

**Sandra daMotta**  
**Chicago Center (ZAU)**

*When were you hired?*

I was hired on January 10, 2007.

*What was your training experience like?*

Training varies from facility to facility but in the last few years at ZAU, with the functional training program, training has been very intense and fast-paced. Classroom training, memorizing maps, studying procedures, completing computer based instruction and training in the DYSIM come quickly one after another and it's important not to fall behind.

*Describe your background before joining the FAA?*

Before I came to the FAA I was primarily a flight instructor and contract pilot. I hold a commercial pilot certificate with single engine land and sea and multi-engine land and sea ratings, as well as type ratings in both the Cessna Citation CE-500 series and the Douglas DC-3. I have also previously worked for Pratt & Whitney and Lockheed Martin and have been an aviation and aerospace enthusiast since the first airshow I attended at Moffett Field when I was about 5.

*Why did you choose a career in ATC?*

I chose to take the air traffic control path after watching the slow decline in job security within the airline and charter industries. I wanted a career in aviation that made a difference, paid the bills and provided good benefits.

*What does NATCA mean to you?*

NATCA is very important to me. Working within the FAA can become very difficult when you are trying to find answers, even to what would seem like the easiest of requests. NATCA representatives that I have met over the last two years have always gone out of their way to make sure that the employees are accurately informed on all issues. They also keep an eye on making sure that members are appropriately protected from illegal activity in the workplace.

*What has NATCA done for you and why have you gotten involved?*

NATCA reps have given me instant answers and information when months of calling representatives from the FAA proved unsuccessful in answering my questions or providing me with the tools to obtain the information I was looking for. Providing me with free food every now and then always helps too!

*Do you have any advice or words of wisdom for the people coming up behind you?*

My advice to students coming into the FAA is to stay focused. It is very easy to fall off the training wagon and lose sight of the end goal. Though, I would tell anyone that it's healthy to put some of the work aside during your weekends. I would also recommend that during the work week a student should make sure they get enough sleep and try to absorb as much information as they can. If your facility allows you to monitor sectors in your assigned area before you've completed DYSIM training, take advantage of it and learn as much as you can from the controllers about your area of specialization. This will help not only once you get to 'the floor' but also in your DYSIM scenarios.