

The Complete History of the Dandelion as Official Flower of the Military Brat

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As seen below, a discussion began on the newsgroup "alt.culture.military-brats" in March of 1998. The Military Brats Registry took on the task of providing a page on its website where everyone could find information and eventually vote on the idea.

Presented here are the threads of conversation that lead to the ultimate choice of the Dandelion, which has become recognized by Military Brats forever forward!

3/16/98

As the cook in our family, and (modestly) the intellectual (okay, semi-) I naturally read whatever John Thorne <<http://www.outlawcook.com>> writes.

John, an army brat escaped to Maine, where he writes books about cooking and food (Outlaw Cook, Simple Cooking, Serious Pig) and issues a newsletter which mixes eating and cooking with thinking and life in general, not unlike the genre of M.F.K. Fischer (wonderful writer, though not a brat) mixed in with a bit of Prairie Home Companion. In his most recent newsletter, he writes, in the context of "a meditation on the interconnection between hunger and character and the unexpected ways in which this can be passed from father and son," as follows...

"All this [ie, his parents becoming rooted after his dad retires] was alien to me. Unlike them, I had grown up an army brat, moving somewhere new every few years, my roots floating in hydroponic solution. As an adult, it's only during those rare times that I happen onto an army base that I feel, and then with great ambivalence, that burst of recognition - half pang, half joy - that one feels before a long relinquished childhood home."

I like the notion of hydroponic roots, don't you? Whatever the official plant of the Military Brats Newsgroup might be (Wandering Jew leaps to mind) it is certainly grown hydroponically.

Harmon

3/17/98

Apropos of something or other: During the recent discussion about an official Saint of Brats, the Flying Dutchman kept coming to my mind. I never mentioned the fable because who knows if he was a Brat or not. Now comes an official plant. Maybe the Dutchman wasn't a plant but he certainly had to keep traveling.

Another plant to consider might be the Hydrilla (?). Its appreciated in some places, roundly cursed in others, and is certainly migrating around the world.

Bill Van Houten (USA Ret)

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS=OXYMORON

3/18/98

How about the dandelion? The plant puts down roots almost anywhere. It is almost impossible to get rid of. It is entirely useable except for the little puffball thingy. An unpretentious plant, yet good looking (except for the habit of being where you least expect it.) It's a survivor in a broad range of climates. And even where those who are so inclined would apply poisons, they have to do it one plant at a time season after season. I like the idea of the Dutchman too. Most ghosts/myths don't get around much.

The Dutchman has been on the move since the 1600s at least. This just illustrates my motto which is "bloom where you're planted"

Anne Christopherson

So now we can have a group motto, too. 8)=

BTW, the puffball thingies are also useable. They can amuse small children.

Harmon

3/19/98

Hey!

Those puffballs are useful. They're for making wishes on. Wishes are very important things, like thoughts and dreams they're hard to take away from a person, but once you do that person is pretty well crushed - you might as well have dropped a piano on them.

Katie

Dandelion gets my vote ! The "eternal optimist" of plants. To see one growing in a crack in a sidewalk is worth a whole book of philosophy.

Bill Van Houten (USA Ret)

Yes! You can learn something new. I had never imagined that the seed balls of dandelions could be useful. I have played with the darned things myself. I have watched my children play with the things. It just plain never dawned on me that that was a useful function. The kids and myself had a blast too! And using them for wishing! I was stuck in the days when it took a daisy or some other such petaled flower to do that. Remember? "She loves me, she loves me not?" This one is still current. I caught my son pulling petals when he was eight. The little girl down the street was doing the same thing.

TSTONE856

Petal flowers are good for love prediction, but the dandelion wish is unlimited- any subject will work!

Mari Kay

I have to agree. When the topic first came up, I was thinking about kudzu but it has such a negative image. So too, did the dandelion, I thought, until I considered Anne's persuasive argument and other's additions to it. Maybe we should get Op Foot locker and other folks to set up some kind of formal adoption of the dandelion, and create a nice insignia to represent it. That way we could begin to make our fraternal organization a little more organized. Maybe even add a motto "Carpe Dandilionus" or something! <g>

Susan

Gets my vote. I think it's a great idea.

Anne

I'm for it also!

