



Cultural Diversity

National Weather Service
Alaska Region Newsletter
Volume 5, Issue 2 - October 2010

In This Issue

- Director's Corner
- Andean Experience - Part IV
- Korean Visitor Tour
- AK EEO Cookbook
- Change for Change
- Tanana Valley State Fair
- New Employees
- Departing Employees
- Years of Service

"Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness." -
Ola Joseph



Editors

Ursula.Jones@noaa.gov
Kristine.A.Nelson@noaa.gov

<http://eeo.arh.nwsar.gov>

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

By Frank Kelly

*When Weather Matters:
Diversity is the Strength of Our Business*

Every two or three years, the National Research Council's (NRC) Board on Atmospheric Sciences and Climate (BASC) conducts a Summer Study workshop on a subject selected by BASC as topical and important. The subject of the 2009 BASC Summer Study workshop was "Progress and Priorities of U.S. Weather Research and Research-to-Operations Activities." About 50 experts in various aspects of weather research and operations joined the eight committee members and BASC staff for two full days of presentations, discussion, and debate. The report identified three important, "emerging" issues—very high impact weather, urban meteorology, and renewable energy development. The report provides eight recommendations. I believe the first of these recommendations speaks directly to us about diversity. This first recommendation states:

The weather community and social scientists should create partnerships to develop a core interdisciplinary capacity for weather-society research and transitioning research to operations, starting with three priority areas:

- **estimating the societal and economic value of weather information;**
- **understanding the interpretation and use of weather information by various audiences;**
- **and applying this knowledge to improve communication, use, and value.**

As I read through this recommendation it seems to me each of the three priority areas is dependent not so much on the technical aspects of our business but, more so, on the people and relationships we develop among co-workers and customers.

First of all, creating partnerships is truly a human endeavor. When we reach out to our co-workers to help provide a solution to a particular problem or challenge, we are developing a

partnership. It might be short lived to solve a current problem or longer term to deal with a series of ongoing challenges. Whenever we have these opportunities the diverse nature of the people with whom we work gives us a better chance for a different view point or an innovative approach. I know sometimes I'll wonder how somebody came up with such an 'out of the box' idea that is a perfect solution. I don't think we would be as successful without the chance for diversity of thought and approach.

The first of the priority areas, 'estimating the societal and economic value of weather information' is an action that seeks science and technical input as well as a real big helping of people working together. The idea of getting at the value of weather information goes beyond what an economist might calculate. It reaches into how people value where they live, what they do, who they associate with and how they fit in a community. Again, this value definition is made stronger and more credible when people with diverse viewpoints engage in discussing what is valuable.

The second area, 'understanding the interpretation and use of weather information by various audiences' has a built in diversity component. People usually make decisions based on subjective probabilities, biased information derived from anecdotal evidence and prejudicial positions based on their values and worldviews. This is why people in the same community or on the same street take different approaches to any given weather situation. The diversity in our customer base challenges us to disseminate our information as clearly and effectively as possible.

This leads then to the last priority, 'applying this knowledge to improve communication, use, and value'. The idea of 'communication' jumps out here. If we think people bring diverse worldviews and values to any situation, then we face an uphill battle to get and hold people's attention about a weather impact. Trying to get people to respond in a certain safe and prudent way makes the job of the weather provider a tough one. Fortunately, because we have a diversity of people in our offices and on our teams, we usually find enough ideas that make it possible to communicate with people in ways they can understand. We don't always get it right or say it in the right way. However, we strive to deliver the right science, at the right time where people are, not only geographically, but also in their mindset.

I think the take away from this short discussion of a BASC report recommendation is we need to better use the diversity of our co-workers to assist us in getting our message across to a broad community. Our values and world views influence how we do communicate and what we bring to the table in any given situation. The strength of the whole proposition comes from the diversity of who we are, where we live and how we interact. □

What kinds of things are we looking for to include in our Diversity newsletter?

- Employee biographies - new and current
- Outreach activities
- Travel stories
- Scientific papers (abstract with weblink)
- Volunteer activities
- Weather office introduction
- Anything else?

