

A Few Good Women: A Military Wife's Sacrifice

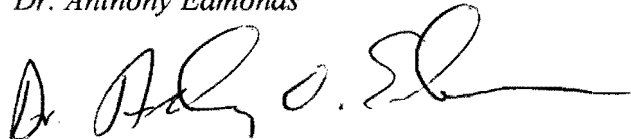
An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dr. Anthony Edmonds", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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Abstract

American culture, as a whole, has strived to honor the sacrifices made by our military personnel. The sacrifice of military spouses, however, has been largely overlooked throughout our history. I think it is important for those sacrifices to be appreciated, so I interviewed three military wives about their lives and created a presentation to inform a high-school aged audience about their sacrifices. In addition to informing my audience about sacrifices made by military wives, I also led the group in a service project in which we created thank you notes for military spouses of current military personnel. This artist's statement describes the interviews I conducted, the presentation I created and the subsequent service project I completed with my audience.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Anthony Edmonds for advising me through this project. His assistance with this project was essential to its successful completion.

I would also like to thank the women who I interviewed for this project who provided insight into their personal lives so that I could share their stories with others.

A Few Good Women: A Military Wife's Sacrifice
Artist's Statement

My thesis project consisted of a presentation and subsequent service project to benefit the spouses of American military personnel. I chose to do this project because the struggle of military spouses has become very personal to me lately since several of my friends and acquaintances have married military personnel and gone through some tough times because of the military regimen. I think it is important for people to remember the sacrifices that these women make so that their husbands can continue to keep our country safe. In this "artist's statement," I am going to describe the way I prepared for my presentation and the presentation itself.

In order to prepare for the presentation and service project, I conducted e-mail interviews with three current military wives during early December 2011 – one whose husband is in the Marines and two whose husbands are in the Air Force. I know several women who are married to members of the military and I chose these three because I thought they offered a complete picture of the military life. I wanted to get perspectives from women with varying experiences within the military, so I chose women whose husbands had been in the military different lengths of time. I chose one woman whose husband was getting ready to leave for basic training to get a perspective from the very beginning of the process. The second spouse has been through basic training and two different bases with her husband, so her perspective is from a mid-way point in her husband's enlistment. Finally, I chose a military wife whose husband is just a few months from the end of his enlistment to get a perspective from a woman who has been through almost the entire process. It was also important to me to get perspectives from different locations to make sure the information I got was not confined to one base, so I

chose three women who were located in different geographical regions around the country. The variety of experience within the military lifestyle, base location, and military branches helped me get a broad picture of the military experience as a whole from the wives' perspectives. I expected that the biggest difference in the military wives' perspectives would stem from the amount of time that their husbands had been in the military. The interviews I conducted seemed to corroborate that expectation, and so I thought that three interviewees, given that their husbands had been in the military different lengths of time, would be enough to capture a wide spectrum of military wives' varying perspectives.

The first interviewee – who will be referred to as Interviewee A – is the wife of an Airman. She is 24 years old, and she and her husband have been married for almost two years. When Interviewee A and her husband got married, they were not planning on joining the military. She knew that her husband was interested in becoming a pilot before they got married and, soon after their wedding it became obvious that they couldn't afford to send him to school to get the education necessary to become a commercial pilot; so the military was an obvious choice for them. Her husband started the Airman Officer Program just after their one-year anniversary and was sworn in in December of 2011. He left for basic training at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama in March 2012 to receive training to become an Air Force pilot (Interviewee A). This will be her first taste of military life so she provided excellent insight into the expectations of what a military lifestyle will be like from a person who is just beginning the journey.

The second interviewee – Interviewee B – is also the wife of an Airman. She is 22 years old and has been married since the fall of 2010. Interviewee B's husband has

been in the military longer than Interviewee A's, and therefore she provided a "part-way through" perspective. Because her husband entered basic training in January 2011, she experienced life without him during that period. Their first base assignment was Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi, so she put her college education on hold to move there with her husband. After his technical training was complete in December 2011, they moved to their second base, Barksdale Air Force Base in Shreveport, Louisiana, where they hope to stay for at least two years so she can complete her nursing education (Interviewee B).

