

# Q & A for NHC



## Felix Garcia

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**The first time I saw you at NHC was in 2008 when you were brought in as part of the Spanish language media pool.**

Yes, it was Hurricane Ike, and I was brought in to assist with the Spanish language media interviews. I was really excited when I got the call in Sacramento to come to NHC to help out. I had some experience with television cameras, but it was my first time where it was head-on.

**How far back did you first get interested in weather science?**

I grew up in the Caribbean, and I remember finding shapes and forms in the clouds with my dad almost every afternoon. It was just something we'd do. So a lot of my interest is owed to him. When I was older and more conscious of the weather, I became very interested in hurricanes, since we've had so many; and other forms of severe weather like tropical waves, flash floods, etc. But, it wasn't until my early 20s when I decided to pursue a career in Meteorology.

**Was there a meteorology program there in Puerto Rico?**

There wasn't at the time. I was already in college there, taking a lot of math, physics, and, science classes. I told my parents I wanted to do the meteorology, and they said let's do it. So we began looking at universities in the United States. And I ended up at Iowa State University in Ames.

### **That is a dramatic change!**

It sure was, and I loved it. I just wanted to do something different and experience a different climate. I'd never even seen snow before, and I was like a child when I first saw it there.

### **How does an ISU student end up in tropical meteorology?**

Going into my senior year at Iowa State, I had a volunteer internship with the San Juan (National) Weather Service office, working on my thesis. The meteorology program had a requirement to do an undergraduate thesis in order to graduate.

### **That is very unusual.**

It was a tough curriculum and one of the reasons I selected the school. So for the internship, I spent the summer in San Juan gathering all of the data that needed for the thesis, which dealt with the thermodynamic variables and thunderstorm potential for the Caribbean islands.

### **Did the internship help you locate a position after you graduated?**

Not really, since it was a volunteer internship. It took me eight months to find a job. I was very lucky though, because while studying at Iowa State, I met a wonderful woman who later on would become my wife. I stayed with her, and during that time I took a lot of jobs...the gas station, grocery store, coffee shop; just about anything. Then the Sacramento (California) office of the National Weather Service called and offered the Intern position to me.

### **Yet another dramatic change in location!**

It was for the both of us. I'm from the Caribbean and she is a Midwesterner. But it was an awesome experience. We loved the area and the people, as well as the climate. At the office as an intern, I did a lot of things, as all interns do...research, outreach, media, you name it.

### **Being bilingual must have been a plus.**

It was a big plus. The media would contact me almost every day. It was crazy and I loved it.

### **That came in handy while you were at NHC Hurricane Ike.**

It helped a lot. And a few weeks after that, my SOO (Science & Operations Officer) approached me, stating that NHC really liked the job I did for them. He was a great guy and asked if I would be interested in working there should the opportunity arise. I said sure, and then an opportunity did come up in the Tropical Analysis and Forecast Branch – the Intern position on the surface analysis desk. And so, here I am.

## **You're a Dad now.**

Yes. In fact, when we moved from Sacramento to Miami, my wife was expecting our first child. So, it was a challenging cross-country drive, especially for her. She is an amazing woman. But we made it safe and our son was born a Floridian.

## **You've made some big leaps in a short period of time. What's next?**

So far, it is all about growing and expanding my skills and knowledge with the hurricane center, and getting all the experience I can get. There are lots of opportunities here and out there, so the sky is the limit. I really enjoy the challenge of analyzing and forecasting the weather over land and the oceans. Every day is a new challenge and I love the kind of work I'm doing here.

## **Can you leave it behind when you walk out of the building every day?**

You know, you have to for your own sake, especially if you have a family. You have to get your mind set to do your job and keep it there when you go home. I love being with my wife and baby and spending time with them.

## **Are you a traveler?**

We love traveling and finding new places. Sometimes we can't just sit at home when the weather is so nice outside. There are so many places to go to around here. But we also travel to see family and friends in the Caribbean, Midwest and Pacific Northwest.

## **Whenever there is a hurricane situation here, everyone brings it up a few notches. Do you feel that excitement?**

Oh absolutely! We see something going on, something developing, we get excited. This is our passion, it's what we do.

**Send comments to: [nhc.publicaffairs@noaa.gov](mailto:nhc.publicaffairs@noaa.gov)**