NAVSUP household goods manager bids farewell

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NAVSUP Fleet Logistics Center (NAVSUP FLC) Yokosuka Personal Property Division Director Herbert L. Elam retired Friday, Sept. 30, after serving a combined 50 years in both the U.S. Air Force and as a federal civil service employee.

Herb Elam, the former director of the Personal Property Division at NAVSUP Fleet Logistics Center Yokosuka, recalls his 50 years' service to the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Civil Service. Elam retired Friday, Sept. 30.

"I know this will come as a shock: I don't know where the time went," Elam said.

Elam cast himself as a "country boy from Kentucky" who just wanted to see the world. Thirty of his 50 years' service was completed overseas in both Europe and Asia. Raised in the coal-mining town of Blue Diamond, Ky., Elam said he and his brothers were supported by a coal-mining father who didn't favor his sons following his footsteps down into the mines. His other brothers elected military and civil service decisions, too; Elam pursued a somewhat higher calling: the Air Force.

It was 1961; fresh out of high school, Elam attended basic training at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio. After brief leave back home, he then pursued a life-long dream to ride the countryside by train. After making his way to Chicago – with about $50 in his pocket – Elam bought a train ticket on the California Zephyr, in a glass-domed touring coach, to San Francisco and his first assignment at Ft. Suisan, Calif.

"I spent just about everything I had in my pocket at the time for that train ride – I had maybe 50 cents left. It took three days. And it was Thanksgiving. I was one hungry, corn-bread country boy but that train ride – watching the country go by night and day – that was the highlight of my life.

"The first thing I did when I got to San Francisco was to make my way to see the ocean. That was amazing. I had never seen the ocean and its expanse was overwhelming," Elam said, then smiled, "Can you imagine a good-ole-boy from Kentucky arriving in San Francisco at the height of the beatnik movement? That was probably my first cultural exchange moment."

Elam's initial Air Force Assignments gave him travel and living opportunities in Germany, Spain, Italy, France and Scotland.

"Every assignment was an adventure," Elam said. "Where haven't I been in Europe? I once took a VW (Volks Wagon) bus on a trip over the Pyrenees – I think I drove it in first gear the entire trip. I've camped on sheep grounds in Rome."

Elam then stretched his horizons to the other side of the world, being assigned to Japan, which Elam refers to as "the land of the warmest people and the best food" for the first time in 1971.

Elam remembers his first introduction to sushi.

"No problem," he said. "I was a beans and taters boy from the American Midwest, but I considered myself very adventurous. I've tried various foods around the world. I loved the food all over Europe. I loved Japanese food."

Elam found his niche in transportation and the movement of household goods and personal property as his primary job in the Air Force; then, after he retired in 1989, he continued in a service industry he was both familiar and proud of.

"It was always about serving families in the greater sense," Elam said, "trying to put yourself in a family's position, moving from one place to the other, over and over. And, I'll tell you another thing, military spouses have my deepest respect. They not only endure the absence of their military spouse, but are often the lone family member handing the household move – frequently to unfamiliar overseas locations.

"But," he quipped, "they're the most demanding."

His most memorable assignment was at the Joint Personal Property Shipping Office (PPO) at Ft. Belvoir between 1990 and 1999.

"Easily the busiest PPO in the world," Elam said. "We were clearing 400 shipments a day but, again, it was for the families."

Elam has been married since 1988, is proud of an adult son and daughter and says he is proud to have served his country for the last 50 years without any regret.

"And I think I'm proudest of my years here at the (NAVSUP) Fleet Logistics Center. You know, we went through 3 IG (Inspector General) inspections and I'm proud we documented the three best business practices and 15 noteworthy achievements since I got here seven years ago."

Elam says he plans to settle in the Northwest and reconnect with his adult children in Washington State.

2011 holiday season NAVSUP mailing dates announced

From Naval Supply Systems Command
Office of Corporate Communications

MECHANICSBURG, Pa. – The Naval Supply Systems Command's (NAVSUP) Postal Policy Division mail-by dates for pre-Dec. 25 delivery of holiday cards, letters, and packages were announced Sept. 27.

The applicable dates are as follows:

Shore APO/FPO/DPO AE zips 090-098 (except 093); AA zips 340; AP zips 962-966

- Express Mail: Dec. 17
- First-Class Mail: Dec. 10
- Parcel Airlift Mail: Dec. 3
- Space Available Mail: Nov. 26
- Parcel Post: Nov. 12

Express Mail Military Service (EMMS) is available from selected military post offices.

If mailing to an APO/FPO address, check with your local post office to determine if this service is available.

Parcel Airlift Mail (PAL) is a service that provides air transportation for parcels on a space-available basis.

It is available for Parcel Post items that do not exceed 30 pounds in weight or 60 inches in length and girth combined.

The applicable PAL fee must be paid in addition to the regular surface rate of postage for each addressed piece sent by PAL service.

Space Available Mail (SAM) refers to parcels mailed to APO/FPO addresses at parcel post rates that are first transported domestically by surface and then to overseas destinations by air on a space available basis.

The maximum weight and size limits are 15 pounds and 60 inches in length and girth combined. From overseas locations, items mailed at Parcel Post rates are sent to CONUS by air on a space available basis.

The maximum weight and size limit are 70 pounds and 130 inches in length and girth combined.

It is also recommended that customers check with their local civilian or military post office for information on size restrictions and possible need for customs declaration forms.

Additionally, customers are advised that certain mail restrictions apply and some items can not be mailed.

Examples are: switchblade knives, pornography, controlled substances, and explosive or incendiary devices.

If in doubt as to what can or cannot be sent through the mail, contact your local civilian or military post office.

As a final note, customers are cautioned that packages must not be mailed in boxes that have markings related to any type of hazardous material, such as bleach, alcohol, or cleaning fluids.

Parcels found by the U.S. Postal Service with such markings or labels on the outside of the box will not be processed.