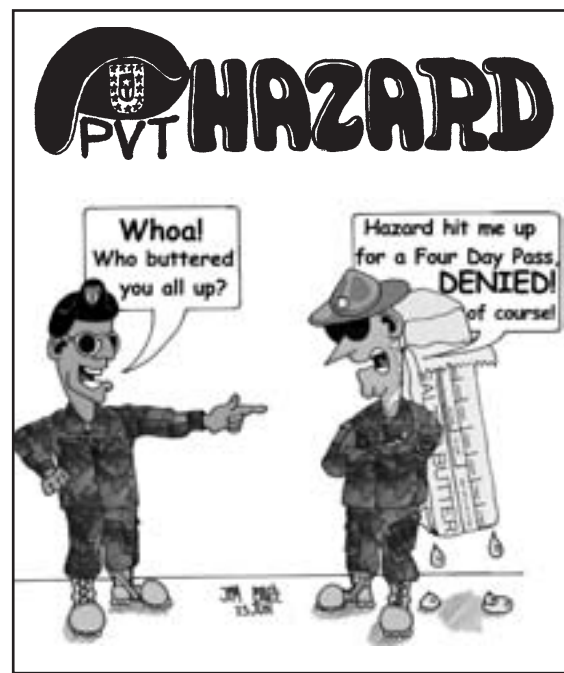
- The Monitor** www.lavenpublishing.com/fortblissmonitor.html
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- DoD news about the war on terrorism** www.defendamerica.mil
- Defense Finance Accounting Service** www.dod.mil/dfas
- Army Knowledge Online** www.us.army.mil
- Civilian Personnel Online** www.cpol.army.mil
- Thrift Savings Plan** www.tsp.gov
- Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)**
www.defenselink.mil/brac
- Fort Bliss MWR** www.blissmwr.com
- Armed Forces Vacation Club** www.afvclub.com
- www.amigoairsho.org

Many of the readers commented on how you really couldn't know whether the relationship would work out or not. Midge and Bob Callis of Norfolk were told they were too young to marry.

"He was 19 years old, 20 days shy of being 20. I was 18. Even though we were officially engaged, we eloped. We had found out that Bob was going to be sent overseas for three years and wanted to be married before he left," Midge Callis wrote. "So many people told us we were too young. Maybe we were, but we didn't worry about age, just being together. If we had it to do over again, would we wait until we were older, more educated, better financially fixed? No. Every moment in life counts and we did not want to waste any time apart. We have never regretted that choice. I thank God for that."

From reading all your kind letters I'm walking away with a renewed conviction there aren't any guarantees with a young marriage. There are only a lot of promises, an awful lot of blind hope and a deep conviction the payoff in this young relationship will be huge.

A 19-year military spouse, Jacey Eckhart is a nationally syndicated columnist with CinCHouse.com and the host of "The Jacey Eckhart Show for Military Families."



2007 DWIs by brigade/unit

DATE	6th BDE	11th BDE	31ST BDE	108th BDE	4/1 CAV	1st AR DIV	GARRISON	WBAMC	FM/CIV	OTHER TENANT UNITS	OTHER MIL	TOTAL
JAN - MAR	HNB 6 BDE	1/44 AMD X 4	13TH MAINT CO	108th BDE	2-12 CAV	1-36 INF BN	MRB GARRISON X2		7	3	63RD REG CMD	33
	HNB 2/6 BDE	HNB 11TH BDE	HNB 3/2 ADA	1/7 ADA X2		1ST BDE						
	1/56 BN	5/52 ADA	2/43 ADA X2			HNB FA 5-1 AD						
APR - JUN		1/44 AMD X 2	1/44 AMD	1/7 ADA X 2		1ST BDE	MRB GARRISON		10	2	402 FA 204TH MI	26
		5/52 ADA	31ST BDE X 2			3-36 INF REG						
		286TH SIG CO										
JUL - SEP									3			3
TOTAL	3	11	5	7	1	5	3	0	20	5	2	62

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