

THE COASTAL BREEZE



Brownsville/Rio Grande Valley

December 2022

Welcome to this Special Edition of the Coastal Breeze.

As some of you know, we lost a devoted and beloved longtime forecaster in early November, Timothy Speece. This edition is dedicated to his memory where you will learn how important he was to the National Weather Service (NWS), including some of his many accomplishments here in Brownsville. We have also included photos of his life and stories from his coworkers, friends, and family. Tim was one of a kind and truly touched us all.



**Rest in Peace, Tim.
You will be missed.**

Find us on Social Media and the Web



Remembering Tim



Tim working the radar desk early in his career

Timothy Speece joined the National Weather Service in 1990, working as an Intern in the Waterloo, Iowa office. In 1995 he was selected as a Journeyman Forecaster here in Brownsville, then promoted to Lead Forecaster in 1998. He has since led and been involved in numerous programs in our office over the years. Most recently, these programs included leading the Advance Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS) program (the program we use to analyze data and create the forecast), Tsunami program, Hydrology Program, Service Backup program, WarnGen Program (our software for producing weather warnings), Recycling program, and was a member of the Web and Office Clean Up teams. Not only was Tim leading these programs and team member, he was a brilliant forecaster, and his dedication to the NWS mission was one that is both exemplary and selfless in service.

Some of his most recent career highlights include:

- Making sure non-precipitation warning product formatters were tested and operational.
- Ensured WarnGen templates were tested and provided training to several forecasters.
- As Service Backup Focal Point, he continually made sure all aspects of service backup were configured, tested and, any fixed any issues. This testing and preparation paid off immensely when NWS Brownsville was called upon to perform full service backup duties for Lake Charles, LA when they were forced to evacuate in late August 2020 due to Hurricane Laura, which lasted for four weeks.
- Local Isaac Cline Award for Leadership in 2020.
- Assisting local officials in Louisiana (the day after Hurricane Laura made landfall) with a chemical fire.
- Local Isaac Cline Award for Hydrometeorology in relation to the October 1, 2021 heavy rain/flood event.



Tim on operational shift

Remembering Tim

Outside of his numerous achievements as a forecaster, Tim was also a role model to many in the office. He helped ensure new forecasters were thoroughly trained, was always open to questions, and would be the first to step up and help in any situation.

To many of us, Tim was not only a coworker but a friend and family member. In the following pages, you will read stories from coworkers, friends, and family. While we can never truly capture the scope of how wonderful of a person Tim was, we hope these stories will help to tell the story of how truly caring, funny, and dedicated Tim was to those around him.



Tim and coworker (Joe) during Beach Cleanup 2011

Remembering Tim

Many years ago as a former lead forecaster at the NWS Corpus Christi office, I would occasionally collaborate with Tim during the forecast process. Collaboration back in the late 1990s and early 2000s was done by phone. I always remember Tim's calm voice and him being very articulate. I remember one such conversation we had about weather observations and the value they were to the forecast process. As his supervisor over the past three years, I got to know Tim even more on both a professional and a personal level.

Tim was an incredibly kind person. He was kind to everyone. Tim was a people person. He was a selfless and humble leader who did not have an ego. He was always there for you. Very reliable person that you could count on. His calming voice and easy-going demeanor made him very approachable to all he encountered. Tim was always up for small talk or deep philosophical conversation. He would often come into my office and we would talk for quite some time on not just shop talk but life in general. He was always quoting movies he had watched or passages from books he had read. His memory was extraordinary in that he could retrieve these quotes so quickly.

Tim meant a lot to our office. Not only was he an original lead forecaster at our office, but he was also the one constant at our office for 27 years. Many people in the community knew and trusted Tim. He was well respected by many both inside and outside of our office. Tim's wealth of knowledge of South Texas weather was vast. From hurricanes to winter weather to floods to severe storms, Tim had experienced it all as a veteran forecaster at NWS Brownsville.

We miss Tim very much.

-Mike Buchanan
Meteorologist In Charge
Weather Forecast Office (WFO) Brownsville

Tim was always great with movie quotes. We had several running jokes that were from the movie *Clerks*. While some are not suitable for publication, one of our favorites, particularly when things were going badly or unexpectedly, was "I'm not even supposed to be here today!" It always gave us a good laugh.