Finally, Interviewee C is the wife of a Marine who had 5 months remaining in his enlistment. She is 24 years old and has been married since March of 2008. Her husband (fiancé at the time) enlisted in the Marines in January 2008. The majority of their time in the service has been spent at Air Station Miramar in San Diego, California. She has been through the basic training separation and both long- and short-term deployments during her husband's time in the military. Their first child was born while he was deployed in the Pacific and was nearly 6 months old when he finally came home. She provided insight to the life of a military wife that has been through almost an entire enlistment. Her husband is not planning to reenlist and they will be moving to Texas at the end of April 2012 to begin their civilian life together (Interviewee C).

In these interviews I asked questions about several different aspects of the women's lives. I gathered general information about each person's circumstances such as military branch, why they chose that branch, length of marriage, whether they had children and how long their husband had been in the military. It was also important to get an idea of their life in the military, so I asked questions about military support

services they use to help their families, support systems of military wives on bases, their favorite part about being a military wife, and how they think civilians perceive their role as a military spouse. I also asked about times when the military has caused them to have to be separated (basic training, deployments), the hardest parts of those separations, life events that have been missed because of separations, and if they had to give up anything to be with their husband during their military duties. From the information gathered in these interviews I created a presentation on how I believe military wives serve our country just like their husbands do (see Appendix B).

After the interviews were completed (see Appendix A for complete interviews), I reviewed the information I had received. The first several questions of my interviews were to get some basic information about the interviewee and her husband: age, length of marriage, how long her husband had been in the military, his reasons for joining the military, if they had children, what branch of the military her husband was in and why he chose that branch. The responses for these questions were understandably varied in each of the interviews since that was largely background information that helped me gain an understanding of the couples' lives and current situation.

The answers to my questions that were most pertinent to the presentation also varied. Two of the couples were married when the husband went into basic training, and the other one was engaged. Interviewee B and C had similar answers when I asked about the hardest part about being separated during basic training; both citing lack of communication as the most difficult part. Only one of the interviewees (Interviewee C) had been through a deployment, so she provided the perspective for that aspect of the military life. Two of the women I spoke with had to put their education on hold to move

with their husbands from base to base. The one question that received very similar answers from all three women was when I asked if they felt that there was a strong support system of military wives on military bases. Each one of the women I spoke with said that they did feel a sense of community with the other women on their bases and that the support system was definitely there. I coupled all of this information from the interviews with some personal research to create the presentation.

The presentation I created was for a high school-aged audience. It was presented to a group of approximately 40 8th graders through high school seniors at a youth meeting on December 17th, 2011. I was given an hour of presentation time, and the actual presentation portion lasted 25 minutes followed by about 10 minutes of questions from the students. After the presentation we spent the remaining 25 minutes creating “thank you” notes that were sent to several military wives at the Barksdale Air Force Base and the Air Station at Miramar.

Before I started the presentation, I told the students that a lot of the information that I would be presenting came from interviews I had conducted with three current military wives. I told them a little about each of the women, and I explained what kind of questions I had asked them. I explained that I asked questions about why their husbands decided to go into the military, why their husbands chose the branch they did, and questions about what kind of difficulties they go through as wives of military personnel.

I started the presentation by asking the students what kind of sacrifices they thought members of the U.S. military make during their time of duty. It was obvious that all of the students in the audience had thought about this topic before, and they named about 8 different types of sacrifices. Some were as simple as choosing where they want

to live and others were much more serious like the chance that they would lose their life in the line of duty. We also discussed other things they have to give up such as time being with their families and personal choices of what to do with their time.

Next, I asked the students what sacrifices military wives made for our country. This question produced a much different reaction than the first, and it seemed that a majority of the students had never actually thought about it before. The only answer given at first was that a military wife would become a widow if her husband died in the line of duty. To facilitate the discussion I asked some of the female members of the audience if they would want to marry someone who was in the military. Some of the girls said that they would, but several mentioned that they thought it would be difficult to be married to someone who could be called to deploy at any time. That seemed to be to open up the discussion on different sacrifices that military wives make for their countries.

First, we discussed the topic brought up by the young women in the audience: the time that military spouses have to spend apart. From the interviews I conducted, it was obvious that basic training and deployments are the major issues when it comes to time spent apart. I did some research and found that the average length of basic training (for all military branches and reserves) ranges from 6-9 weeks in which spouses are usually not allowed to live together or see each other. I also found the average deployment length broken down by military branch for 2009 and 2010. The Army has the longest deployment length with an average of 10-12 months. The Marines and the Air Force have relatively varied lengths of deployment with the average ranging from 6 to 12 months. Finally, members of the Navy and the Coast Guard deploy for an average of 8-10 months at a time (Chandra, Burns, Tanielian, Jaycox, and Scott, p.10). During this

period (2009-2010), it was not uncommon that a soldier would experience more than one deployment or that the deployments of military personnel would be extended under the Stop Loss Policy in which the military can extend military deployments (or enlistments) past their agreed upon limits up to 6 months after the end of a war (Powers, "Military STOP LOSS"). That kind of uncertainty makes it even more difficult for military families to plan their lives. I asked the students what types of things could happen in those time periods that might be difficult to go through alone and someone mentioned having a baby, which led nicely into our next topic.

