

# Q & A for NHC



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### **You're one of those rare NHC people from the West Coast.**

I grew up in southern California, and we moved to Oregon when I was about 11 years old. I think (NHC Deputy Director) Ed Rappaport is the only other person.

### **Was there an early interest in weather for you?**

When I was 10 to 12 years old, I liked predicting things and seeing whether my prediction was correct or not. At the start of the baseball season, I would predict how the teams would finish in the standings. What I liked about weather was predicting the temperature and if it was going to rain, then getting immediate gratification the next day of how good I was with that forecast.

### **Did you think you could make a career out of it?**

A part of my life wanted to do that. But I am pretty religious, so another part of my life wanted to go to Brigham Young University. That took priority for me and I got a U.S. Air Force ROTC scholarship to it. BYU did not have a meteorology program, but I could get

a Bachelor degree in math and science. Then, the USAF would send me somewhere to get the meteorology courses I would need to be a weather officer. And that's what I did. After I graduated BYU, I went up the road to the University of Utah, taking the basic meteorology courses in dynamical, physical and synoptic meteorology along with climatology. I ended up with a Bachelor degree in meteorology in addition to the math and science degree I got the year before.

### **What did the USAF do with you?**

They sent me to Robins Air Force Base in Georgia as a weather officer. I would brief the weather crews every morning remotely, and I did the same thing for McGee Tyson AFB in Tennessee. I always wanted to be pilot, but that was not going to happen as I had color-blindness. I did find that I could be on a flight crew as a weather officer on the weather reconnaissance squadron flying out of Anderson AFB on Guam. I went to Guam, but there were no weather officer slots available. Instead, I was offered the job of managing the satellite operations at the Joint Typhoon Warning Center (JTWC) there. I took it, and hoped to transition into the reconnaissance squadron. But funding was cut in 1984 and the squadron was closed.

### **So you stayed with the JTWC?**

Yes, I ran the satellite operations, working very closely with the Navy. I really enjoyed what I did, learning the Dvorak satellite technique and getting very skilled in what I do.

### **That would have triggered an interest in typhoon forecasting.**

It did. When my two years of duty was up in Guam, I applied to get a Master's degree in tropical meteorology at Colorado State University under Dr. Bill Gray. I got the degree and came back to the JTWC for five years, serving as a typhoon duty officer and putting out typhoon forecasts for the Eastern Hemisphere. I owe the USAF a great debt of gratitude for educating me with skills for that job. But, it probably hurt my career path spending all that time on Guam.

### **How is that possible?**

I was focused on one area, and the Air Force wants you to diversify. When it came time for me to be promoted from Captain to Major, I was passed over. And if you're not promoted to Major, you get separated. I left Guam and went to Europe for year hoping, for a second time, to be promoted. It didn't happen, so I had to leave the military.

### **Another door usually opens when one is closed.**

The National Weather Service on Guam was in need of forecasters. It was a fairly new office, and they reached out to me to apply, as I had all that experience there. I began working for the Weather Service the day after I left the Air Force and stayed there for nearly 8 years as a lead forecaster. Then the opportunity came up to take a downgrade to a journey forecaster on the U.S. mainland in Medford, Oregon, which is very close to where I grew up.

### **Guam was nice, but?**

You're outside the mainstream of weather offices, and I wanted to go back and work in an actual weather forecast office. And I really enjoyed Medford, it was great being home. The office did snow, fire weather, and a lot of marine forecasting. Then, after a few years, I saw an opportunity to come the NHC's Tropical Analysis and Forecast Branch (TAFB).

### **Had you thought of that before?**

It was a lifetime ambition to be a hurricane forecaster. I could apply all of the skills I learned in Guam and work at NHC. I was told that TAFB was a great step to move into the hurricane specialist slot at some point. So, I made the move here in 2006. I took a brief break in 2007 when all of the administration problems were occurring and went back to Guam for a couple of years. But the military changed the rules for federal employees living on base, so my wife and I came back to South Florida and I returned to TAFB. I decided to not pursue becoming a hurricane specialist, choosing instead to stay as a marine forecaster in TAFB.

### **What is your greatest challenge in TAFB?**

It's making the transition to gridded forecasts. The entire National Weather Service is using grids and speaking that kind of language. As a national center, we are on the leading edge of applying and using grids. I have the background in it from Guam and Medford. It is a challenge using a new way to do things, using the grids to develop a forecast for winds and seas instead of just using the models.

### **I hear you are learning a second language.**

I have an assignment through my church to speak at different groups of people. Many of them are Hispanic and/or bilingual. So, I am trying to learn Spanish to better communicate with them.

### **How do you relax?**

I'd like to play golf, but it is so expensive here. My father-in-law is a snowbird and lives in Brooksville, (Fla.); the rates are a lot better there. I am a big baseball fan, but the Marlins have me disenchanted right now. I am exercising more, which is a great way to clear the mind.

### **Where do you see yourself in five to 10 years?**

I see myself remaining in TAFB with the goal to be one of its lead forecasters, and then retiring from it. Medford would be the only place I would want to move to if the chance came up. I still have a home there and plan to retire there.

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