Marc
Military Brats Registry
www.MilitaryBrat.com

Yikes! This thing is taking off, kind like ...oh, I don't know...A DANDELION!!! Or a Military Brat. Give a brat an idea and WHAM! It goes! Okay. Who, among us, is a graphic designer? And Marc & Gene, you guys are organizing things, what should we do next?
Harmon

My dad was an enlisted pilot on WWII and now is a member of the Silver Eagle, a fraternity of all one-time enlisted navy and marine pilots. They have a convention every year. Maybe we can take some pages from their book about how to turn a confederacy into a bonafide group? I think they are HQd in Pennsacola at the Navy Air Museum.

Susan

I Am an artist, amongst other things, if i had a photo of a Dandelion. and a Few ideas...
Somebody send me a photo of a dandelion, Soon...
Kevin

Me too. But a dandelion is simple,(probably find one in some clip art or on the web...) I think the concept is what's needed here. Seems to me as brats are scattered we need the image of the dandelion seeds scattering, blowing in the wind so to speak....are we looking for a crest, or just a symbol?

More input guys!!!

Mari Kay

3/20/98

We need to come up with the "Unofficial Military Brat Flower" webpage...just need to compile what's been said here about the dandelion, then add a little artwork and bingo...done deal!
Marc

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<http://www.militarybrat.com>

I think Mari Kay is right on here. A picture of a puffball blowing in the wind to be scattered to the four corners of the earth is perfect for brats, IMHO. Gad, didn't know I could wax so poetic at 6:45 A.M.

Anne

The dandelion has my vote.

OJIII

I think we should focus on flowers that blossom anywhere and anytime, wherever the wind blows the seed. Sometimes the seed lands in the beautiful paradise of Hawaii. Other times it lands in the manure of xxxxx. (Didn't want to mention any particular place like, from what I've heard, "Turkey")

The Shoe

The last time I saw this sort of thing happen was on the AOL brats forum and we wound up with the Footlocker.

Harmon

BRAT CONTEST - EVERYONE WLECOME!!!

Hey, gang. I put Marc Curtis up to something and, bless his heart, he's game. Over the next week, or so, Marc is going to create a page at his site:<http://www.militarybrat.com>

Where we can decide on our new insignia (or Crest?) based on the Dandelion. I suspect he will post the discussion we've had thus far to inform those brats not tapped into this newsgroup who come to his site via other routes. He will also post the contest parameters.
(see below)

So you artists, get your image proposals ready, motto-writers, get writing, and send them to Marc. Please, keep in mind that this will basically become a "logo" so -- clean, fairly simple images, short and sweet mottos.(Mottos can be in any language the submitter deems appropriate, but if it's not English, translations would be appreciated.)

Deadline for image and motto entries is April 30, 1998. Then, between May 1 and July 4 (seems an appropriate date) the rest of us can vote for the image we want to represent us. One vote per person, please.

Once the motto and the insignia votes are tallied, we'll let you know who won. The winning artist and motto-writer will each win a copy of "Military Brats" Legacy of Childhood Inside the Fortress."

Thanks for your enthusiasm, and your participation. The more of us who get involved, the truer a representation of us it will be.

Best Regards,
Susan O'Brien

Sounds like a plan and I'm going to put in "We bloom where we're planted", so don't nobody go there first.

Anne Christopherson

3/21/98

Any of you stationed in France recall the Petit Larousse encyclopedia? Their logo, as I recall, was someone blowing on a dandelion flower gone to seed, and the caption was "Je seme a tout vents" which I think means "I sow everywhere" (not literally, but I think that is the gist. That might a model for some artwork. Of course I can't find ours right now.

Gerald

I found this on a website:

Dandelion

She will blow and blow

But will never know

Where the little Dandelion will go

Where the little Dandelion will grow

The wind takes it high

The wind takes it low

But she will never know

Where the little Dandelion will go

Where the little Dandelion will grow

By,

Chelsea

There's a b/w picture of a girl blowing a Dandelion, scattering it to the winds.

Marc

-

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<http://www.MilitaryBrat.com>

3/23/98

Portions of the Dandelion thread from a.c.m-b have been pasted to www.militarybrat.com/dandelion.cfm along with the rules for the logo/motto contest. Once the entries are in there will be a page for voting on 1. Whether the dandelion should be considered the "Official Military Brat flower" and 2. Which logo and motto should be selected if there is an overwhelming "Yes" vote. Have fun with your ideas! BTW...Anne already has "Bloom Where You're Planted" locked in ;)

Marc

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Military Brats Registry

<http://www.MilitaryBrat.com>

I had this thread buried away between some girl interested in horses and a guaranteed 6 million dollars in fifteen minutes. Glad I looked. I really like the dandelion idea. They may be weeds, but they are pretty ones! Why is it that people want a motto in Latin? What was Ann's Christensen's suggestion? That was good.

