



Voices

A GLIMPSE INTO THE CAREERS OF
AIR TRAFFIC
CONTROLLERS

NATIONAL AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS ASSOCIATION AFL-CIO

EXCITING rewarding
challenging

"You can see your hard work
make a **difference** right away
in air traffic control."

LESLIE WARFIELD

The work air traffic controllers do each day is often regarded as "behind the scenes" because the public is unable to directly watch controllers separate aircraft while they work either in the radar room or the tower. Instead society is simply aware that the controllers are working on their behalf "somewhere" to ensure that airplanes are safe as they move across the nation's skies.

Voices

**A GLIMPSE INTO THE CAREERS OF
AIR TRAFFIC
CONTROLLERS**

To give you a better idea about whom some of these air traffic controllers are, the National Air Traffic Controllers Association wanted to introduce you to five from around the country. The interviews from these men and women show the dedication, patience and quick thinking necessary to be one of the 15,000 controllers who ensure the safety of two million air passengers every day.

For additional information, please visit the union's website

www.natca.org

EXCITING challenging

rewarding



ANN HARRIS

7 YEARS AS AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER
WASHINGTON NATIONAL AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER

HOW DID YOU BECOME AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER?

"I went to the University of North Dakota-Grand Forks. I went through the College Training Initiative and graduated with a B.S. in Aeronautics (flying) and a B.S. in Air Traffic."

WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT THE FACILITY WHERE YOU WORK?

"We have a lot of helicopter traffic, and we must follow specific procedures when VIP personnel are transported through the area. Another unique aspect of National Airport is that general aviation traffic is not permitted. Due to security concerns and the proximity of the airport to the nation's capitol, it is unclear whether this type of traffic will be allowed in the future. And finally, the view from the tower of our nation's capitol is amazing."

HOW DIFFICULT IS IT FOR WOMEN IN THIS PROFESSION?

"It's difficult because stereotypes about our abilities still exist. It is slowly getting better – we just have to prove ourselves a little more. I think this is a great profession for women because there are many opportunities for us."

"You can see your hard work
make a **difference** right away
in air traffic control."

LESLIE WARFIELD

"I think this is a great profession for women
because there are many **opportunities** for us."

ANN HARRIS

"The best part about this job is
working with people who **love** to do the job
as much as you do. "

KEVIN DEBENEDITTIS

WHAT'S THE BEST PART OF YOUR JOB ?

“I think the best part is that I don’t do the same thing every day. It may take weeks or months to see results in other professions, but you can see your hard work make a difference right away in air traffic control.”

WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO BECOME AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER ?

“A test I took in the military determined I should be either an air traffic controller or linguist, and a career in aviation perked my curiosity more. My uncle was also a controller in the Navy, which also sparked some interest.”

WHAT'S THE WORST PART OF YOUR JOB ?

“No matter how experienced you become in this profession, it is always in the back of your mind, especially during busy periods, that you could make a mistake that could harm people. Our job requires you to do your best every day, all day.”



16 YEARS AS AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER
 DULLES TOWER

WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO BECOME AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER?

“My father was a controller. When I was small, he would often take me to work with him and let me sit at a control position and play with a few of the knobs. I was fascinated with it and always wanted to do what my dad did. Also, I always loved airplanes, but was actually afraid to fly. This was the next best thing to being in one all the time.”

WHY DO YOU PREFER WORKING IN YOUR TYPE OF FACILITY (TOWER, TRACON OR CENTER)?

“I enjoy working at the center because I have the opportunity to see what was going on with air traffic in most of the country. It's hard to tell what's happening in Atlanta when you're working at the Denver airport, but at a center you get to know about both. I do miss not actually being able to see the aircraft I'm working like you do at an airport. My current house sits on the airport's approach path and I can sit outside and watch the jets fly over all day and never tire of it. The sound they make never bothers me either. The big jets, like the 747, still amaze me to this day.”

WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE? WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN THE FUTURE?

“I love my job and will probably do it for another five years, but when I'm done I hope to begin a second career as a school teacher. Now that would be a big change! I'm sure I'll be more stressed at doing that than I've ever been as a controller.”



20 YEARS AS AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER
ALBUQUERQUE EN ROUTE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER



22 YEARS AS AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER
CHICAGO EN ROUTE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTER

WHAT ARE 3 IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS THAT YOU BELIEVE AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER NEEDS ?

1. "Ability to Multi-task"
2. "Quick Thinker"
3. "Having Thick Skin"

HOW DID YOU BECOME AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER ?

"I was a music major in college and figured it would be a good idea to have something to fall back on in case I didn't get to play with Van Halen. I took the test, went to the academy in Oklahoma City and was assigned to Chicago Center."

WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT THE FACILITY WHERE YOU WORK ?

"Chicago Center is located in the middle of the country so we are an important part in the flow of the East and West coast traffic. Also because we directly control all air traffic in and out of Chicago Tower, we have quite an impact on the National Airspace System."



26 YEARS AS AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER

DAYTON AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL TOWER/
TERMINAL RADAR APPROACH CONTROL

DESCRIBE A TYPICAL DAY AT WORK.

“I spend the day talking to airplanes, and I also train a lot of new air traffic controllers at my facility. I enjoy training them because it gives me an opportunity to share my experiences and the satisfaction of knowing that I am helping to train others to take my place someday.”

WHY DO YOU PREFER WORKING IN YOUR TYPE OF FACILITY (TOWER, TRACON OR CENTER)?

“My facility is up/down meaning I spend half of my time in the air traffic control tower and half in the radar room. I think this provides a good mix; radar is the most challenging but then you are able to go into the tower and watch the aircraft. It’s truly the best of both worlds, and watching the airplanes fly is still amazing after all of these years.”

WHAT’S UNIQUE ABOUT THE FACILITY WHERE YOU WORK?

“Our facility is open 24-hours a day. After midnight, when other airports are typically quiet, we are busy with a lot of cargo traffic. During the day, we are busy with commercial traffic. We never have a dull shift.”