

## Your Family is More Than a Set of “Hood Ornaments”

### Description

Doing a little exercise, but it's a story that has merit, lessons learned, and about listening:

I loved my work in the Navy. Actually I just love working on engaging projects. From the time I entered the service on active duty, I dove into my jobs. Not only did I strive for excellence, I seemed to have the bad habit of always creating a side project because, you know, the Navy needed help.

So there I was, married to a beautiful woman, with a daughter and a son, a home owner, despite the moves for the service needs, and certainly great fitness reports. The other part was bringing work home, and if a vacation was taken outside of home, I usually took work, even, IIRC, hauling my trusty Apple ][+ and monitor on one.

Having exceeded 12 some years time in service, the strain on my wife was far more than I'd paid attention to. Before we had kids, she worked and went to school, and we decided together that she would stay home until later. She did, and I went about being a workaholic.

One of the most profound things she said to me, one night when the words weren't exactly kind, was “You realize you're doing all this extra work and you're being promoted right along with your peers!” I, of course, wasn't in the listening mode, at least not to absorb it and pay attention. It has stuck, so the fact is I did hear it. At the time it had no impact. I believed I was correct, and my extra projects, that stole my connection with my family (my choice), I figured were still more important.

If that was the moment, or not, it was a defining moment. We grew further apart, going through the motions for about 5 more years, when I was just told “I'm tired of this” and the separation, without my argument (knowing I was still right), lead to the divorce. It's not like it's a unique story, but the reality was she was absolutely correct. As the Navy was in the thoughts of downsizing in the mid-90s, when the Selective Early Retirement Board for FY96 reported out, my name was on the list, and one of my peers, in particular, who had actually professionally

### Category

1. Military

### Date Created

June 27, 2014

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