



From Galveston Bay to the Prince William Sound - It's closer than you think...

By Robert Luke
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Okay, so now you are thinking, What do the the beaches of Texas and the rocky shores of Alaska have in common? The latest answer is Debra Russell. Debra recently took over the duties as the Official in Charge and Port Meteorological Officer (PMO) in sunny Valdez, Alaska. Previously, Debra was supporting the folks up in King Salmon with all their weather needs.

Some might think it is a stretch to go from south Texas up to Alaska, but not for Debra. From her early days as a Galveston Ball High School Tornado, Debra was destined to be involved with the weather. Like most young people, Debra searched for a place to fit in and call home. As she put it, "I am not a cowgirl, and I don't have big hair," so when the U.S. Navy mailed her an "It's not just a job. It's an adventure" brochure, Debra was hooked. It was the lure of those snazzy uniforms and images of ships cutting into the waves with the swell and spray going everywhere that started Debra on her quest for adventure.

After basic training in Florida, Debra

joined the fleet in Vallejo, CA on the **Navy Tug Dekaury** (YTM-178). In her spare time between swabbing decks, scraping barnacles and getting to know way too much about Brasso; Debra dreamed of becoming an Aerographer Mate (ok, Navy weather guesser to the civilian folks). Well, she got her wish and was transferred to the "beautiful" corn fields of Rantoul, Illinois for basic weather school. And you thought the Navy adventure was a myth. Debra's first tour in Navy weather was at a lovely little hideaway called Adak, Alaska. This jewel of a tour is where the Debra got bit by the Alaska bug (among others). Debra felt a sense of home and craved the challenge in the Alaskan environment. The Navy moved her to Guam (talk about climate changes) and then back to the Texas beaches at Corpus Christi.

In 1991, the call of the wild (ok maybe it was the moose or caribou) got the best of Debra, and she left the Navy to strike out on her own. It took over a year atop Stampede Pass, Washington to re-acclimate herself to the northern environment, but then the National



A Texan in Alaska. Debra Russell, Port Meteorological Officer, in sunny Valdez, Alaska.

Weather Service finally realized that Debra has a lot to offer (she had weather experience and she WANTED to go to Alaska), so they shipped her up to McGrath. Since then, she has been a solid (yet slightly frozen) fixture in Yakutat, Anchorage, King Salmon and now Valdez.

Life is an adventure, but Debra has been blessed. She has gotten the chance to live out her dreams, surrounded by all her loves: her family, the marine community, and the great Alaskan spirit. Who says you cannot go home again...

Welcome Aboard Debra - Luke 📍