

This week's veteran is Jim Elam,

Jim was born in Urbana, Illinois, and went to the Urbana schools. He was a multi-sport letterman in basketball, football, track and baseball. The summer after graduating from Urbana High School, 1955, Jim joined the Navy.

After finishing basic at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Jim was sent to San Diego, California, for training at the Communications School. He learned about electricity, communication equipment, and movie projectors. In those days the movie projectionist was a unit's most important person because movies were the only source of entertainment.

Upon completion of his schooling, Jim was assigned to the guided missile ship, USS *Norton Sound* of Port Hueneme, California. Built during WW II as a seaplane tender, she was redesigned as a guided missile cruiser and fired the Navy's first shipborne guided missile in the fall of 1948. Jim says, "I was stationed on the *Norton Sound* for three years. During this time, the ship was only at sea two to three days at a time. When we were at sea, we would practice shooting guided missiles. Because guided missiles were experimental at that time, their behavior was quite erratic, some going into the water and some had to be shot down because they turned and headed back to the ship." During his time on the *Norton Sound*, Jim maintained the electrical and phone systems aboard ship. He would also make the two hour trip to San Diego to pick up movies which he showed on the ship at night.

Jim's next ship was the USS *Boxer*. While aboard, he made one tour to the Persian Gulf because of a possible war in the area. In 1958, *Boxer* was the flagship during Operation Hardtack, a series of nuclear weapons tests near the Marshal and Kwajalein Islands in the Central Pacific. The inhabitants were removed from the islands during the tests. Jim states, "Although they were supposed to return to the Islands, the people never did because of too much radiation." During his duty in the Pacific, he enjoyed having shore leave in Hawaii.

After discharge, Jim returned to Urbana to work for Northern Illinois Water Company. As a second job, he had his own small home maintenance business. After working for Northern for ten years, Jim became head of maintenance at Kemmerer Village. While at Kemmerer for 39 years, Jim played slow pitch softball for Assumption. He also coached Little League, girl's softball, and Kemmerer athletic teams.

Jim married his wife Bonnie in 1956. They have three children, seven grandchildren (one deceased), and three great-grandchildren.

Thank you, 2nd Class Inter-Communication Petty Officer James Edward Elam, for what you gave for us.

ATTENTION: The Veterans Memorial dedication will be May 25 at 2 PM following the VFW Auxiliary chicken dinner from 11 AM to 1 PM.