Another possibility that came up in Ann Holcomb's group was from Tolkein's THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

Not all that is gold has a glitter

Not all who wander are lost

Think that is right. I'll check on it. That seems a good fit to a dandelion and to us

Gene Moser

Not me, Anne - personally, I can't think of a more appropriate motto. One BratVote here...

Terry Pulliam Shiele

How does that sound translated into Latin. Anyone?

MK

Well, gee, at least let's read the nominations before awarding the Oscar. 8)=

Here's my nomination, rooted in words that nearly all of us have said from time to time, in answer to "Where are you from?"

"We grew up all over."

Harmon

3/24/1998

I move, therefore I am.

In Latin, naturally. All *real* mottos are in Latin. It's a law.

<G>

Semper Fi

OJ III

Great brainstorming! Here's what I see....a puffball scattering to the winds with the motto "Where are you from?"

Mari Kay

3/28/1998

SteamGene said...

> > No Latin. Multiple languages. Same motto.

Hmm. That's a pretty good motto itself! Kind of postmodern. How about: "All Together in Many Places"

That should be fun to translate.

Harmon

3/29/1998

Heh heh. I got Deutschland: "Drei Bier."

Harmon

3/31/1998

Just a reminder...voting for the "Official Military Brat Flower" begins on May 1, 1998. There's still time to get your entries in for motto and/or logo design. Entries must be sent

to w.....@militarybrat.com and be

sure to put "Dandelion" in the subject line of your E-mail. Go to

<http://www.militarybrat.com/dandelion.cfm> for full details!

Marc

Military Brats Registry

<http://www.militarybrat.com>

4/16/1998

Only 2 more weeks to send in your dandelion logo or motto! On May 1 I'll post the URL for the voting.... Once you vote, and please only one vote per

person, you'll see the instant results. There will also be a page that you can check every now and then to see how the vote is going! Go to

<http://www.militarybrat.com/dandelion.cfm> for more details and info on where to send your entries!

Marc

4/18/1998

So I just looked out in my BACK yard (we know the tulips are in the front) and two thirds of the lawn is covered with dandelions!! I can't decide whether to be happy or disheartened! Aaaaargh!

Susan
USN BRAT

(just in case it's the latter, what's a safe way to get rid of them?)

I just had the same reaction 15 minutes ago and I come in and here is this posting. Sorry, brat flower or not, out they come! Now, if they were tumbleweeds, I might really have second thoughts <g>. Oh, it was my front yard.

Cheers,

Frank

Hmm. The dandelions, the flower representing your youth as a brat, are in the back yard. The tulips, representing the grownup brat, are in the front yard. This strikes me as entirely proper. Evidently, we are in need of a second official flower.

Harmon

Hey, it's not like you're chopping off the arms of fellow brats! Besides, in your efforts to eliminate the dandelion, you are encouraging its spread since even the lightest touch causes their seeds to blow in the wind...to the four corners of the earth (how they determined 4 corners on a round object is beyond me).

So just smile and do your duty :)

Marc

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<http://www.MilitaryBrat.com>

Gee, Harmon, when you put it that way, I feel so entirely well adjusted! It's only taken me (mumble, mumble) years. I think I'll go out and lop a few tops off. Lord knows I'll never kill 'em.

Susan
USN BRAT

Whatever the second flower is it has to be more than an annual. Poppies? Cacti? Maybe tulips? Have a bloomin' good day :-)

Gail

Our official flower looks so cheerful after the gloom of winter. We won't see them for another month up here. It seems a shame to kill the dandelions but they really do a number on the lawn. Only way I know to get rid of them without chemicals is to dig them out. Horrendously time consuming but it works as long as you have one of those long pokers that will get most of the root. Choose the time just after a rain - the ground is softer. Then fertilize the grass like mad so it spreads into the bare spots.

Jean

Y'know, it never really occurred to me before, but I've lived in the same townhouse for going on 15 years, and I've never managed to make the garden work. Every year I have to go out & drop more money than I want to on a bunch of flowers to fill in all the bare spots, which is most of the garden. I've thought it was the soil, or my black thumb, but now I know it is a deep brat problem - subconsciously, I don't think I'll be here next year, so I don't do anything in the garden that will last.

That does it. Next spring I'm moving. (Wish it were to NYC.)

