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Foreword

I have always believed people are the heart and soul of our military and not our whiz-bang technology and state-of-the-art weapons systems. It takes a special group of people to put the nation's families before their own families and that is the sacrifice that deployed military members and their families accept on behalf of all Americans.

With more than half of all service members married, *A Family's Guide to the Military For Dummies* is a necessary, timely, and important book. Sue Hoppin and Sheryl Garrett have done a masterful job of making sense out of a gargantuan and daunting topic. Sue brings a spouse's perspective, a writer's touch, and her years of experience as a leader and advocate for improving the lives of military spouses and families, while Sheryl is the consummate consumer advocate, having worked with Congress and the courts to stop predatory lending practices, increase financial literacy, and reform Social Security.

Part reference guide, part practical advice, this gem of a book should be required reading for every new recruit and military bride. Why? Because the military is not just a job. It's one of those few professions that has a life-long impact on the entire family. Falling in love with and marrying a military member requires accepting the military lifestyle — the memorable times, as well as the hardships — as your own.

The military has come a long way in how it views families. The outdated saying, "If the military wanted you to have a wife it would have issued you one," has been replaced with, "You enlist a service member, but re-enlist a family." In the last few years, military leaders have realized that maintaining and retaining the force is linked to service members' quality of life with their families. "Quality of life" is a hot-button issue within the military community and today's military offers better resources and programs for families. But making sense of it all when you are trying to figure out rank structure and acronyms can be overwhelming for the uninitiated. *A Family's Guide to the Military For Dummies* is more than just a comprehensive guide to all things military. It's like a new friend taking you by the hand and showing you the ropes, which is reason enough to give *A Family's Guide to the Military For Dummies* a 21-gun salute.

—Tanya Biank

Author of *Army Wives*, the basis for the hit Lifetime TV show of the same name

