

## Called to Orders

*By Melissa Rice Noble, Supply Corps Spouse*

30 years of thinking, “We’ll get this!” Three decades of assuming the senior folks had a handle, had a plan, had an Eagle’s vision. Only to move along, go along, get along. Follow the recommendations to roam overseas, IA, geobach, and yet things didn’t always turn out. One simple example, my spouse didn’t get his choice for grad school.

But what we did get was...otters at Monterey Bay Aquarium, shops and chowder at Cannery Row and Old Fisherman’s Wharf, snorkeling, samples in Wine Country, Bill Murray at Pebble Beach...

Best yet, a neighborhood where the kids still played outside. Two years of surreal, “We’re-All-30-and-Beautiful” La Mesa, catching up on family time, and meeting unflappable people.

Since my husband is the biggest math nerd, he was frolicking in dense poppy fields of Operations Research equations with a perpetual smile on his face. After deployments and a sobering medevac, we got to be involved—together! Scout camping in the Redwoods! Little orange Tigers lolling and rolling and hoping to throw axes. (Please, please, please?!) A soccer team coached by Dad, that contained our oldest, and the next-oldest played up, and the toddler was the beaming mascot. What memories. So much kicking! So much covering the coach’s eyes while sitting astride his shoulders. So

much falling! So much getting up again. And that, my friends, is what it’s all about.

My honey skipped through software simulations and twirled in algorithms, formulas, and system modeling, honing heady numerical results for given values of input parameters. And then, if I sat still too long, he told me about it.



*Melissa Rice Noble (2nd from left) with her husband RDML Joseph D. “Doug” Noble and two daughters.*

So there we saw that the reward isn’t always apparent, but sometimes it is...it’s often not what you hoped for, or the first, or third locale tossed out for consideration...but very often what lands in your lap, can be a kind of glorious grab-bag. And there’s always daydreaming about the next place! No, my husband isn’t a detailer, and he isn’t bribing me with spicy favors to say this—it’s mostly true.

I'm writing this during another geobach separation, in COVID, under Winter Storm Viola, as we pine to explore this big city locale and all its dynamic culture. Mostly in the form of cheesesteak emporiums, hoagie shops, and eateries like the oldest Italian restaurant in the entire United States! (It opened in 1900, and it's called Ralph's!) Playing tourist was our silver lining...but the virus tarnished it. Mottled, murky gray blot where my fried ravioli ought to be.

But I digress. We won't let 1,000 COVID regulations slow us down! What? Oh, we will. Indeed, we will. But that's just more energy for the next great thing to come!

We've got healthcare; we can still taste and smell. Our bond is tighter, what with absence elevating fondness. The puzzles are built, the board game rules have finally been read. And forgotten again.

So maybe none of us have a handle, have a plan, have a clue. The needs are always changing, and our people are resourceful and multi-faceted. We learn to go with the flow, surge with the tide, even when the beach is...rocks?!?!...and try not to overthink.

There's good to be found. When I've let go of my expectations, my midnight-scribbled-schedules, even the multi-page, footnoted, color-coded spreadsheet generated by Robochop—that's when it gets interesting.