

## We Honor Veterans Newsletter



**June 2020 Edition**

### **Vernon West - Proud Navy Veteran**

**Vernon Francis West** (yes – that is VFW) entered the Navy in 1943. Vernon served on LST-744, mostly in the South Pacific. LST-744 earned four battle stars for World War II service.

During World War II, LST-744 was assigned to the Asiatic-Pacific theater and participated in the following operations: Morotai landings-September 1944; Leyte landings-October and November 1944; Lingayen Gulf landing-January 1945; and the Mindanao Island landings-April 1945.

Vernon kept a detailed diary or log documenting all of his ports of call along with information and photos of friends, family and people he met along the way. This diary is treasured by his children who can see what their father's life was like during his three years in the Navy.

When asked about his favorite port of call, Vernon gets a faraway look in his eyes, smiles and says “the Philippines” – but does not elaborate.

Vernon, along with 17 other WWII, Korea, and Vietnam Veterans, attended a Vet Café at Oak Crest Retirement Community held earlier this year. The Vet Café was hosted by Oak Crest and was facilitated by five Vietnam Veteran volunteers from Gilchrist. The Oak Crest veterans brought photos from their years in the military. As Vernon's photo was passed around, someone commented that he had a great head of hair back then. Vernon then shared with the group that his buddies told him he had “Betty Grable” hair.

Vernon's daughter Janet also attended the Vet Café and brought along Vernon's original Navy uniform. Talking with Vernon and looking through his diary and military photos and documents, it is clear he is a proud Navy Veteran.





Veterans attend Oak Crest Vet Café



LST-744

## Captain Wisowaty Celebrates 100 Years!

Gilchrist military veteran volunteers recently conducted a very special Salute to Service Tribute (SST) for Gladys Wisowaty. Gladys was celebrating her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. However, this story begins many years ago.

Gladys was a member of the Army Nurse Corps where she worked as an Army Combat Nurse. Gladys was assigned to the 23<sup>rd</sup> General Hospital activated at Fort Meade, Maryland on July 15, 1942. Her unit was deployed to Casablanca, French Morocco in North Africa in 1943 and subsequently moved to the war zones of Italy and France. Captain Gladys Wisowaty was discharged following 4 years of service in 1947.

On December 7, 1941, the Army Corps of Nurses numbered less than 1,000. Only 82 were stationed in Hawaii that day, serving three Army medical facilities. The attacks on Pearl Harbor were a turning point for the United States and the war as a whole. As men and women enlisted, the military grew, including the Army Nurse Corps. In all, more than 59,000 American nurses served in World War II.



Gladys Wisowaty



Gilchrist veteran volunteers honor Gladys Wisowaty with a Salute to Service Tribute

## The Flying Adventures of Curt Rock

Curtis (Curt) Rock and his brothers Preston and Gardner knew they wanted to fly from a

very young age. Growing up in Brooklyn, New York near Floyd Bennett Field, the “Rock Boys” spent many hours at the field watching the pilots and planes. They became fascinated with flying as they watched some of the early aviation heroes fly into and out of Floyd Bennett Field.

Following high school, Curt attended Howard University. Then he was off to join the Air Force in 1949 to be trained as a pilot and then as an instructor pilot. To meet the need for pilots in Korea, Curt was sent to combat flight training and learned to fly the P-51 Mustang. Curt Rock arrived in Korea in 1952 where he flew a number of missions. When the Air Force began the transition to F-86 jets, Curt and others took their P-51s to Japan. Curt then returned to the US where he learned to fly the T-33 and F-86 jets. Curt was then transferred to the Military Air Transport Service where he flew the C-118 to many countries around the world.

You may be wondering about Curt’s older brothers Preston and Gardner. Preston flew with the Tuskegee Airmen and Gardner joined the Air Force and also was a fighter pilot in Korea. The Rock Boys definitely fulfilled their dreams of flying.

Curt Rock left the Air Force as a Captain in 1960.

Curt was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute (SST). The SST is conducted in homes, residential communities, and Gilchrist Centers. The tribute is a meaningful and heartfelt ceremony that includes giving the veteran a certificate of appreciation, a pin, a thank you card from a student, a handmade patriotic quilt, and music from a particular branch of the service. The SST for Curt Rock included family members, seven active duty Air Force personnel, three Gilchrist military veteran volunteers, and a number of Gilchrist staff. The SST concluded with a formal salute by all uniformed military personnel. One of the active duty members of the Air Force commented “It was an honor to salute a true American hero.”

