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Congressional District One

Teacher: Rachel Jones

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“The Road to a Great Marriage”

Many romances start in strange places. My parents’ romance started in Slapout, Alabama at the local hangout for teenagers, Bonner’s Dock.

After a Holtville football game, my mother and a friend went to see who was hanging out at Bonner’s. My mother didn’t go to Holtville, so she didn’t know many of the people there. Her friend saw someone she recognized and wanted to introduce them. After my mother and father were introduced, they spent the rest of the evening talking and laughing. This began their story together that, so far, has spanned over eighteen years.

My parents met in 1991 after a football game. They dated for two months before my father proposed. After the proposal, my parents were engaged for almost two years before they married in 1993. They held their ceremony at the gazebo in Millbrook.

My mother and father had a good life, but they both had to work two jobs. My mother says that her love was tested every night when my father came home from work and woke her up, sipping an icee loudly and laughing hysterically at the television show “Gomer Pyle”, but she just giggled and shook her head. In an effort to improve their lifestyle, my father joined the Army.

Military life was difficult from the beginning. After five months of training, my father got orders to go to Germany. Shortly after he arrived, my mother flew over. One month after my father reported in Germany, his unit was deployed to Bosnia for a peace-keeping mission. One month after my father was gone, my mother found out that she was pregnant with me. After three years of trying to conceive, this was a great surprise, only my father was scheduled to be in Bosnia for twelve months.

My mother sent him a Red Cross message about the pregnancy, which was given to him by his commander along with a pat on the back. My father got to come home after four months to visit, and then back to Bosnia to finish his mission. My mother mailed my father a letter every day that he was gone, telling him about the baby on the way. I arrived in September. My mother wasn't allowed to send any pictures of my to my father because he wanted to see me in person first.

Three months after I was born, my father came home and held his child for the first time. We enjoyed Germany for the next two years, despite two more deployments. After three years in Germany, my father got orders to Colorado. Our family of three was so to be four, as my mother was eight months pregnant.

After one month in Colorado, my sister arrived. My father worked hard at his job every day. My mother continued to be supportive of his career by taking care of things at home while he completed assignments in California and Egypt. After four years in Colorado, we moved to Kentucky.

While in Kentucky, my parents were surprised with my mother's diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis. Feeling like they had dealt with more than their fair share of hard times, this was very difficult for them to accept. After a year of doctors visits and hard times for my family, my mother's MS finally stabilized enough that she could get on medication that helped to minimize her symptoms of MS. My father supported her through many nights of pain and difficult times of dealing with this new evil in their lives. She said that he saved her from pain, on a daily basis.

After three years in Kentucky, my father received orders to report to Korea. So while my dad was in Korea, we moved home to Alabama. That is when I attended Holtville Middle School for the first time, but was only there a year, as my father was returning from Korea, to go back to Kentucky. Some of our friends were still there, but many were gone, as it often is in military life.

My father worked in the same place as he did before we left for the first time, and my mother worked on Post also. This time in Kentucky seemed different. After many years in the Army, my dad was debating about getting out to pursue another career. My mother supported him in this, as she has had to watch him leave our family behind many times and was looking forward to not having to do that anymore. Upon leaving

the Army, my parents had many discussions and talked a lot about how things would be afterward, as this had been our life for the past fourteen years. There were many conversations on this subject, both gentle and heated conversations due to the stress of completely changing our way of life.

However, I believe we made the transition quite well. My family is still strong and we love each other fiercely. Though there were many trials and tests for my parents through their eighteen years together, they are still best friends and love each other very much. My mother says that when you can see that person's faults as funny quirks, it's gotta be love (as she laughs again about being woken up by "Gomer Pyle" and the slurping of an icee in the middle of the night). They have shown me that love and support is a key point to a successful relationship. They have supported each other in many ways over all of these years and now they sit back and laugh about some of the hard times that built their life and their relationship. I have learned through my parents that families are stronger when they can laugh together and at each other and still feel loved. To me, they have the best marriage, one of joy, sharing, caring, trusting, strength, loyalty, kindness, understanding, support, and most of all... Love.