

# Surgeon Follows Heart to Mohave Dessert

## Local man combines Navy career with medicine

BY CARI HACHMANN  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Steve Noble, a Portland local and general surgeon specializing in thoracic surgery, will journey to the middle of the Mohave desert in California, leaving behind his family, wife and four kids, to mend hearts in Twenty-nine Palms, the largest Marine base in the world.

As a six year old, Noble became fascinated by the human organ systems flipping through encyclopedias kept in his grandparents' Parkrose home and since then, his interest in medicine has never waned.

"Stephen was very much that typical first born child, wanting to be good at whatever he set out to do," said his mother, Anita Noble.

Combining the Navy and medicine, Noble's career path winds near to his family's tree as both of his grandfathers were merchant seamen while his grandmothers worked at the Multnomah County Hospital,

before it became OHSU, where Noble completed his residency.

Noble decided to become a general surgeon during his 3rd year at the graduate School of Medicine at Indiana University, where he had joined the Navy one year prior as a first level naval officer.

Three hospitals removed from the war's front line in Iraq and Afghanistan at the National Naval Center in Washington D.C., and upon completing one of three naval residencies, Noble encountered his first opportunity to treat Marines.

Just 12 to 24 hours after injury, war victims are treated on the scene by local medics, flown to a military hospital in Iraq or Afghanistan, then to Germany where they are stabilized and finally they land on an operating table in front doctors such as Noble, other surgeons, and medical staff.

One war victim's story awakened Noble to the level of sacrifice U.S.



Dr. Steve Noble is an officer in the U.S. Navy.

soldiers are willing to commit to at such a young age. The individual being treated told the practicing surgeon that he the true hero was his fellow soldier, who took a bullet in the back as he lifted the injured

Not long after, Noble was scrubbing hands with a transplant fellow prior to an open heart procedure when the student surgeon questioned a then dread-locked Noble about his future in medicine.

*Once an Alberta street youngster and now a general surgeon, Steve Noble will follow his dream of becoming master repairman of the human heart, chest, and lungs. From the trauma centers of local hospitals, Noble leaves his familiar home in Portland to perform "bread and butter surgeries" on operating tables in the Mohave desert.*

young man into safety.

"It was a humbling experience," said Noble. "I was impressed by the Navy's men and women who at such a young age dedicated themselves to give service to their country."

When Noble said he was leaning toward general surgery, the student retorted that people either knew or did not know if they were going to be a surgeon.

Memories flashed back to high school counselors that advised him away from a career in medicine and other doubters and cynics that seemed to sway him from his dreams. One college professor had even sent a letter home to his parent declaring he had a zero chance of getting into medical school.

Having already proved them wrong, the young student had twice the motivation to advance his career in medicine, and told the transplant fellow, without a doubt that he would become a general surgeon.

Originally born in California, Noble spent his childhood years in northeast Portland off Alberta Street where he attended the Baptist Church and Trinity Lutheran Elementary. Noble attended high school in Toldeo, Ohio and studied biology/pre-med at Xavier University in New Orleans, a historically black and Catholic university.

After graduate school, Noble arrived in Portland to complete a one month study program, but found a permanent residence after accepting a full, 4-year contract to practice general surgery at OHSU.

"It has been a dream come true to come back home and practice surgery in Portland," Noble said.

Living in town with his wife and four children and, Noble became involved with the Portland gang task force when he treated a young trauma victim at Emanuel Hospital who had been shot at a funeral. With sons in the age of influence of gangs, Noble decided to get more involved.

"Homicide is the number one killer of black males aged 16-34," said Noble, interested to understand how he and the community can help young black males and inner city

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