Government Salary info w. Sherry Vitovsky

* There’s appropriated fund and non
* NAFI – non-appropriated fund - it means that the government doesn’t pay a dime of your salary
* Then there’s AFI – appropriated funds
* Civil service is an example of appropriated funds
* AAFES is non-appropriated – they run every retail business on Army and Airforce, Navy, Coast Guard, and Marines was run by NEXCOM, but food was run by someone totally different and those are run by appropriated funds (DECA)
* The general consensus is that the appropriated fund agencies paid more
* An AAFES starting salary could be based on additional factors, not just a posted income. They have a formula they use where they put you in at, based on experience and education.
* The pay range was very broad – it was very flexible for people’s various experience and gives opportunities to people with lots of backgrounds and even disabilities
* There have been pay freezes that have kept office from filling positions. For example, attorneys were having to do a lot of paralegal work because their office couldn’t fill empty seats. People were very overworked but weren’t getting paid more
* Jobs used to be posted internally only, but now most jobs are also posted externally. So now there is more competition for jobs
* Every 5 years made a large difference to her pension. Working 2-3 more years didn’t make as much of a difference, so deciding to stay would sort of mean another 5 year commitment in one’s mind.
* It used to be that your years of service counted more for income. Now specializations and degrees count for more.
* Most of the job descriptions will say “would prefer a degree” or the like, but it wasn’t mandatory.
* The benefits are what kept her there. She wanted to leave SO many times and go work in the private sector, but she was thinking long term. She was offered a great job once, but the logistics of the commute plus losing her benefits made her turn it down. Back then, people weren’t very open about their benefits at job interviews, so she really didn’t know what the company offered and didn’t want to risk what she had.
* It’s common among the non-civil service jobs to believe that the civil service jobs are overpaid
* It took 17 years before she finally got promoted into management because at that time your years of service mattered a lot more so she had to wait her turn. People can get promoted faster now.
* Example of appropriated funds being paid more – AAFES (non-appropriated) and DECA (appropriated) have been trying to merge together, but DECA would have to lose $5-6 per hour to come down to AAFES. So they would have had to do a pay freeze for 6 years to bring DECA down to AAFES
* Pension calculation hasn’t changed, but paid up insurance has stopped. Pensions can start at age 50 with 20 years (something like that – she’s getting me the formula). Paid up insurance would also start then, including spouse and family. The insurance benefit fell off about 12 years ago – that is what the newer employees don’t get. But they still get the same pension.
* She thinks younger employees understand the value of the pension. The education is better.
* Most NAFIs don’t double dip into SS
* People that retire a little early are hired “like that” when they start going to other agencies. AAFES is world-wide and the employees work with global logistics and many other sought after areas. So it’s not hard to get a job after retiring or leaving.
* Sometimes folks go work for another govt agency, mainly executives. A lot of people will have multiple job offers right away.
* Some people want the house, car, etc. so they go back to work in the private sector simply to have things they couldn’t get while they were employed.
* Do you think stress makes a person retire earlier than they would normally? “Absolutely. Especially in a legal office.”
* She thinks about 10 years is when people are much stickier. Especially since every 5 years is a bump in your pension. Then it’s 15, because you get more sick leave, PTO, etc.
* You have to want to do it, and you have to want to do it well to keep up with the work. Otherwise it’s too stressful for too little pay.
* EOP – Exchange Operating Procedures was what they called their procedure manuals. Working with new hires was difficult because they didn’t always follow it and they were used to it.
* AAFES is over 100 years old
* There were people that were by the book in terms of “40 hrs a week” and didn’t really put forth much of an effort. But there were people that worked long hours and gave extra. You didn’t move up as much having a lax attitude.
* They did annual reviews – clerical role reviews were very simple and a one pager. If you were non clerical (manager), you have to input your own goals and how you did very detailed. You review them quarterly to see if you were on track.
* It is possible to get demoted! She knew people that did. The supervisor basically didn’t think they cut the mustard. It was also difficult to move over to make a lateral move (so that you can move up), but you have to ask for it and the supervisor may not necessarily lose you. It is possible for a supervisor to keep you, and the inner department dynamics sometimes had competition and they just didn’t want to help out another department. But you have recourse and other methods to move up if they block you. You can post a job audit, you can submit a JAQ (job analysis questionnaire). She did this three times. It’s hard, though. They don’t just grant JAQs. Once it took a year to get the raise she deserved (she submitted a JAQ because she believed her job actually included many more responsibilities than what she was being paid for).
* About every 5 years a team of people from HR would go out (including in the real world) to analyze salaries. It was very rare that there were pay decreases because their salaries were so much less than the real world. If they did decrease, you would get your same salary for two years, THEN the decrease happened. So usually by then you had moved up or left.
* The most frustrating thing about working for the govt is that people don’t understand what it’s like to work for the govt. She can’t even share when she got raises because people would say, “Well I hope my tax benefits paid for that!” AAFES makes millions over their overhead each year, and that all goes to MWR – Morale, Welfare, and Recreation. Tax dollars doesn’t build the day care centers, etc… AAFES does!
* NBFF – Name brand fast food. AAFES negotiated to bring these to bases. First one they asked was McDonalds, and they said no. Taco Bell, Burger King are there, though, and Starbucks (plus a lot more). McDonalds has come back asking to be added but AAFES says no.