



SUCCESS STORY

Belinda Gerber

Sometimes, things seem like fate.

For Chief Steward Belinda Gerber, a chance social gathering on the small Pacific island of Guam led her to Military Sealift Command. Six and a half years later, she couldn't be happier.

Born in the Philippines, Gerber moved to Guam from Washington state after her divorce. Although she had worked as a Nurse's Assistant on the mainland, she was unable to find similar work in Guam. So she took a job in the housekeeping department of a hotel, and almost immediately looked for a way out.

At a party for Guam's active and growing Filipino community, Gerber noticed two unfamiliar faces, and struck up a conversation. The two "new guys" worked for MSC, and their descriptions of their jobs and their lives fascinated her.

"I started asking lots of questions, what to do, where to start to get the job," Gerber said. "The next day, they were nice enough to pick up the application form and hand it to me personally."

Gerber started out with little knowledge of the shipping industry, or life at sea in general. "But after hearing from those MSC guys about all the benefits MSC has to offer, I decided to apply so I could earn those same benefits," she said.

After obtaining her MMD, Gerber applied for – and landed – a job as a Supply Utilityman on board the USNS Mount Baker.

At first, Gerber was attracted to MSC for the benefit of having a permanent and secure job. "As time and experience kick in," she said, "I now appreciate the opportunities for promotion, and my ability to earn an income comparable to or greater than if I had a college degree."

She also appreciates how hard it is to find good work today – and is thankful

for having found it with MSC. "The best part of my experience is having my house completely built and furnished because of the salary I'm earning, money I know first-hand can be hard to come by holding just a regular (shore-side) job," she said.

Her willingness to work hard, learn and try something new has paid off. After four tours, she has moved up through the ranks of the supply department, to 3rd Cook and now to Chief Steward.

In her current assignment on board the USNS Rappahannock, Gerber oversees the preparation of breakfast, lunch and dinner. She keeps track of all the supply spaces and, of course, does her share of paper work.

Gerber said the chance to travel, and to work with a diverse range of crew members, has been one of the most rewarding parts of the MSC experience. "My career with MSC has helped me develop into a better person, in understanding and communicating with the crew. From different personalities and ethnicities, it has helped me learn to deal effectively with my peers, superiors and subordinates."

"I love traveling and seeing all the different countries and places, and learning about their culture," Gerber said.

Her favorites? "Singapore is nice, it's very clean," she said. "Plus it's close to the Philippines, so I can take time to see my son. Dubai is interesting because of the wealth there, and I love Australia for



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the wildlife."

Gerber has thoroughly enjoyed her time at sea. She's made her ships her home and her workplace. And, especially as gas prices rise – she sees this as a huge advantage. "I don't have to drive to and from work. That saves time and money," she said.

In her spare time, Gerber said she enjoys talking and joking with her fellow crewmembers, watching movies and simply relaxing. "I am still surprised how comfortable life at sea can be," Gerber said. "It really feels like home. I've got my own room – all of the officers do on MSC ships."

In closing, Gerber said there are two key factors that have propelled her career, and which would serve any prospective mariner very well: motivation and hard work. That, and a little nudge from fate doesn't hurt, either.