Harmon

I have to reply

Cause I do believe we will be moving again to Orange Beach/Gulf Shores

But and However I feel I need to leave a garden here.....I feel I have to leave something of myself

Susan

It's all in your perspective. I love to sit out on my lawn and dig out the dandelions. And there are always some left, which is good, as my children are now raising pet bunnies, and dandelion leaves are good for them when

they are off their food...also I get a satisfied feeling when pulling out the clover , and getting all its little runners (well all as far as I can see!) Weird, huh?

Mari Kay

Gary brought me a dandelion in full yellow bloom several weeks ago; I put it in some water in a small vase, like I would any other flower he gives me (always found, never bought...the only way I'll have it). When

it dried up, I was going to throw it away, but he told me to wait. Wait, I did, until a week or so later, when he told me to take it outside and make a wish, scattering the tiny seedlings. Keep your dozens of red roses...that dandelion wish was special.

Tee

Dandelion greens are great even for us to eat when you pick the smaller leaves of the young plants. They actually are good in salads or cooked up they taste similar to the "dreaded" spinach (g), which I happen to like a lot.

Joie

I agree.. the dandelion was the flower of choice that my children brought to me when they were little. It was the "fun" flower that turned into a fuzzy lion to be blown away with a wish. Those are good memories and ones I cherish.

Joie

Even digging them out leaves a little bit of root, and dandelions always return. If you *really* want to kill them, dig them out and then pour boiling water over the spot where they were. Non-toxic

but kills plants like
nobody's business. Of course, you have to make sure you don't kill the "good" grass . . .

Melissa

The young greens make a salad and the flowers make a sweet wine. All we need now is the meat.

Gene Moser

What a wonderful memory I just had! My sister and I were playing in a field making bracelets, necklaces and crowns from dandelions and other flowers. I remember being so content just to sit there for a few hours making stuff for my mom. I also remember how much she made over her gifts. You would have thought we had given her diamonds. My mom has been gone for 4 years and I thank you for giving me back a forgotten memory.

Nita

4/29/1998

Some time ago there was a discussion about mottos. It kind of fizzled into a pile of suggested languages, groups of languages, and befuddlement over which one, if not all of them, to use. The actual mottos suggested were few. I want to remember (a dangerous game) that Anne Christopherson (sp?) suggested "Bloom where you're planted." I liked that one. Someone thought all mottos should be in Latin. So, I went out and tried to find the Latin. Today I succeeded.

"Bloom where you're planted." is, in Latin, "Flore ubi deponent." A friend gave me the translation and isn't 100% sure of the grammar. Another friend of the friend has been called upon to check the finer details of word selection and grammar. So, this could get modified a bit. But, it's close. In a conversation with my wife she told me that plain English works. Latin suggests "old." I told her that there have been military brats since there was a military. She remarked that none of them use Latin today. My response was that while we have yet to encounter any brats from empirical Rome online, we would want them to feel welcome. The rest of this particular criticism is best left unwritten.

I like the Latin. It is universally recognized for its use in such things as mottos. It is no longer a "living language" except in the sense that it is present at the root of so many words in so many languages. It's like the dandelion, you find it where you least expect it and you find it everywhere. I don't know much about the Asian languages and I suspect that Latinate roots are few, so, "everywhere" is not precisely accurate. But, isn't that an accurate generalization about where we've been?

Another positive aspect of using the Latin; only the folks in the group with the motto tend to know what it means, so it functions as a kind of secret password.

Anybody got any connections in the cereal or secret decoder ring industries?

TSTONE856

T,
QUICK like a bunny get over to Marc's site, (www.militarybrat.com) and submit your entry so everyone can vote on it. The Motto/Logo thing goes to the voting stage on Friday. (see details at the site) and entry cut-off is Thursday.

Susan O'Brien
USN Brat

6/25/1998

I know Marc is the keeper of the flame on the Motto/logo stuff, but I noticed the calendar.

Just thought I'd rattle everyone's cage one more time to remind folks that the Motto/logo contest is drawing to a close at <http://www.militarybrat.com>

The voting is close and very interesting so if you haven't cast your ballot yet, give it a go. Fewer than 200 people have voted last I checked and with 10,000+ of us registered, (and millions who aren't) 200 is not a very large slice of the pie. The more of us who participate, the more representative of us the choice will be. If you have friends and siblings who are not regulars with us in the NG, but who are brats...see if you can get them to vote, too.

