

We left Monday 23 Feb. to drive from Dallas to Georgia. We made 500 miles the first day, and finished up the last 250 miles on Tuesday. We picked up Debbie (my sister-in-law) on the way, and went on to our rented cabin from there.

We didn't miss a turn or a highway between Texas and Georgia -- had no problems, whatsoever. We didn't get lost until we were on base. Someone needs to tell their mapmaker that he Suck\$! And a few more signs would be nice... like "TURN AROUND, STUPID!" We (I) managed to get lost (and stay that way) on Best of Luck Road... or something like that. It didn't take me long to figure out why it was named as it was. I can just see the grin on the face of the sadistic %@\$#@&*! who thought it would be funny to mess with the minds of civilians. By the way, on a military base, there's a general speed limit of only 15-20 mph. It's frustrating to get lost, but I managed to get lost in slow motion! The base is a bazillion square miles of "stuff," and then fourteen bazillion miles of "nothing" ...so "lost and almost out of gas" really IS a big deal.

Anyway, Wednesday was "Family Day," and we were all crying happy-tears to see my baby brother looking sooooooo good and sharp in his uniform. After some initial festivities, we were able to take John with us for a few hours, but had to have him back by 2100. (That's 9:00 PM for you civilians.) Some of his comrades were without family members, so Wade and I took them as our own, and I ended up playing chauffeur to an additional 3 additional soldiers. We took everyone to a BBQ restaurant and then back to the cabin for some R&R. Although the cabin was extremely close to the base, the drive from the cabin to the barracks took almost an hour, so we left the cabin at 8:00PM so they wouldn't be late for bed check.

My brother, John, was the 2nd oldest member of his group of inductees. The eldest was a man who hit the new-recruit age-limit of 42. John will be 39 in three months.

The following day was graduation, itself. It was a bit strange for me, having been raised an army brat. I was used to the pomp and circumstance of military graduations and other such ceremonies but still... There were marching bands and multi-colored smoke bombs and tanks and troop transports, bazookas and grenade launchers and soldiers pointing machine guns at me -- and firing. Regardless, seeing John march by in his dress uniform, beret cocked to the side over one eye... THAT brought tears to my eyes, and still does when I just think about it. We were able to take John back to the cabin with us for a few more hours, but had to have him back on base by 9:00 again.

The following morning, we took our time packing up, and we vacated the cabin by 11:00. At that time, John was 3/4ths of the way to his next station. HE was up, dressed, packed, and on the bus with the other recruits at 0500 while the rest of us were blissfully asleep.

John is now going through his AIT (Advanced Individual Training), which should take about 10 weeks. Immediately after that, we're not sure what will happen, but we'll update this page as soon as we hear something we can pass along.

It was only 14 months ago that John decided that he was going to do this. He quit smoking and put himself on a severe exercise program, and proceeded to accomplish the impossible. The changes in him are amazing, and I'm all full of "I admire you SO much! You're an inspiration to everyone. We're all so very proud of you!" He knows it, too. He's not cocky about it and, in fact, seems to be humbled by his own experiences. But he does stand tall. He knows that he just survived Hell, and may be heading straight into Hell, Part II.

I ask for your prayers on John's behalf, and on behalf of all our brothers and sisters, parents and children, who've made the decision to don a uniform. Pray that God's will be done; that He bless the efforts of these men and woman; that they return safely.

~~Bet, Proud Sister~