

Q & A for NHC



**LTJG JEFF
PEREIRA**

**NOAA Corps Officer
Storm Surge Unit**

National Hurricane Center

*By Dennis Feltgen
Public Affairs Officer
NOAA Communications & External Affairs
National Hurricane Center*

Tell me about the NOAA Corps.

It is one of the seven uniformed services of the U.S. The NOAA Corps currently has approximately 315 commissioned officers. NOAA Corps Officers hold a baccalaureate or higher degree in science, math, or engineering. We provide the leadership and support needed to meet the missions of the various line offices within NOAA.

How did you get into it?

I always wanted to work for NOAA, though I did not know in what capacity. One of my college classmates joined the NOAA Corps before I did. He was going through the interview process when he told me about it. I didn't know that NOAA had a Commissioned Corps, so I researched it more, applied, and I was able to get in.

How long is the program?

Basic Officer Training has changed a bit since I went in, but it was four months long. The training is mostly tailored to learning how to drive a vessel. The curriculum is challenging, with onboard ship-handling exercises along with classroom instruction in leadership, seamanship, navigation, and military protocol. Eventually when you first come out of the training program, you're going to operate and navigate one of NOAA's

ships. Aviation training is available on a limited basis but officers are considered for flight training only after they have completed their first sea tour.

Can one make a career with the NOAA Corps?

If you are competitive enough to stay in the corps, you can make it a 20 year career. It is an up and out system, so if you do not get passed over three times for promotion you can stay in the Corps until you decide to retire or the needs of the Corps is such that your services are not needed anymore.

What is your goal?

I have been in the NOAA Corps for almost four years, and my goal is to make this a career, 20 years plus.

Let's go back a bit. Did you have an early interest in meteorology?

I had an interest in meteorology since grade school. "The Weather Channel" was my favorite channel growing up and I was dubbed by my family as "The Weatherman". Whenever my parents or friends asked me what the weather was going to be like, even at an early age, I would know what the weather was going to be like in my home town in Rhode Island. I didn't always like a sunny day, I always liked thunderstorm storms, of course hurricanes. We had Hurricane Bob in 1991.

Where did you get your meteorology degree?

I received my BS in meteorology from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Fla. Ironically I did not initially enter the school for meteorology, but rather for my other passion, which is aviation. I received a BS in engineering, but I still had a passion for meteorology. So it was in my junior year that I decided to stay for a few more years and grab my meteorology degree as well. It was a new program then and I was one of its first students.

Did you join the NOAA Corps right out of college?

I took a year off and did quite a bit of traveling to gather my thoughts and see where I wanted to go in life. I really enjoy what I do with the Corps. Working here at the hurricane center has always been a dream job for me.

What do you do with the Storm Surge Unit?

We assess what the coastal surge vulnerability is going to be with a land-falling hurricane. During the hurricane season, we become operational whenever there is a hurricane threatening to make landfall in our areas of responsibility. We assist the hurricane specialists with the public advisory and provide support to local WFOs. During the off-season, we are constantly updating the basins creating the MOMs and MEOWs which are ultimately used by Emergency Managers to develop the nation's evacuation zones. I also do a bit of outreach during the quiet times. I really enjoy the work that I do. I get to work with people who have taught me a lot about storm surge and the role that hurricanes play. We play an important role in providing the people with information they need to save lives.

What is the biggest project you have going?

Other than running the Slosh models and updating the basins, I am leading the effort (with the help of the rest of the surge team) to create a storm surge webpage for the National Hurricane Center website. I have also been implementing storm surge data to create GIS based maps to assess coastal inundation vulnerability for the entire East Coast and the Gulf of Mexico for different category of storms. I didn't realize the

importance of these maps until they started to be used in high-level briefings for the Deepwater Horizon Spill.

What do you see yourself doing in 10 years?

My ultimate goal is to fly, so when I leave here, hopefully I can get a flight assignment position.

With your interest in both aviation and meteorology, why did you not join the Air Force and its hurricane hunters?

I did look into the Air Force and the Navy but again, I have always wanted to work for NOAA. Being able to work for NOAA and serving my country at the same time is really the best of both worlds. Those thoughts are still out there, and it could always happen. After a fulfilling career in the NOAA Corps, joining the Air Force Reserves and flying their Hurricane Hunters sounds exciting, anything is possible.

You were part of the Hurricane Awareness Tour along the U.S. Gulf Coast this past spring. What did you pick up from that?

I got a real understanding of what people don't know about hurricanes and what it takes to prepare for the hurricane season, putting myself in their shoes. Overall, it was an excellent opportunity to be able to see and talk to the people and realize the importance of our work.

What do you do in real life?

We have a five-month-old baby in the house, so that keeps us busy. I love to travel, but we're not doing much of that now. Hopefully, we can do more of that in the next year. I am a big sports fan, following my New England sports teams. I follow the South Florida teams of course, but my heart is still in the Northeast.

Send comments to: nhc.public.affairs@noaa.gov