

## My Story As A Military Child

By Joseph P. Hettich

Little did I know that on December 14th, 2009 that my childhood would change. My dad was a U.S. Army Reserve Colonel deployed to Iraq on his fourth combat tour and came home on leave for my birth. On March 19th, 2003 my dad (then MAJ Paul J. Hettich) and his brother/my uncle (then CW2 Philip A. Hettich) would get deployed for the invasion of the Iraq War. Every day my mom would record a short video of the day in my life of me when my dad was deployed miles away from home. While deployed, my dad would go to the USO and record himself reading books to me. At the end of the story, he would leave a message for me. My mom would often play these videos of him and I would sit right in front of the television and watch the videos as I got a little order.

When I was four years old, my Dad was getting ready for his fifth combat tour, this time to Africa. I went to Washington D.C. to visit him when he finished training.

I visited many memorials like Ford's Theater, WWII Memorial, Korean Memorial, Vietnam Wall, Jefferson Memorial, Lincoln Memorial, Air and Space Museum, Post Office Museum, and Arlington National Cemetery, where I saw the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

As I got older, I found out that my grandpa (1LT Paul I. Hettich) told me that the Hettichs' are a 10 generation military family, which includes cousins, uncles, grandpas, and great grandpas from the Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the current Battle in Ukraine.

My dad is currently a retired Colonel in the Retired Reserves and a U.S. Army Reserve Ambassador for Illinois. He is a ROA Life Member, Illinois ROA Vice President, and Illinois ROA Fort Sheridan Chapter 48 member. He serves as a ROA Family Readiness Support Committee member too.

During my Cub Scout and Boy Scout Career, I have attended several military events, which includes Veterans Day, Memorial Day, Army ROTC Rambler Battalion 75th Anniversary Military Ball, and U.S. Army Birthday. I was involved in Memorial Day 2021, Veterans Day 2021, and Memorial Day 2022. I researched Memorial Day 2022 for about 12 months on two Soldiers who were brothers from WWII. I wrote a speech on them.

I am already planning for Veterans Day 2022 and Memorial Day 2023. For Memorial Day 2023, I am researching a Nurse (Maria Meta Anderson) who served in WWI and is buried in our village cemetery.

I learned a lot about my country from doing the Boy Scout merit badges Citizenship in the Community, Citizenship in the Nation, and Citizenship in the World. Finally, I am proud to be a part of my military family and to have gone through all of these experiences.



*Joseph P. Hettich*