-Josh Schroeder
Science and Operations Officer WFO Brownsville



Tim masking up during COVID

Remembering Tim

Tim Speece was very opinionated in the office and he would get on his “soapbox” on many occasions. I remember one conversation we had about “Ancient Aliens”. Tim was channel surfing for something to watch on television and of course one of the cable channels was showing Ancient Aliens. Tim immediately changed the channel and I mentioned to him what was wrong with that television show. Boy did I make a huge mistake. Tim went on to tell me that there were no Ancient Aliens that came down to visit Earth. He went further to imply that the ancient Mayan and other ancient civilizations did not interact with these so-called “space aliens” and therefore did not “learn” any advanced technology as a result of no interaction with them. Of course I mentioned the hieroglyphics that have been found in drawings on caves and inside pyramids. Tim would not have any of that. After my lecture from Tim, I remember him saying “And another thing!”, which was what Tim would always say after one of his “office rants” in operations. I will miss those rants and the conversations I had with Tim over the many years we worked together. It was one of the many reasons that it was ALWAYS a pleasure to work with Tim on shift in the office.

-Mike Castillo

Warning Coordination Meteorologist WFO San Angelo

Former Lead Forecaster WFO Brownsville



Tim presenting at Career Days Event October 2008

Tim was an extremely valuable member of our team here at BRO. Not only was he a skilled lead forecaster, but he had a way about him that brought peace and laughter to most situations. He genuinely cared about everyone here and treated them like family. When I first arrived at BRO, I had very little forecasting experience, but Tim made me feel respected on the job while simultaneously helping to patiently instruct and critique me as needed, so that I could become a better forecaster. He often asked about my family and my dog and we would share crazy dog/pet stories with each other. One of my favorite memories with him was when we talked about my old Chevy Corvair on one of our night shifts and laughed while watching ridiculous old commercials about its off roading “capability”.

-Laura Farris

Forecaster WFO Brownsville

Remembering Tim

I first met Tim in 2014 when I moved across the country to Brownsville, fresh out of college and starting my career in the National Weather Service. He quickly became a mentor to me, and over time, a really good friend. He was always there to give advice on how to maneuver through the agency, but even personal advice on how to navigate life. Midnight shifts with Tim were always a treat, as we all do our best to stay awake through the night, keeping a close weather watch on all residents of Deep South Texas. He was always an open book with anyone that would listen, and told some of the funniest stories, as if you were right there with him. Whenever an older pop culture reference went over your head, Tim would sternly assign a running list of movies to watch or artists to listen to.

Some of my fondest memories with Tim were working tropical operations together. While the stress levels during a hurricane can be quite high due to the responsibility we have of keeping our residents safe, there are some people who manage to provide balance around them - Tim was one of those people. One of his greatest skills was lifting others up and putting their needs first before his own.

Words will never fully describe who Tim was as a person, but he had an undeniable impact on the community he served and friendships he shared.

-Chris Birchfield

Eastern Region Marine, Tropical, and Tsunami Program Manager
Former Forecaster WFO Brownsville

Like everyone I am deeply saddened to learn of Tim's passing. He was a fantastic teammate and friend. I can recall quite a few night and evening shifts with him with some B-movie on SyFy where we would try to guess which of the dumb characters were going to meet their demise first. He had a great insight into weather in the RGV and I was always glad to see him coming up on my scheduled shifts.

-Justin Gibbs

Lead Forecaster WFO Paducah
Former Forecaster WFO Brownsville



Tim with coworkers and at the Port of Entry in Los Ebanos.

Remembering Tim

For those who have been blessed (cursed?) to work a shift with Tim and I, you know we always had an absolute blast on ops floor - complete with wild speculations, obscure movie quotes, silly voices, multiple dialects, rantings, ravings, tangents upon tangents, and an absolute no doubt dedication to our mission of saving lives and property. When we were fielding calls from people stuck on an icy flyover for hours, running out of fuel, cold, and scared, Tim's deep and friendly Carolina voice reassured them they'd be alright. His compassion for those in need was inspiring. His convictions and willingness to stand up for what he believed was motivating. His sneezes were so loud and strong, it would upset the pressure in the building and set off the door alarms - and he followed every one of them with a genuine and quiet "Sorry". His laugh was infectious.

