Q. If you could offer one piece of advice to someone just joining the service, what would it be?
A. Come in with an open mind. I’m living proof that the navy offers unbelievable opportunities. If you have an open mind and a willing heart, anything is possible.

Q. What do you attribute your success to?
A. We all have a finite time in which we serve, and mine is going to be the 29 or 30 years that I happen to be in uniform. I believe that my success is due in no small part to the people who mentored me throughout my career. I attribute my success to leadership and mentorship.

Q. What in your career are you most proud of?
A. I’ve thought long and hard about that and I believe it was making third class petty officer and a close second is becoming a chief petty officer. Those are the two promotions that I am most proud of. Making third class petty officer allowed me my first position of leadership. Furthermore, after becoming a chief petty officer I got the realization that I was part of the senior enlisted community; tasked with leadership and mentoring the Sailors coming behind you.

Q. What has been your biggest challenge throughout your career and how were you able to overcome it?
A. Achieving a work life balance. The lion’s share of my career has been spent deployed. I’ve missed birthdays, Christmases, and such; Sailors should ensure that they give an equal amount of time to their family as they do the Navy.

Q. What do you wish you had known at the start of your Navy career?
A. I look back on all the successes and all the challenges. I can’t think of anything I probably would have done differently because if I had done something different, the final result might not have been the same!

Q. Did you have a “turning point moment” in your career, and if so, what was it?
A. It was my 10 year anniversary; I made my commitment to the Navy in spurts. I joined the Navy after high school and a couple years of college, I intended to do four years. At the end of my first enlistment I choose to stay in for the shore duty. While serving shore duty, I made first class petty officer and kept thinking “You know what? It’s not that bad. Let me try one more enlistment,” and at my 10 year mark I decided that there’s no job as good as this one. I’m going to do this as long as I can.
Fleet Master Chief JoAnn M. Ortloff  
Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa  
U.S. Sixth Fleet

Q. If you could offer one piece of advice for someone just joining the service, what would it be?
A. Don’t wait for things to happen to you, make them happen for you. You own this. You own your future. You must be inquisitive. You have to innovate and ask questions and remember that the United States Navy is a military service. It’s not college. It’s not a big corporation. It’s not a small business that’s around the block that sells pens and paper. It’s a military service and we go to war and we prepare for war. So don’t wait for someone to tell you what’s going on, make it happen for you. You own this. You must own your career.

Q. What in your career are you most proud of?
A. The opportunities that have led me to this pinnacle of opportunity that I stand at now as a fleet master chief. What I’m most proud of is an opportunity to be the voice of Sailors; to be the influential voice when we’re making Navy policies and command policies. To have that trust of the admiral, to have that trust of the [Sailors] and to connect it all and to have that positional privilege to speak about where the Navy’s going and where it’s been and be recognized for that experience. What I’m most proud of is taking all those things that the senior leadership gave to me as I was growing up in the Navy and paying it forward and doing the due diligence as a fleet master chief today.

Q. What has been your biggest challenge throughout your career, and how were you able to overcome it?
A. My biggest challenge has been change. In the last 31 years whether it was in air traffic control or command leadership, change has always been the biggest challenge. It’s constant. In my early career I didn’t manage change well. We all get used to being comfortable with a regulation, a policy, a procedure, a routine. When change comes it’s disruptive. It puts you on the defensive, and as a young Sailor I didn’t know how to manage that. Having great leadership helped me to get past that. I had a wonderful senior chief who forced us as young LPOs to go to leadership training. Any time there was a two-day class or a three-day class, she made us go. For instance, anger management at fleet support center- You don’t have to be angry to go to anger management, if you go with a leadership perspective, you’re learning how to diffuse anger and you come out a much better leader.
Change was very hard to understand, manage, accept and incorporate it’s always been the biggest challenge. Learning to overcome it by facing it as change is good for the sake of improvement, as long as change is not made just for the sake of change.

