



A Navy Father and an Army Son

First-place winner, January 2026 Together We Served Memories Competition

Yes—one of my children followed my footsteps into military service. My son, Mark, chose a different path, but one just as meaningful. After spending his first 20 years as the son of a Navy man, he decided the Army was the right fit for him.

I was still an active-duty Navy officer when Mark made that decision. One of the proudest moments of my life came in 1981 at an Army recruiting station in Fresno, California, when I had the honor of administering the oath of enlistment to my own son. Watching him raise his right hand and swear to serve our country was something I would never forget. Service, I realized, could be more than a profession. It could become a family legacy.

Mark completed basic training and became a communications specialist in the Army Signal Corps. His technical aptitude served him well, and he spent more than four years stationed in Germany. Those years shaped far more than his military career. While serving there, he met another active-duty soldier—the woman who would become his wife and the mother of his two children. The Army had given Mark more than training and experience. It had introduced him to the woman with whom he would build his family.

After completing their military service honorably, Mark and his future wife returned to California, where they married and began civilian life together. Mark took advantage of the educational benefits he had earned and continued his education, eventually earning a master's degree in business administration with an emphasis in accounting.

My wife and I eventually followed Mark and his growing family to Colorado, where we had the pleasure of watching our grandson and granddaughter grow up. The years moved along, as they have a way of doing. Today our granddaughter has children of her own, and we have three greatgrandchildren to adore. Looking back, it is remarkable to think how much of that family story can be traced to two young soldiers who met while serving their country in Germany.

Mark and I may have served in different branches, but military service gave us something else in common—along with a rivalry that comes roaring back every year during the Army–Navy game. In our family, that game is the Super Bowl. The loyalties are firm, the teasing enthusiastic, and the respect never in doubt.

I remain proud of my own years in the United States Navy, and I am every bit as proud of my son's service in the United States Army. I went to sea; Mark served on land. We wore different uniforms and followed different military paths, but we shared the same oath and the same commitment to our country.

For a Navy father and an Army son, I can think of no better family legacy.