Susan Bailey O'Brien
USN Brat

6/27/1998

Hi:I haven't posted here before, but this one is of interest to me. Over the years I always thought of myself as a tumbleweed (*Salsola kali*), or at least more akin to one than a dandelion. A dandelion after all has roots. We didn't. I still don't. At age 57 I've lived at three different address in the last 9 years. Well, at least those were all within a mile of each other. The last big move was 9 years ago from Colorado to Pennsylvania, and I guess we'll be going back in 3 years or so. Maybe then, upon retirement I'll finally be able to really sink some roots. When I went to college, I rented an apartment there and lived there longer than I had ever lived in one building in my entire life before that time. Of course, life in the U.S. has gotten more mobile, but Military Brats take the cake, no doubt about it. Even gypsies at least have a smaller roving area. The whole earth is ours. Junior High in Japan and high school in Europe, I didn't go that far, but I've seen some on the registry that certainly have. Anyhow, my vote would be for the Tumbleweed. I'm sure you could easily find more information on the tumbleweed, but see if you don't think it is a fitting symbol of Bratdom.

Cheers
Frank

To all:

No sooner do I post something and I find I used an incorrect scientific name. The correct name is "*Amaranthus albus*" and it is unique in many ways.

I'm also learning how to do this sort of thing and posted this elsewhere were it makes no sense.

Sorry,
Frank

"Winds of War" by Herman Wouk about a military family before the outbreak of WWII has a part where the father a naval officer contemplates his family of 'tumbleweeds'. I agree with Frank it is a pretty apt image.

Johnathan E H Plaster

Frank,

You make some interesting and very valid points! It would have been great if your post had come during the original Dandelion thread. As to the dandelion having roots....that's true, and if you pull one out of your yard

you probably leave some of those roots behind...as do Military Brats when they move. Our roots are attached to our memories, and we take them with us but we leave a little bit of ourselves behind each time we go. And while we are blown about like a tumbleweed, at least the dandelion has a flower that attracts people to it. There are very few places that the dandelion hasn't been....but the tumbleweed is very limited in its travels. Maybe we need an official Military Brat Garden :)

Marc

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<http://www.MilitaryBrat.com>

Actually, the tumbleweed has gotten around. I quote from the site at:

<http://www.abc.net.au/science/k2/trek/4wd/Over69.htm>

"According to the American movies, tumbleweed is as American as apple pie. But tumbleweed is not a native American. It's a Russian invader, that was first discovered in Australia." And "Salsola belongs to the spinach family. It is common in Asia, North America, Australia and Africa, and it grows into a ball. "

It also has a salutary effect where it grows. I like to think that we do too, at least for the most part:

"Scientists at Utah State University have found that it even improves the soil. Tumbleweed trickles chemicals into the soil. These chemicals then make the nutrients in the soil more available to other plants. Once tumbleweed has grown in the soil, other plants grow better the next season." I like to think we have the survival trait also: "But best of all, it's a survivor. In southern Nevada, where many nuclear weapons were tested above ground, the tumbleweed was always the first plant to start growing at Ground Zero. Like the cockroach and the frog, the tumbleweed will inherit the earth." I don't like the analogy of the cockroach, but the rest is OK! ;-)

Frank

7/3/1998

One of my Mothers' favorite songs seemed to be (I'm not sure of the title) the cowboy song "Driffin' Along With the Tumbling Tumbleweed" However, a lot of my civilian friends back east never seemed to know what a tumble weed is (and a few of these Seattleites, when they finally venture east of the Cascades, are pretty amazed and impressed with them also.) Too bad you didn't bring it up earlier, but then maybe a dandelion is more universally understood anyway.....

Mari Kay

7/4/1998

The tumbleweed presents a very clear metaphor of the rambling lifestyle. However, it has to be dead to tumble. This kind of limits my desire to apply it to myself. Although, they made great, great, building blocks when I was a kid. We would build big forts, and houses, roof and all. And they would last until somebody came along and burned them, or plowed them under, or just separated them enough to let the wind carry them on. It's a fun weed, except in the garden. Brat sausage? Weiswurst in a curry sauce. No doubt about it. True it's dead when it starts to roam, but so was our social life for a while. When I left Germany in June of 1955 and went to Southern Maryland, I was really at loose ends all summer. Didn't get much better that fall in what was then a rather agricultural area with all these kids who had been together since 1st grade. Of course the plant isn't totally dead, as it tumbles it spreads seeds, tens of thousands of them, all over the place. Hopefully, as we roamed we left some good behind as well. I like to think I did.

Frank

And thus, the Dandelion was chosen as the “Official Flower of the Military Brat.” It has been promoted by the Military Brats Registry (www.MilitaryBrat.com) since its inception, and remains a very descriptive symbol of Military Brats.

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