



HOUSTON PORT METEOROLOGICAL OFFICER, JIM NELSON, RETIRES

By Robert Luke
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Jim Nelson, the Houston, Texas Port Meteorological Officer (PMO) retired from Government service on March 29, 2002.

Jim Nelson began his official government career 47 years ago when he joined the “wooden ships and iron men” of the U.S. Navy. Actually, he had been serving in this nomadic life for years, for he had salt in his blood from the day he was born – his father was a Navy Chief.

After basic training, Jim was sent to Oklahoma for additional military bearing, and it was there that Jim encountered his first tornado and gained an interest in weather. Jim took orders to the Navy Weather School in Lakehurst, NJ. Upon graduating, Jim saw duty at many commands like the **USS Antietam** (CVA/CVS-36), Naval Air Station Quonset Point, RI, **USS Willis A. Lee** (DL-5), and the **USS Courtney** (DE-1015). It was aboard the **Courtney** that Jim learned to navigate, shoot the Sun and Stars and use LORAN “B”. While serving on the **USS Otterstetter** (DER-335), Jim encountered another rare and treacherous weather phenomena.



Jim Nelson, 1955

The **Otterstetter** was caught up in what history calls the Ash Wednesday storm that hit the European coast. On that day in 1960, this storm caused considerable damage in Holland. The **Otterstetter** ended up breaking her back in that storm, so Jim cross decked yet again to the **USS Edisto** (AGB-2), just in time to make the “exotic” port calls of Thule, Greenland, and Antarctica.

In the rest of Jim’s illustrious naval career, he was assigned to the **USS Independence** (CVA-62), and Fleet Weather Centrals in Norfolk, VA and Rota, Spain.

When Jim was assigned as an Instructor back in Lakehurst where he taught aviation and



Jim Nelson, today

synoptic surface observations, meteorology, plotting and upper air, he finally got a chance to pay the Navy back for all the fun he had been given in past years.

Jim finally hung up his anchors in 1974 while serving in Charleston, SC.

Not one for sitting still, Jim started his second career right away and began working for NOAA at the National Climatic Center (later renamed National Climatic Data Center) in Asheville, NC. Jim was responsible for checking surface and upper air observations for quality and correctness.

Nine years later the moving itch finally won, and Jim transferred to Galveston, TX as a radar operator. In 1987, he assumed the duties as PMO in the Houston and Galveston region. Jim has been instrumental in the excellence of the VOS program and has been a benchmark to the kind of



ambassadorship and shipmate that the waterfront knows and respects.

When asked to comment about his retirement, Jim's only words were, "YES!! I made it!!"

Jim has been married to the former Elizabeth (Betty) A. Jensen of Waltham MA for the last 41 years, and together they have 4 children and 4 grandchildren. Jim and Betty live in League City, TX and don't have any plans to move to some retirement village in Florida. Instead, Jim plans to spend most of his time working in his yard and aggravating his wife.

On behalf of the VOS program, we wish, Jim and Betty, *Fair winds and following seas.* ⚓



VOS participants keep a close eye on the weather and notice cloud formations as indications of weather activity. This series of cloud photos taken at L41-13N Long 68-00W southeast of Frenchmans Bay was provided by Jack McAdam, Master of NOAA ship Delaware.