ANDEAN EXPERIENCE 2008

By Michael Richmond
WFO Anchorage

Part IV: The Final Chapter

Pictured is Illimani, the beautiful three-peaked extinct volcano rising to 21,230 feet and gracing La Paz with her presence. In addition, is a diagram of the route we followed. When planning this trip, I decided to summit one of the Andean mountains of at least 20,000 feet elevation, and chose Illimani because of its proximity to La Paz, and the interesting descriptions I had read from climbers who had been on it. I went with Bolivian Journeys, a guiding company headed by Marco Souria, who has many years of climbing experience, and has helped glaciologists and climate change researchers in their treks in the high Andes. He told me beforehand this would not be an easy climb. I didn't doubt him.



My guide was Eulogio, who has summited Illimani more than 20 times. He spoke very little English, but with my broken Spanish, I was able to communicate effectively. Although Illimani is only about 25-30 miles from La Paz straight-line distance, it took us 4 hours to get there. We had to wind around an incredibly steep canyon behind La Paz that appeared at least 7,000 feet deep. The road descended to the bottom of it, where it was very warm, then ascended the other side, in steep hairpin curves through three small villages. One of the hazards of the trip is shown to the left, herders with their sheep and llamas, sometimes it took them several minutes to get their animals off the road.

We arrived at the base village around noon, and had to wait for our porters to help us haul most of our gear up to the low camp. The base village lies at about 13,000 feet on Illimani's lower slopes, and women from it hire out to all the guiding companies as porters. The first day, two teenage sisters, Jimena and Clarita, tied the two 60 lb. bags with our food, tents, and climbing gear to a burro, and led it up to our low camp at 14,500 feet.

The hike up to the low camp took us 3 hours. Camp was only about 4 miles from the village, and not too steep of a trail. I had just 35 lb. on my back consisting of extra clothing, some food, a down sleeping bag, and water. I didn't feel too bad from the altitude. The low camp was in a large open meadow, right at the base of the mountain. It was a cold and gloomy place during our stay, with occasional showers of snow and sleet, and thunder at times. What amazed me were the herds of horses, sheep, and llamas that people from the village tended in this inhospitable location.



Porters - Jimena and Clarita

My only negative experience in Bolivia occurred that night. Eulogio warned me to bring everything in the tent at night, but I forgot to bring in my very nice collapsible trekking poles. They were gone in the morning. It was a little eerie to think of strangers wandering around overnight around my tent in that gloomy place, stealing things.

The next morning dawned sunny and inviting. We packed up and were ready to hit the trail at 0900. Our porters, who would be lifting our supplies to Campo Alto located at 18,000 feet, were Jimena, who's about 16, and her older sister Juanita, who is in her early 20s. They tied up the two 60 lb. bags in blankets, wrapped them around their necks, and followed us.

The trail initially was not very steep, and I thought, great, if it just slowly winds up the mountain, I'll be in fine shape. Unfortunately, this was not to be. The trail quickly started ascending a sharp knife-like rock outcropping between glaciers. It was like climbing stairs the whole time, on sharp, sometimes loose rocks, with fatal hundred foot drop-offs on either side.

I quickly realized the effect of the altitude, combined with the weight of my pack and steepness of the trail. At home, hiking or skiing with 35 lbs. on does require additional effort, and slows me down some, but at these altitudes, the effect was magnified. We stopped every hundred feet or so, so I could catch my breath, and took very short, slow steps. Of course, even Eulogio couldn't just run up this, so it took us about five hours to ascend from where the trail steepened at 15,000 feet, to Campo Alto, a map distance of probably only about two or three miles. The views were incredible, the thick,

steep glaciers on our sides, and the rocky precipitous slope below tumbling down into the canyon, dotted with distant villages and terraced farms. In the far distance, the skyscrapers of La Paz were visible.



These pictures are about halfway up to Campo Alto, around 16,000 feet.

