

# **Chris Caraynoff**

## **Miami Center (ZMA)**

*When were you hired?*

I was hired in April of 2006. I reported to Oklahoma City on April 26th, 2006. My first day at Miami Center (ZMA) was July 17, 2006.

*Where do you work?*

I work at Miami Center, and it is the only facility that I have worked at, so far. I work in Area 2 (Coastal) where we run the lone approach control at the center for Fort Pierce and Vero Beach. We also deal with the southern arrivals into Orlando, as well as the northern arrivals into Palm Beach, Miami, and FLL.

*How did you first become interested in ATC?*

I became interested in air traffic as a child. A family outing on Friday night consisted of pizza, ice cream and then going to Albany International Airport to watch the planes land and depart. As I became older, I knew I did not want to become a pilot due to the expenses, and the eventual stress it would put on my family if I was away for days at a time.

*How did you come into the FAA?*

I came to the Agency through Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. I majored in Aviation Business Administration and minored in Air Traffic Control. I was part of one of the last groups to take the OPM test before the ATSAT was brought in. I graduated in December 2004 and waited until March 2006 before everything was completed i.e. background check, psychological exam, medical exam, etc.

*What advice would you offer to new controllers?*

The best advice I can pass along to new controllers is to stay the course and to always put in your best effort. This is because... 1. By doing so you will be able to learn and absorb more information, and 2. You never know who's watching you. It's always better to make a name for yourself through the hard work that you do.

*What has been the most stressful part of becoming a controller?*

Training is probably the most stressful part of the work process that I have endured to this point. I waited for nearly two years to get into training upstairs, and

basically all I did was plug in and monitor the veteran controllers to find out what controlling style I liked best. I chose my trainer based on this and I think it worked out better that way. Spending so much time with one person training tends to take its toll, especially at the end, but when you finally get certified, a lot of what your trainer did and why he/she did it becomes evident.

*What was Oklahoma City and transitioning to your first facility like for you?*

Oklahoma City was quite the experience. Take it from a guy that is from a small town, and to that point, knew nothing about airplane characteristics and was two years removed from college. It was like starting all over again. I did not receive any per diem in OKC, so basically all that we were given was \$8.18 an hour. These checks every two weeks barely covered room and board. Many of us actually went into debt by paying for our food and trying to have a life out there.

Coming to Miami was definitely a culture shock for me, but it quickly got better. Finding a place to live was first, and luckily I was able to link up with another OKC student in my same situation coming to Miami. I definitely recommend getting a roommate when you first arrive, if you are single to meet more people, and during training to have someone to shoot ideas and thoughts off of.

*What is an average work day like?*

An average work day now consists of coming to work, plugging in and usually working an hour to an hour and a half. I then get a 40 minute break. Times on position can go past the 2 hr. mark, but that is usually few and far between. During the summer, we expect decreased traffic with a lot of weather, and in the winter, more traffic and good weather (LOTS OF WIND). We are working five day weeks, but because my area is very short staffed, overtime is common.

*What do you like best about your job?*

I like feeding off the adrenaline when I am busy. It's a great feeling to get through a really busy push, and unplug and say "I worked that". Pay is getting better and I think, with NATCA's help, we are going to finally get what we deserve here.