Some of the funnier moments that come to mind include his love for the occasional "snark" or snarkiness. I often had him read my response emails to make sure they weren't too "snarky". Monty Python movies, quotes, skits, sounds. Anything Blazing Saddles - I think he knew every line out of that movie. There was a webinar often played in ops with a gentleman that sounds like the character Buffalo Bill from Silence of the Lambs, and that would send Tim and I into the corner giggling and likening the subject matter to the movie and carrying on, often too loud for whoever was actually trying to listen to the presentation. He loved conspiracy theorists and the outlandish theories they would believe. He often talked about how much fun he had visiting Roswell. One of the very first laughs we shared together was over the "one of us" scene from the 1932 movie "Freaks", which we often quoted whenever someone new joined our team. We could carry on conversations in New England accents or old man voices and sometimes joked about recording an album of old men complaining about things old men complain about set to music, including tracks like "Get off my Lawn", "It's my soccer ball now", and "My soup is cold". Tim had the best "old miner" impression and higher pitched laugh to go with it. There was a video with a rodent yelling "ALAN!" and "STEVE!" that we referenced and laughed about constantly - sometimes at the expense of our co-worker Alan. When he was given a special inhaler that he used in ops, I would sing a parody of the Rolling Stones' Mother's Little Helper: "Doctor please... help Tim Speece... on ops floor, he huffed one more!" And when he finally exhaled his meds, he would smoothly say "what a drag it is getting old"... before we'd both "do-do-do" together through the remainder of the melody. The last good laugh we had together was in the parking lot. Tim was walking to his truck to go home and I was coming in for a shift. His truck was full of black bags full of lawn debris. I gave him a tough "you better not be doing yard work" and he said he was just using the bed as a trash bin for now, waiting for bulk day. I immediately painted the picture that he was probably just driving around the neighborhood placing a bag here or bag there in other people's tree lawns or trash cans. He laughed and said the neighbors are all protecting their bins on his street and we immediately went into old men voices again, carrying on in the parking lot... "get that Speece trash away from mine!"... "you got more room in that bin, your trash could USE a bit of Speece-n up!"... I will forever miss our friendship and laughter.

-Rick Hallman

Lead Forecaster WFO Brownsville

Remembering Tim

Tim was not only a coworker, but a dear friend and quickly became like family to my husband and me. He was helping my husband and I move into our new house carrying, a nightstand down the stairs to the moving truck, and tripped. He fell into the wall, obliterating the nightstand and getting a GIANT welt on his head. In typical Tim fashion, he was more concerned with the nightstand than his head. We finally had to force him to sit down and put ice on it. That lasted five or ten minutes before he insisted on helping more. It was so like him, to put his needs last.

Our times working together on the Ops floor were a blast. We would talk about music, comics, our families, pets, and rant about the state of the world, but most of all we would talk and compare notes on movies. Tim loved old Sci-fi movies, Mystery Science Theater 3000, and horror movies (as do I) which we could talk about for hours. Some of our favorites were from Mystery Science Theater 3000-The Final Sacrifice (the Rowsdower jokes were neverending) and Space Mutiny (Big McLargehuge!). We would laugh until we cried. When Tim had to transition to work from home we would text each other our B movie pick of the week. It wasn't all laughs though. Tim helped me become a more confident forecaster and leader within the office. From day 1 he supported me 100 percent, trusted my judgment and would never hesitate to take the opportunity to teach me something new. I always felt comfortable asking him questions and running my forecast by him. He cared about not only the mission of our work but about the people who performed it. He always asked how I was doing and how my husband was doing at the beginning of a shift or in passing, he even kept this up when he became too sick to come to work. He truly cared about everyone around him. Tim will forever be my favorite coworker and I miss him dearly but I feel fortunate that we crossed paths and that I have so many great memories to remember him by.

-Amber McGinnis
Forecaster WFO Brownsville

I only knew Tim briefly during my 5 month Pathways Internship at WFO Brownsville from July to December 2015. However, Tim was always a very approachable veteran forecaster I relied on for any questions about the local area. No matter what the situation, how busy it was, Tim was steady as a rock and that spilled over to everyone else on shift. I only wish I got to know him longer, but will always remember him.

-Randall J. Hergert
Former Pathways Intern WFO Brownsville



Tim working on hurricane training 2022

Remembering Tim

Our upper air building has had many critters in it over the years. However, the tarantulas tend to take over during the spring months here at the office. I remember one evening when I was releasing the weather balloon I found two tarantulas in the upper air building. I was terrified!! So I called the office and Tim was more than willing to walk all the way out there and help me “peacefully” dispose of them. Since that day, he more often than not walked out there with me (especially in the early mornings when it was dark) and checked the building for creepy crawlies and made sure I was comfortable and safe before heading back to the office. Some of our best conversations were out in that building. The whole time he was trying to calm my anxiety down and make sure I wasn’t so afraid to be out there anymore. Though I still hate going out to that building, now I will always think of him whenever I am out there.

-Angelica Soria

Forecaster WFO Brownsville

I knew Tim for over 11 years and he was a great coworker, mentor and friend. Tim mentioned to me the first day that we met that “There are no absolutes in weather, so always expect the unexpected”. Surprisingly, his words of wisdom proved to be true as later that night, we had an unexpected severe weather event. He was very approachable and was always willing to help out no matter how busy he was. Tim was a Google guru as he always was quick to check with Google while he was talking about movies or travel with me. I will surely miss our long talks about movies and his long office rants about current events.