We reached Campo Alto around four in the afternoon, and immediately threw down our packs and rested. At 18,000 feet I had reached my new altitude record. But unfortunately, I was so winded from our ascent, I just was not able to fully recover my breath. My breathing continued fast, with my heart racing, and within an hour, I began to come down with the symptoms of the dreaded Soroche, altitude sickness. For those who have never experienced it, it is truly miserable. For me, it was a mind-numbing headache that seemed to press out from my skull through my eyes and a low-grade nausea. I was not incapacitated, but feeling bad enough to prevent me from eating anything, though I was able to drink some hot tea and water.



The incredible view from Campo Alto.

The plan had been to set up camp, get to sleep early, then rise at 0200 and summit, so we could get back to camp by early afternoon, in case the daily afternoon convection got too bad. I didn't want to descend yet. I thought that maybe with some time and rest I'd improve. Meanwhile our porters came up with their loads. They ascended the rough, steep, rocky route in their dresses, shawls, and sandals with no socks! And it was about 25°F up there at 18,000 feet! Talk about tough! I was very impressed. They were slower, carrying their heavy loads, but were laughing and joking the whole time.



The sunset that night was the most beautiful I have ever seen. As the daylight lessened, the lights of La Paz became visible in the far distance. Beyond La Paz, the perfect cone of Sajama, the highest peak in Bolivia at 21,500 feet was in view. The glaciers above camp and the summit of Illimani were bathed in the orange sunset alpenglow.

These crosses shown below, located just up the slope from Campo Alto, memorialize three Bolivian guides who died over the past ten years. They died because they were guiding tourists like me who came down with Soroche, who then pressed their guides to continue. The

tourists either blacked out or slipped, and took the guides with them on their fatal journey. Eulogio said if I didn't feel better later that night, there would be no climb. I was not going to argue with that! What followed was very likely the most miserable night I can remember. Bundled in my down bag (the temperature out was probably about 15°F, with a stiff breeze), with the headache and nausea, sleep was impossible. When Eulogio awoke at 0200 and asked me how I felt, I said no change, and we decided there was going to be no summit attempt. So, he went back to sleep, and I tried to, but was not very successful. While lying there in misery, it seemed like every 10 to 15 minutes or so, I heard what at first I thought was thunder. There had been some earlier that day, but after awhile, as these sounds continued, I realized, they were avalanches on the higher slopes of the glacier cap. So, perhaps it was for the best we didn't summit.



When morning light finally arrived (not soon enough for me!), we slowly roused ourselves. I had some water and tea, but no food, and we packed camp. We began our descent around 0800, this time Eulogio had me rappel down the steep rocky face, just in case I was too tired and slipped. But I was actually feeling fairly well. I think just knowing we were descending gave me a boost. It only took about two hours to get down to 15,000 feet, and, by then, I felt much better. By the time we got to the low camp site at 14,500 feet, I was able to eat. Another couple hours brought us back to the base village, at 13,000 feet, and by then I was ravenously hungry, and ate a full meal of potatoes the villagers gave us, with canned tuna. I passed out all my chocolates and candy to several small children who materialized from the village. Amazing how just the four thousand foot descent was enough to clear my symptoms and return me to normalcy.

Bolivia and Illimani exceeded my every expectation for this trip. I knew Illimani would be a formidable challenge and am so grateful to have had the chance to at least try for the summit. I highly encourage you to make this trip. The land and people are the most amazing I've ever seen. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy living vicariously through me, my story, and these pictures. ☐

Korean Foreign National Tour

By Andy Brown

On June 25 of this year, I had the privilege of leading a group of Korean foreign nationals on a visit to the National Weather Service Forecast Office in Anchorage. Tours at our office are typically given by management but a scheduling conflict resulted in few options. Although I had never led a tour on my own, I graciously accepted the task.



I exchanged a few emails with their point of contact for the foreign nationals. Throughout our exchanges, I learned that the thirty individuals were visiting Alaska from Seoul, South Korea as a part of a fireman training school; they had limited knowledge about Alaskan geography or weather; and did not speak English so their guide would be translating for me. This was all useful information that I used to prepare for their visit.