One of the questions I asked during my interviews with the military spouses was if their husbands had missed any life events because of his military service. One of the women stated that they had their first child when her husband was on a lengthy deployment, and their daughter was 6 months old when he returned home (Interviewee C). So we discussed life events that military spouses sometime have to go through alone because their husband is away on duty. The five big issues that I wanted to discuss were the birth of children, moves, holidays, birthdays and anniversaries, but a few of the students had some other examples. One student knew someone who lost both of her parents while her husband was deployed, which was very difficult for her to go through alone. Another mentioned that some women may have to cope with problems with their children such as diagnosis of a serious medical condition while their husband is away. Some situations can arise in which a soldier can request to go home for an emergency; this is referred to as compassionate leave. Compassionate leave is available to military personnel when a relative is seriously ill or passes away so that the soldier can return home to be there for the end of the relative's life or the funeral. Unfortunately for the

woman mentioned by the first student, parents-in-law are often not considered close enough relatives to qualify for this type of leave. Compassionate leave is given to a member of the military only when the relative with the emergency is a parent, spouse, child or sibling (Powers, “Compassionate Assignments”). A child’s diagnosis with a serious illness also might not qualify unless the diagnosis is life threatening in the short-term. These are just more examples of how difficult it can be for soldiers to be allowed to come home to be with their spouse during difficult times. I think each of these are valid points, though, and it was encouraging that the students were thinking of things on their own and participating in the discussion.

Next, we talked about personal goals that military spouses may have to give up or put on hold in order to be with their husbands during his military service. I told the students that in my interviews I had found that it is common for women put their education on hold when they have to move to be with their spouse. One of the women I interviewed completely gave up her education to be a housewife, and another was hoping to finish nursing school if the military allowed them to stay in one place for long enough (Interviewee B and Interviewee C). I asked the students what goals they have that might be difficult to accomplish if their lives could be uprooted and moved at any time and the most common answer I got was the job or career that they wanted to have. Many of the students thought that it would be difficult to hold down a job if they had to move from base to base every year.

Being near to family was one sacrifice that came up a few times during my interviews since the base a military couple is assigned to is often a good distance from the couple’s hometown and families. To illustrate this point, I researched how far the two

women I interviewed who were already living on military bases were from where their parents lived. Interviewee B is stationed at Barksdale Air Force Base in Shreveport, Louisiana, which is 681 miles and 11 ½ hours of driving time from her parents' house. Interviewee C is stationed at the Air Station at Miramar in San Diego, California, which is 2,071 miles and 1 day and 9 hours of driving time from where her parents live (“United States of America”). The distance between a military family and their extended family did not seem to come as a shock to the students, and some of them, being teenagers, thought the distance from their parents might be nice. But the older students in the group saw how this might be difficult for military spouses, especially when their husband is deployed.

Finally, we discussed the “ultimate sacrifice” that military spouses may be forced to make in the line of duty. I did not ask the women I interviewed about their feelings about the idea of their husbands dying in their military duty, but I think it is pretty obvious that it would be an issue that would weigh heavily on them, especially when their husband is deployed. In order to get an idea of how many military personnel lose their lives in the line of duty, I did some research on average military deaths per year. In the last 15 years of data (1995-2009) an average of 1,286 members of the military died each year (Leland and Oboroceanu). Continuing life without their spouse would be the biggest sacrifice that a military spouse would ever have to make.