Q. What do you wish you had known at the start of your Navy career?
A. I wish I knew everything the Navy had to offer early in my career. I had no idea until I was a senior second class that the Navy offered scholarship programs; furthermore, that you could go to a class to learn about something outside your rate in order to make you a better eclectic Sailor. I wish I had known those things early on. With the advent of internet, the training and development, official websites and Facebook that we have, every Sailor has this at their fingertips. Unfortunately, we still underutilize it. I’m still tackling that problem of how to get Sailors to reach out; don’t wait for things to happen to you, make them happen for you. I wish I had known how to do that in the beginning of my career.
Fleet Master Chief JoAnn M. Ortloff
Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa
U.S. Sixth Fleet

Q. Did you have a “turning point moment” in your career, and if so, what was it?
A. I would say there are two major turning points in my career. One was making chief petty officer, what a huge turning point! We heard about making chief. We kind of knew there was a mystery about making chief. But when you put on chief and walk down the street with those anchors on, you suddenly become somebody that has the confidence of the world, and the confidence of the Navy. You are ready for Sailors to ask you questions. You’ve got to have that answer, so no matter what you were asked, you had to know or had to know how to find out an answer. You could no longer say I don’t know; let’s go ask the chief, because you are the chief.

The second really big compelling turning point for me was my first deployment. Every Sailor joins the Navy to go to sea, see the world and get salty. I remember, in the early 80s, I would see these photographs of Sailor at parade rest in his dress blues in the hanger bay of the carrier looking at the horizon; that was amazing to me. Yet until 1994, we as females didn’t have the opportunity to experience that on the combatant ships, and my rate required Sailors being assigned to a combatant ship in order to go to sea. When that career opportunity, that life opportunity – that Sailor opportunity – came to me and I was able to go to USS John C. Stennis, and it was a huge turning point in my career! I got to take everything I learned as an air traffic controller and as a Sailor, go to sea, and put it to work in that environment that I trained for. It made me want to stay in longer, it made me want to do another deployment, it made me understand and connect all the things in the Navy. What forward deployed meant. What peacekeeping meant. What power of presence meant.

Admiral Michelle Howard
Vice Chief of Naval Operations

Q. If you could offer one piece of advice for someone just joining the service, what would it be?
A. The service has a range of opportunities for Sailors; they should try to find the job that feeds their passion. In being a patriot, there’s so many ways you can support the mission but it’s important for you to find something that fuels you; once you do, the days will go by quickly and you will have incredible satisfaction with what you’ve accomplished.

Q. What do you attribute your success to?
A. I got to serve with the best Sailors and Marines in the world.

Q. What has been your biggest challenge throughout your career, and how were you able to overcome it?
A. In the early years when I first served onboard ships, it was very challenging to integrate into ships as women had not been serving on ships prior. A lot of it is just a positive attitude and maintaining a sense of humor.
Q. If you could offer one piece of advice for someone just joining the service, what would it be?
A. In boot camp, I would ask Sailors to always remember why they joined the Navy. What was their motivation for joining the Navy? I would ask them to remember that as they continue on this journey, however long it might be, to remember the motivation that first got them into the recruiting office. If they can see that shining light there, and they think they might be having a bad day or they think they might not feel as if they made the right choice, they will remember that motivation and that will continue to get them through whatever’s going on.

Q. What in your career are you most proud of?
A. When I was selected for chief petty officer. I was onboard USS Abraham Lincoln, it was back in 1995 and I had been in the Navy about 11 years. I never thought that I would experience anything like that. My skipper called me down to the ready room about midnight to tell me that I was selected to be a chief petty officer. At that point I thought wow! Who would have thought? I just felt proud and privileged.

Q. What has been your biggest challenge throughout your career, and how were you able to overcome it?
A. The biggest challenge I’ve faced in my career, especially as I got more senior, is that there’s always someone more senior than you. Second is that I will never have control over everything. There are some things I can control, and there are things I can’t. To keep an open mind and to know that for those things I cannot control, leave those in the hands of the leaders that do control it. For the stuff that I control, make sure that I’m focusing on that and putting all my energy into that because we burn ourselves out getting all excited over the things we can’t control.