First, I found the generic PowerPoint presentation that the office commonly uses for guests. The presentation is designed to give guests an overall understanding of our office including the many different units that reside at the Sand Lake Road building. After reviewing the presentation, I came to the conclusion that I needed to update it for this occasion. Some modifications I made included adding the

words “Welcome” and “Thank You” in Korean. I also replaced several slides that had text on them with graphics, maps, or pictures. I did this since the translator would be focused on what I was saying and not reading over the text on the slide. Knowing that the individuals may have an interest in our fire weather program, I added a couple of slides that outlined our products and challenges that we face. All of these modifications had the purpose of personalizing the tour and making it special for them.

My final preparation came the night before they arrived. I researched “Korean etiquette” on the Internet to ensure that I was sensitive to their culture. I was surprised to learn there were many protocols that Koreans follow and was immediately thankful I had taken the five minutes to research the subject. An example of the etiquette that I came across involved the proper way to give and receive a gift. I read that gifts should be received with both hands and that they should not be opened in front of the person giving the gift.

When the foreign nationals arrived, I greeted each one individually as they walked in (which is proper etiquette). They immediately saw that the word “welcome” was displayed on the screen in their own language and applauded my effort. I believe these two simple gestures were both well received and appreciated by the guests. Before I could begin my presentation, an individual (who I later learned was their leader) approached me and presented a gift on behalf of the group. I graciously accepted the gift with both hands extended. Again, it was a simple gesture, but one I believe they noticed and appreciated.

The rest of the tour went very well. After the group toured the office, several individuals approached me and expressed their gratitude in broken English. The overall response was very positive and I believe it was at least partially due to the extra effort that was taken to make them feel welcome, personalize their experience, and respect their cultural differences. □

Alaska EEO Cookbook



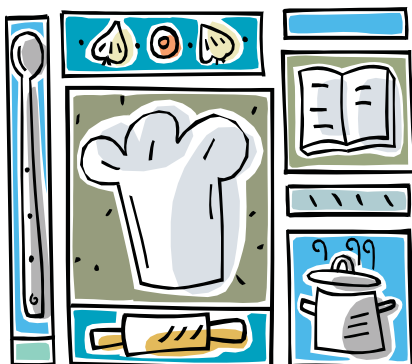
Alaska Region EEO/Diversity Committee is pre-selling cookbooks.

Cost of the cookbook is \$11.

The recipes in this cookbook have been donated for your enjoyment by Alaska Region National Weather Service employees.



Interested? Contact one of the EEO/Diversity Committee members in the list below



Jennifer Burke (AAWU)
Carlos Godfrey (MOBEU)
Ursula Jones (WFO Juneau)
Tom Miller (WFO Fairbanks)
Rebecca Schwab (ARH)
Geri Swanson (WSO Cold Bay)
Alberta Vieira (AAWU)
Pepper Weimer (Fairbanks)
Bill Williams (WSO Bethel)

Giving Change for Change

The Fairbanks Forecast Office gave a coffee can full of change to the local food bank as part of the British Petroleum challenge grant. Each year the grant brings in well over \$10,000, enabling them to provide assistance to over 8,000 households and 100 other local agencies. □

Fairbanks Community
Food Bank
www.FairbanksFoodBank.org

Tanana Valley State Fair **Fairbanks, Alaska**

The NOAA booth at the Tanana Valley Fair this summer was a success thanks to the participation from multiple NOAA line offices and the local Ham Radio club. The Fairbanks Forecast Office

and the NESDIS Office staffed the NOAA booth for more than 180 hours. Alaska Sea Grant offices and the local HAM radio club helped by rounding out staffing coverage. NOAA outreach, National Marine Fisheries, and Marine Debris Program were able to send material for use at the event allowing, those staffing the booth to present a wide spectrum of NOAA products and services during the fair. The Fairbanks NWSFO is grateful for the contributions from all the participating offices.

The nine day fair had an attendance of over 100,000, many of which passed by the NOAA booth. As always, the prize wheel was very popular, followed closely in popularity by the "Cloud Identification Chart". In addition, around 1,000 pamphlets were handed out concerning winter weather, the Alaska Weather Information Line, and flooding.