The last topic I discussed during my presentation was suggested ways to provide support to military spouses while they're providing support to members of our military. I found several suggestions online such as: sending reverse care packages, hosting a military family night out, organizing a returning veterans gathering, helping her around

the house, delivering a meal to her house, and keeping in touch with them for moral support (Green). I also found a unique way that one woman is providing support to military wives across the country. Mollie Gross is a military wife herself who travels to military bases across the country and performs “military wife comedy.” Most of her act is about normal situations that military wives go through, and her comedy provides a way for women to laugh at their problems, if only for one night (“About Mollie”). She often makes light of serious situations to make the other military spouses feel at ease. In one of her jokes, she explains that military wives should educate themselves on post-traumatic stress disorder so they don’t believe it when their husbands say that they’ll get war flashbacks from taking out the trash (Gross). We watched a video of her talking about her mission and how it affects those she performs for called “A Band of Brides.” Her mission, as she explains in the video, is to make jokes about normal situations for military spouses to try to lessen their stress levels. It was good to see how others are supporting military spouses so we could discuss ways that we could help even though we don’t live near a military base. There were several good ideas batted around such as care packages and gathering donations that military families might need. I described the project that we were going to complete that day: create thank you cards for military spouses to let them know that there are people that appreciate the sacrifices that they make for our country.

Before we started on our project I wanted to make sure the students understood the source of my information and that military spouses are not people who should be pitied. I explained the interviews I had conducted and told them that the women were not completely negative about their experiences as military wives. I told them that the

women who were already living on bases used several military services to help support their families such as a commissary, “free stores,” and base medical centers, which they are very appreciative of. I also asked about the support systems they find when living near other military wives, and they were adamant about loving the “sisterhood” they find with other women who are in their same situations. They all said that this was their favorite part of military life. Finally, I asked the women if they would want their husbands to make the military his career. The woman whose husband is very near to completing his military duty said that she would not, but the two other two women said that they would evaluate the military just as they would any other job and decide when their husband’s enlistment ends. My objective in presenting this additional information was to demonstrate to the students that military wives are not living a terrible life (as may have been suggested with the other information), but that there are also positive sides to their lives as military wives.

Finally, I wanted to see if the students had any questions on anything we had discussed. I told them that I would be splitting the notes into two packages and that they would be sent to the military wives I interviewed at Barksdale Air Force Base and the Air Station at Miramar. Both of the women I spoke to indicated that they would be able to distribute the notes to women around the base by either handing them out personally or by giving them to the staff at the base commissary, who would hand them out to military wives as they came in to shop.

The next question that was asked was whether or not the women I interviewed knew that their husbands were going to go into the military before they got married. I explained that, of the three women I interviewed, only one of them knew her husband

was entering the military when they got married (Interviewee C). The other two married their husbands before the prospect of joining the military arose (Interviewee A and B). That means that (at least) two out of the three women I interviewed were actively involved in the decision for their husband to join the military. I thought this was an interesting point because the military does put a lot of stress on a relationship, and these women chose that along with their husbands.

The final question that I received was actually from an adult in the audience (there were a few adults there to supervise the event). She asked if in my research I had found any information about how the divorce rate for military couples compares to the divorce rate for civilian couples. I told her that I had not done any in-depth research into the topic but that I did vaguely remember seeing an article stating that military divorce rates had been increasing during the past 5 years or so while the U.S. was deporting so many military personnel to the Middle East (Washington Times). Since I did not have a definite answer for her, I did some more research after we completed our “thank you” notes and got back to her about 30 minutes later. I found that the divorce rate for military couples has been steadily increasing since 2000 for every military branch except the Air Force. The largest change has been in the Army, where the rate of divorce rose from 2% in 2000 to 3.1% in 2008. The Navy and the Marines experienced a 1% and 0.4% increase, respectively. The Air Force, the only branch to experience a decrease, went from 2.45% in 2000 to 2.4% in 2008 (“Demographics 2008: Profile of the Military Community” 40). I also discovered a study that determined that military personnel are more likely to be married and less likely to get divorced than their civilian peers (Karney, and Crown). She and I both found this to be interesting since military couples often have

a lot of excess stress placed on their relationship by deployments, which civilian couples do not have to deal with.

When it became obvious that the students did not have any further questions, we moved on to making the “thank you” notes to be sent to some of the military wives we had talked about. I provided the students with cards to write on and markers, stickers, and pens to create and decorate their notes the way they wanted. We ended up creating 36 “thank you” notes, which meant that I could send 18 to each of the women who volunteered to hand them out for us.

I think the project, as a whole, went very well. The students seemed to be interested in the topic and actively participated in the discussion. It was obvious that this was a topic that they had not thought much about before this presentation. I am very glad that I was able to provide them with new information and an aspect of military life to think about in the future. The students were also very excited to be able to support the women they had just learned about by making “thank you” notes that would encourage them. I think the women who receive the notes will appreciate them, and I hope, will feel a little less lonely while their husbands are away.

