

As a military child, I have a deep understanding of patriotism. I observe patriotism daily when I watch my father lace his boots. I feel it when he hugs us before he leaves for months. I experience it as I drive past the flags on our neighbors' homes. Patriotism is about service... service to your family, your friends, and ultimately service to our country.

When I was younger, my friends and I would play at the park, running around like crazy, and yet the second Retreat started playing over the intercom, we all halted, paying respect without realizing why. I now know we were respecting our flag and those who've defended it, especially those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

My parents taught me patriotic values; loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and courage. These values are not just ideals. I learned them from the examples of sacrifice modeled by my father and his peers. They displayed dedication, hard work, and love for our country. They never complain about service. They don't do it for money. They serve to protect our values and way of life.

Ultimately, pride weaves its way into patriotism. I am proud of my father and mother and their sacrifices. I'm proud of my resilient siblings and myself. I'm proud to be a military kid and to represent my country. The USA is not perfect, but it stands for perfect ideals. I am proud to be an American.