Many questions were answered concerning accessing particular weather information via the Internet. We used the wireless Internet connection to show people how to navigate our websites. The ability to walk the customer through the steps on the spot to get to information was invaluable.

Each day we highlighted a different part of our NWS and extended NOAA family operations. Hopefully, we will be able to expand on this in the future, giving the public an even better understanding of what NOAA has to offer.

Enjoying this year's achievement makes us eager to enhance next year's booth. Feel free to share any Tanana Valley Fair booth improvement ideas with John Lingaas (WCM FAI WFO) at John.Lingaas@noaa.gov. □

Helping Keep Alaska Clean - WFO Fairbanks was able to get out and conduct their 3rd and final Adopt-A-Highway Cleanup for the year.

The Anchorage Weather Office Has a New Intern

By Alberta Vieira

Kevin Skow has been at the ANCFO since last fall. He was born and raised in the northern suburbs of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, which is actually the Coon Rapids/ Andover/ Anoka area. He attended school in North Dakota at the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks and received a bachelor of science in meteorology with honors, in 2009. His interest in meteorology began when he was in the grade school with a fascination with storms.

He eventually would like to become a SOO or WCM in one of the Midwestern WFO office. His favorite job before this one was as an IT intern at PTC, a computer software company. If he had to take another career path it would probably be in the IT field.

His hobbies aside from weather include photography/video photography and computers, which could help the rest of us in our mission, right? He also enjoys Great Lakes ships and biking.



Kevin likes Anchorage and would like to stay in Alaska for a couple of years. □

Upcoming Monthly Celebrations

November - National American Indian Heritage Month

As always, meeting minutes and other EEO/Diversity information may be found at <http://eeo.arh.nwsar.gov/>. Meetings are typically at 1 p.m. on the third Wednesday every other month. Here are the meeting times for FY11.

November 17, 2010

January 19, 2011

March 16, 2011

May 18, 2011

July 20, 2011

September 21, 2011

The Winds of Change

The Winds of Change



A WARM WELCOME GOES OUT TO ALL NEW EMPLOYEES AND CONGRATULATIONS ON PROMOTIONS AND RETIREMENTS!

Perry Dehne, from Smyrna, New York, took a Meteorological Technician position at WSO Kodiak effective July 6.

Brandi Taylor-Kelly, a local hire from Wasilla, took a Support Services Specialist position at Administrative Management Division at ARH effective August 16.

Dawn Bundschuh, a local hire from Eagle River, took a Secretary position in SOD at ARH effective July 18.

Aimee Fish, transferred from WFO Burlington Office, took a Fire Weather/Public/Marine Program Manager position with ESSD at ARH effective July 4.

Todd Foisy transferred from the WFO Anchorage Office as a Meteorologist to ESSD at ARH as a Service Delivery Program Manager effective August 29.

Promotions:

Joseph Schulz accepted the position of Management Support Analyst in ADMIN effective July 26.

Scotty Berg was promoted from a Hydro-Meteorological Technician to a Meteorologist (General Forecaster) in the WFO Fairbanks Office effective August 15.

Julie Malingowski, located at WFO Fairbanks, was promoted from a SCEP Student to a Meteorological Intern on August 29.

Resigned/Retired/Transferred:

David Kochevar transferred from WSO McGrath to the Center Weather Service Unit Office effective July 18.

Matthew Thompson transferred from the DATAC Division in the ARH to the NOAA/WASC Office in Seattle effective July 22.

YEARS OF SERVICE RECOGNITION

Employee	Position	Office	Years
John Lindsey	Electronics Technician	WFO Juneau	40
Allura Weimer	Hydro-Meteorological Technician	WFO Fairbanks	30
Neil Murakami	Lead Forecaster	WFO Anchorage	30
Ted Timmons	Facilities Program Manager	SIB	25
William Whittern	Meteorological Technician	WSO Bethel	15
Joseph Putera	Computer Specialist	WCATWC	15
Lisa Gregory	Secretary	DATAC	10