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Appendix A

Completed Interview Questionnaires

Interview Questions
Interviewee A – December 10, 2011

1. Name and age:

Interviewee A – 24 years old

2. How long have you been married?

We've been married for about a year and a half.

3. How long has your husband been in the military?

He was accepted as an officer this past October but we have not been assigned to a base yet.

4. What were your husband's reasons for joining the military?

He has always wanted to become a pilot and he decided that a military pilot is the way he wanted to go!

5. Do you have any children? If so, how many and what are their ages?

No.

6. What branch of the military is your husband in? What is his job?

Air Force. He is going to be a Lieutenant Pilot.

7. Why did he choose this branch of the military?

He wanted to be a pilot so the Air Force was the obvious choice.

8. Were you married when your husband went through basic training?

He hasn't gone yet but we will be.

9. What was the hardest part about being apart during his basic training?

N/A

10. Have you and your husband ever been through a deployment?

Not yet.

11. If so, how long was he gone and did he miss any important life events (graduation, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.)?

N/A

12. What was the hardest part about being apart during his deployment?

N/A

13. Is there anything you have had to give up/put on hold due to the military lifestyle (getting your degree, moving away from family, etc.)?

Not yet. I finished college before we got married and I've started working as an independent wedding planner. I know we will probably have to move away from our families when we get assigned so I think that will be difficult.

14. What kind of military services do you use to help support your family (commissary, etc.)?

N/A

15. Do you find that there is a strong informal support system of military wives on military bases?

I don't actually know yet but during our research into the military and my interactions with wives in the military already I feel supported already! It's amazing how included I feel already.

16. Do you have any opinions on how those outside the military lifestyle perceive your position as a military wife?

So far I've gotten nothing but support from people and I have really appreciated that thus far.

17. What is your favorite part of being a military wife/in the military lifestyle?

I think my favorite part will be supporting my husband in his lifelong goal and I'm excited to bond with the others on the bases and become involved in the lifestyle.

18. Would you want your husband to make the military his career? Why or why not?

We don't know yet. My husband would enjoy being a pilot for the rest of his life but we will decide if the military is the way to go farther into our enlistment. It's difficult to decide this now but since he is going in as an officer, I think we will enjoy it.

Interview Questions
Interviewee B – December 12, 2011

1. Your name and age:

Interviewee B – 22 years old

2. How long have you been married?

We've been married for a year and 2 months.

3. How long has your husband been in the military?

For almost a year now. (Since January 25, 2011)

4. What were your husband's reasons for joining the military?

He felt called to join the military and also felt it would set us up for a better life in the long run.

5. Do you have any children? If so, how many and what are their ages?

No.

6. What branch of the military is your husband in? What is his job?

U.S. Air Force. His job is in Cyber Transport Systems.

7. Why did he choose this branch of the military?

Out of all the research, we had heard this was the most "family friendly" branch. Also, his dad, grandpa, aunt, and uncle were all in the Air Force.

8. Were you married when your husband went through basic training?

Yes.

9. What was the hardest part about being apart during his basic training?

It was partly the shock of being completely separated, but also not knowing what he was doing or when I would get to talk to him again. I didn't hear anything for the first 3 weeks of basic. I received 3-4 letters towards the end of basic and only got to talk to him over the phone 4-5 times for about 15 minutes each time. It's so hard to know what to talk about when you only have 15 minutes.

10. Have you and your husband ever been through a deployment?

No, not yet.

11. If so, how long was he gone and did he miss any important life events (graduation, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.)?

N/A

12. What was the hardest part about being apart during his deployment?

N/A

13. Is there anything you have had to give up/put on hold due to the military lifestyle (getting your degree, moving away from family, etc.)?

Yes, I had to put my nursing school on hold after I was already accepted to a nursing program. I am still waiting to start again and it's been about a year. I also had to move the farthest away from my family than I ever had been before. I started off 12 hours away for 6 months, and now 7.5 hours away for the next couple years at least.

14. What kind of military services do you use to help support your family (commissary, etc.)?

We use the Bx, the commissary, Airman's Attic, thrift store on base, and Airman and Family Readiness Center.

15. Do you find that there is a strong informal support system of military wives on military bases?

Yes, I think so, at least at the first base I was at. I was able to connect with other spouses on Facebook pages where we were able to coordinate different coffee groups, scentsy, and jewelry parties. For the most part, many people are very kind and giving, but there are always some that cause the drama. I haven't been at my new base long enough to know much about the support system yet!