Q. What do you wish you had known at the start of your Navy career?
A. That it’s okay not to know everything and it’s okay to ask questions. I believe maybe if I’d known that at the beginning of my career and had not thought that I had to know everything and that I had to know the answer to everything, I would not have got so caught up in looking for the answers myself rather I could have just went to a shipmate or a leading petty officer or a chief and asked that question; I would have gained so much more knowledge quicker. I ask questions all the time, and it’s not always from senior people. Sometimes I have to ask the YN3, okay, how do we do this? That’s okay!

Q. Did you have a “turning point moment” in your career, and if so, what was it?
A. My turning point in my career was being stationed as a recruit division commander at RTC Great Lakes and my eyes being opened to a whole other world in the Navy. I did not realize there were other Sailors out there doing great things and I had really become stagnant in my knowledge on what was going on because all I thought about was flying jets and taking care of the pilots that flew those jets. Going to RTC and being exposed to the rest of the Navy and of course having the opportunity to train the future of our Navy. There’s nothing better than duty at Recruit Training Command.
MCPON (AW/NAC) Mike D. Stevens

Q. What do you attribute your success to?
A. I owe my success to the people that I’ve served with, my peers, my subordinates, and my seniors. Any success that I’ve been able to enjoy throughout my time in the Navy is directly attributed to the people that I’ve served with. Very little of that success is attributed directly to me.

Q. What in your career are you most proud of?
A. I’m most proud of having had the opportunity to influence other Sailors to have good and successful careers. When I look across my entire 30 plus years of naval service, it’s really the culmination of things that I’ve been a part of that make me feel good about my service.

Q. If you could offer one piece of advice to someone just joining the service, what would it be?
A. There are three things. I call these the foundations to success. 1. Every single day, no matter what the job is, no matter what you’ve been asked to do, make sure you work hard at it every single day. Do your very best at every job that you have been assigned. 2. Stay out of trouble. You can spend an entire career working hard; building your career and you could do one thing and lose it all. 3. Be a good and decent person to yourself, to your friends, to your family, and to your shipmates. Treat one another with dignity and respect. I think if we can do that, then a lot of what ails us simply goes away.

Q. What has been your biggest challenge throughout your career, and how were you able to overcome it?
A. The biggest challenge in my career has been the challenge that I’ve endured in leading myself. Sometimes it seems very easy to lead others. The difficult part is finding what it takes to lead yourself every single day; you need to get up and focus on what it is that you need to do in order to be successful.

Q. Did you have a “turning point moment” in your career, and if so, what was it?
A. There’s really been no one single turning point in my career. Like most of our Sailors, I’ve had my ups, my downs and my challenges. It’s the ability to recognize that and the ability to recover from that. It’s about staying teachable and constantly learning and evolving. It really helps you overcome your shortcomings or the challenges you face. However, when you stop being teachable, you stop learning, when you stop learning, that’s when you’re going to run into problems.

Fleet Master Chief Marco Ramirez

Q. If you could offer one piece of advice for someone just joining the service, what would it be?
A. We’re all from different back yards and we’re all one color and that’s Navy blue. The people that are coming in the Navy today, they should embrace the Navy culture with our Navy core values and our ethos. Sailors that accept the culture and live by it, they’re going to be successful in the Navy because the sky’s the limit.

Q. What do you attribute your success to?
A. Sailors that I’ve worked with, helped develop and seen develop because they’re thriving, they’re smart and they’re ready. They are overcoming their fears, getting qualified in warfare platforms and leading other Sailors!

Q. What has been your biggest challenge throughout your career, and how were you able to overcome it?
A. I’m an enlisted guy, I came in the Navy and now I’m the fleet master chief of the pacific fleet. I sit at a lot of tables amongst other people who don’t believe that I belong there, that’s a challenge for me. The secret is not to get emotional, but to overcome it. It’s really all about communication; if you can communicate you’re going to win. The time we stop communicating, we both lose. I’ve been fortunate to ask those leaders and those peer groups what I am doing that you don’t like, so I can change it. But I have to ask that question because nine times out of 10 they’re not just going to tell me. By that same token, I also ask, what do you like, so I can keep doing it. Communication is the key.