

George E. Elam, Jr.

George Elam Software Services, LLC



Now we have George Elam, a second generation Rotarian who joined the Rotary Club of Houston (RCH) in 1979. His father encouraged him to join the Club, and he was sponsored by Tommy Thomason (incidentally, the originator of the rodeo calf scramble). Following Mr. Thomason's lead, George was active with the rodeo's speakers' committee, and later served as the chair of that committee. George wanted to join the Rotary Club because of the wide range of service opportunities within the Club. He believed it was the right time in his life to start giving back to the community. Throughout his years with RCH, his main interest has been the Fresh Start committee. He talked at length about RCH's history of involvement with the prison system to begin providing educational opportunities to pre-release prisoners to increase their prospects for success upon release. Now two Rotarians go to the Central Farm Unit (in Sugar Land near the Sugar Land airport) every other week to talk with a group of prisoners who are nearing release. George said his reward for this work is the appreciation the prisoners show for the information and perspectives the Rotarians bring to them.

George also has served on the Red Badge committee, was the Club's treasurer in the early 1990's, and has served four multi year terms as a member of the Club's board.

In his work, George calls himself an "independent software consultant". Most of his clients are small to medium sized businesses that provide relatively unusual services or products – that in turn require the use of specialized software. If a client already is using a particular software application, they may ask George to fine tune or modify the software to better meet their changing needs. Or, George may choose a new software application – including the design of the software if needed – for a client, install the software in the client's system, and help the staff learn to operate the new application. George said the reward of this work for him is the satisfaction that comes from helping the client perform a new operation, or improve the effectiveness of some aspect of his business. He said, "I love the work because of my fascination with computers, and the way people run their businesses."

George came to this work from an interesting background: His family moved to Houston from the Upper Midwest (largely to escape the cold weather there) when George was a small boy. After graduating from high school in New Orleans, he went away to college – to Rice.. There he obtained a B.A. in Mathematics. (Rice? Mathematics? I'm impressed.) Right after graduation, he was invited by the Army to take a physical. Rather than letting himself be drafted, he enlisted and spent 2 years and 10 months as an Army officer. He then taught high school science and math courses for a year, before discovering an opportunity to join IBM as a data processing systems engineer. For 9 years he sold and installed large, complex data processing systems to major clients for IBM. While with IBM, he obtained a Master's Degree from Southern Methodist U. in Liberal Arts, with the financial help of IBM and the GI Bill. After a couple of jobs in other fields, George got back to computers and software, leading finally to a decision to go out on his own in 2004 as a consultant.

In addition to his consulting work and his Rotary involvement, George is very active in his church, especially in its missions work, both locally and in Mexico. He continues his work with the Houston Livestock Show & Rodeo, and is an Honorary Life Member of the Greater Houston Partnership. To relax, George enjoys his children and grandchildren, plays a little golf, goes fishing occasionally, reads history, and is an amateur radio operator (i.e., a “ham”). He meets monthly with a group of fellow hams who build their own communications equipment. (The most technologically sophisticated folks in the ham world. They probably went to Rice, too.)

George appears to be one of those enviable people who are very comfortable in their own skin, who enjoy just about all aspects of their current life situation, who feel good about the course their life has taken, who are fulfilled in their work and their service to the world around them, and are not waiting for something special to happen. In other words, his “bucket list” is very short, and that feels good. He believes that people see him as a good listener, someone who cares and encourages people to live life fully. If he came into a large sum of money, he said he’d use it to help the projects of his church, Rotary International, and the committee work of the RCH.

George is unusual, in that he has a great depth of knowledge and interest in the technological world of computers, while also having a broad range of interests in people and in the more abstract areas of life. I think that meets the definition of a renaissance man. Rotary is lucky to have him.