16. Do you have any opinions on how those outside the military lifestyle perceive your position as a military wife?

I feel like there may be two drastic opinions. On one hand, some people may think that being a military spouse is a big deal. That it's just as hard as being in the military because we do have to make so many sacrifices of our own. On the other hand, I believe some may look down on us and think that we have it "easy" or that we may be "lazy" as some of us do not have jobs, which is not always by choice. I have been unemployed for a year now because I've moved 3 times and no one would hire me. I also think that some people have the misconception that when you're in the military you get everything for free, which is not the case.

17. What is your favorite part of being a military wife/in the military lifestyle?

So far, my favorite part would just be that I am able to meet new people who are more or less in the same position as I am. It's easier to connect when you have one major common factor.

18. Would you want your husband to make the military his career? Why or why not?

I haven't completely decided on this. We plan on taking it one enlistment at a time. We will weigh our options at the end of each one to see if we get the same or similar benefits in the civilian world as we would have through the military.

Interview Questions
Interviewee C – December 11, 2011

1. Name and age:

Interviewee C – 24 years old

2. How long have you been married?

Almost four years (since March 22, 2008)

3. How long has your husband been in the military?

Also almost four years (since March 2008)

4. What were your husband's reasons for joining the military?

He thought that his dad benefited from the experience when he was younger and knew the military could help him grow as a person.

5. Do you have any children? If so, how many and what are their ages?

Yes. We have one child and she is 10 months old.

6. What branch of the military is your husband in? What is his job?

Marines. He works in aircraft maintenance and repair.

7. Why did he choose this branch of the military?

His dad was in the Marines when he was younger and he thought that he benefited from the experience.

8. Were you married when your husband went through basic training?

No. We were engaged at the time.

9. What was the hardest part about being apart during his basic training?

The hardest part for me was planning our wedding without him. It was very difficult to plan such an important event alone. It was also difficult not being able to talk to him as much as I was used to before he left.

10. Have you and your husband ever been through a deployment?

Yes. Three.

11. If so, how long was he gone and did he miss any important life events (graduation, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.)?

He has been on three separate deployments. The first two were one-month deployments and I thought they were very difficult at the time. However, the last deployment was 7 and half months long and it was the hardest time of my life. He missed our third anniversary, my birthday and the birth of our daughter.

12. What was the hardest part about being apart during his deployment?

He was gone for the first 6 months of our daughter's life and it was very difficult to have her birth and so many firsts (smile, laugh, etc.) without him. When he came home it was so difficult to get our daughter to bond with him after such a long time but we've worked through it!

13. Is there anything you have had to give up/put on hold due to the military lifestyle (getting your degree, moving away from family, etc.)?

Our families live in southern Indiana and we are stationed in San Diego so we are quite a ways away from them and that is difficult since we have a new daughter. I have also put my education on hold and I'm not sure I will finish it. I was going to the University of Southern Indiana for Early Childhood Education but when we got married and moved away I discontinued my education and now that we have a child (and are planning to have more), I'm not sure I will go back.

14. What kind of military services do you use to help support your family (commissary, etc.)?

We use base thrift stores and "free stores." We also use base medical centers for basic medical needs (check ups on my husband and I).

15. Do you find that there is a strong informal support system of military wives on military bases?

I think there definitely is. I've developed some very strong relationships with other women on the base here in San Diego. We relate to each other so well since we are going through similar experiences and it makes it easy to develop relationships here.

16. Do you have any opinions on how those outside the military lifestyle perceive your position as a military wife?

I have gotten a lot of comments from civilians about how they "feel sorry" for me. At first I thought it was kind of a nice way of saying that they understood the difficulties of being in the military lifestyle but I have come to realize that they actually have no idea what I'm going through most of the time. Their comments make me think that they think I'm incapable of surviving on my own while my husband is gone. Yes, it is hard, but I am happy to say that I can survive on my own when needed!

17. What is your favorite part of being a military wife/in the military lifestyle?

My favorite part of the lifestyle is the support we get from others within the lifestyle! I love the way we support each other and I'm glad I have found some new life-long friends.

18. Would you want your husband to make the military his career? Why or why not?

No. My husband's enlistment is up at the beginning of April of 2012 and we are not signing up for another enlistment. We are going to be moving closer to family and he will be getting some additional training for a civilian job. We decided that the demands of a military lifestyle is not how we want to raise our children so we are going to be starting a new life soon!