-Kirk Caceres

Forecaster WFO Brownsville



Tim at Career Days Event October 2008

Remembering Tim

Tim was always such a nice guy. I'd see him as he was leaving after his night shift ended at 7am and he always stopped to ask me how my family was doing, how I was doing. He was always kind and considerate. He also liked to "torment" us. I remember how he used to have a subscription to his hometown newspaper and he'd bring it in occasionally. He'd open the paper and say "let me read you some articles from my hometown." Everyone would say "NO!!" and he would laugh so loud. I will miss our talks and I will miss Tim very much.

-Rachel Gil

Administrative Assistant WFO Brownsville

I first met Tim when I arrived in Brownsville back in November 2007. As so many have mentioned, he was one of the most easy-going people to work with and that was my experience as well. I'll remember him for his generosity and gift-giving; he always had a host of films (on DVD and even VHS) to hand out to departing or retiring staff, with a connective story behind them. Soon after I moved into my new house, he gave me a AA/AAA battery recharger (with batteries, of course) for electronic gadgets; Tim was always environmentally conscious, exhibited by such gifts and his volunteering to take crushed aluminum soda cans from the office to Brownsville's recycling center every week. On the job, Tim provided critical contributions during the office's upgrade of the operating system used to produce forecasts and warnings. Tim's effort ensured that we had a seamless transition to the software used to generate flood, thunderstorm, and tornado warnings - the backbone of our critical weather operations.

As Tim would say: And another thing! I'll remember our vibrant overnight conversations. Some say the third rail of polite discussion is politics and religion with Tim, there was no third rail - we'd "go there" with deep and often animating conversation, sharing our thoughts passionately before realizing time had flown, and we had deadlines to hit. What defined Tim for so many was his ability to make you laugh. Back in the early 2010s, myself, Fred Vega, and Tim traveled to Austin for a hydrology meeting. At supper, he relayed a story about a dress-code violation that had us in stitches - laughing uncontrollably until we cried and almost literally falling out of our chairs. The Magnolia Cafe was never the same!

-Barry Goldsmith

Warning Coordination Meteorologist WFO Brownsville



Tim during Beach Cleanup 2011

Remembering Tim

Through all of the highs and lows of Timothy's illness, he always remained the kind, humble, supportive, funny, loyal, loving, best friend and brother that I will be forever thankful for. He was always there for me, and we could talk about anything. I was four years older than him. Our two older brothers were 6 and 10 years older than me, so Timothy and I were closer in age and spent quite a bit of time together growing up.

One of my favorite memories of our time together as children was to sit outside on our parents covered back porch and watch weather moving through our area. We would sit covered in a quilt, and watch storms pass through during the day and at night. We also had a small telescope to look at the sky. At times I was scared, but he loved it. He would excitedly talk about things we saw, and explain them to me. He definitely loved his work, and knew what he wanted to do for a career as a young child.

After he started his job working for the National Weather Service, one way he always made me feel very loved and protected was by watching over me and my family when it came to weather events in our area. He would call me no matter the time of day or night, ask me if we were ok, and give me a weather update. He told us several times over the years to take shelter during tornadic weather events that happened near our home. He bought a weather radio for us and would remind us to keep it on. We definitely appreciated his concern and love for us.

-Cindy Speece Robbins
Tim's sister



From left to right: 2 years old; 12 years old; 21 years old

Remembering Tim

Tim met his wife, Yolanda (Yoli), through his work at the National Weather Service. She worked for a radio station out of Mission and had to call quite frequently to get the temperatures. It seemed Tim was always the one who answered the phone. Yoli made it clear over their conversations that she was not interested in him and was only calling so often due to her work. As they continued to get to know each other, Yoli decided to ask Tim out on a date. He agreed. Tim drove to Weslaco to pick her up, and they drove to McAllen for their date. They went to dinner at Applebees and saw the movie Mr. Wrong, where they laughed and laughed. She was impressed that Tim paid for everything, considering she was the one to ask him out.

Some time later, they were at Tim's co-worker's house. where he went to fix something. She recalls Mystery Science Theater 3000 being on TV, one of his favorite shows. Tim was getting over a cold, and he pulled out a handkerchief. At this moment, she knew she had to marry him, as a gentleman always carries a swiss army knife and a handkerchief.

When they decided to get married, Yoli had been shopping around looking at rings. She did not want a traditional ring but found one she loved. Tim bought that exact ring for her without knowing that was the one she wanted.



Left to Right: Tim and Yoli on their wedding day; Tim and Yoli earlier this year.

Timothy Speece
February 21, 1968- November 5, 2022



“ I just want people to think of me as a clown” -Tim Speece

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NWS Mission

Provide **weather**, water, and climate data, forecasts and warnings for the protection of life and property and enhancement of the **national** economy.



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