For more information on Curt Rock, watch this video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSyjJ1v8P6U>



P-51



Curt Rock being honored with a Salute to Service Tribute

## Virtual Salute to Service Tributes

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Gilchrist staff and volunteers had to explore alternative approaches to honor our veterans. One of the approaches proving effective is to conduct a remote or virtual SST. To conduct the pinning ceremony, one or more Gilchrist staff are with the veteran. One or more of our military veteran volunteers then conduct the ceremony use Zoom or FaceTime.

As Gilchrist staff are unable to go into some of the residential care centers, we have reached out to staff working with the veterans and they have been willing to assist with the remote salutes.

Gilchrist is committed to honoring our veterans and will continue to explore alternative approaches to do this until we are once again able to conduct the tribute face-to-face with the veteran.

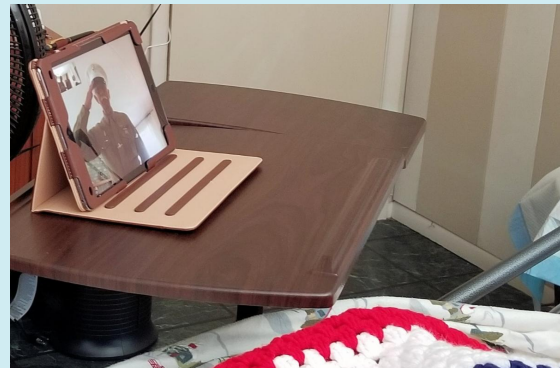


Marine and Vietnam veteran Thomas Fuchsluger being honored for his service during a virtual SST. He is seen here with a Gilchrist Social Worker and Chaplain.



Veteran volunteer Ed Kaplan conducts a Salute to Service Tribute using Zoom. As seen on the computer screen, there were quite a few participating in the ceremony. In addition to family in the US, there was a family member joining from Germany. There were six veteran volunteers, a chaplain and music therapist conducting the tribute.

Final salute for a veteran unable to have visitors in his room.



## Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans

Our next Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration is scheduled for March 21, 2021. This is a day to honor and thank the men and women in our community who served during the Vietnam War. This Welcome Home celebration honors the veterans in our care as well as all of the veterans and their loved ones in our community.

At this time, we may stream the live event online. Our hope is that we can have some of our veterans in attendance with others watching the event online. We will let everyone know our final plans as soon as they become available. Be sure to mark your calendars for **March 21, 2021** because one way or another we will be honoring our Vietnam Veterans.

# Increased Accessibility

VA has good news for Veterans who need same-day urgent care for a minor illness or injury during the coronavirus pandemic: VA and its in-network community urgent care clinics are rapidly adapting their care practices to include video and phone options to ensure Veterans have access to their providers, while reducing potential exposure.

Veterans who need urgent care may have the option to use telehealth (phone- or video-based visits) instead of in-person visits at VA or in-network community clinics. Telehealth allows Veterans to conveniently access health care at home while reducing their exposure to COVID-19. Veterans have increased use of phone or video appointments by more than 800% in a matter of weeks.

Some VA or community urgent care clinics may be affected by closures, limited services, quarantining or social distancing based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local health department guidelines.

For safety, Veterans should call before visiting any VA or community urgent care clinic. They should ask about options to receive care virtually by phone or video.

Veterans can find same-day care locations by using the VA facility locator (<https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>) and selecting "urgent care" under facility type. Then select "community providers" as the service type. Alternatively, Veterans can find an in-network urgent care clinic by contacting their local VA medical facility. They also can call the VHA Office of Community Care National Contact Center at 877-881-7618.

Veterans who have care currently scheduled can continue to use this care as available and clinically appropriate. Sometimes VA's community partners are not able to provide urgent and time-sensitive care. When that happens, VA will coordinate care and absorb that need at one of the VA medical facilities.

Through this unified system, VA continues to deliver care at the VA and in the community. We will see Veterans through this time of challenge.

# Virtual Remembrance Wall

## MDVA Builds Virtual Remembrance Wall in Advance of Memorial Day

"Flanders Fields", authored by Lt. Col. John McCrae, is a poem written during some of the fiercest battles of World War I. It was written from the perspective of the fallen and directs survivors to keep living.

Because of this directive, MDVA is launching a virtual remembrance wall. The fallen tell us in the poem, "to you from failing hands we throw the torch; be yours to hold it high". Click on this link to go to the virtual remembrance wall:

<https://veterans.maryland.gov/flanders-fields-and-the-mdva-virtual-remembrance-wall/>

MDVA is seeking stories of our fallen, reflections on their lives and narratives on what our fallen would have us know about the torch they wish us to hold high.

Remembrances will be shared on the website, in an electronic newsletter, and on social media. Please consider also sharing photos. MDVA will include their stories in a virtual Memorial Day message at 11:00AM on May 23, 2020. Throughout the year, we will add to the wall.

If you would like to share a remembrance message about a friend or family member, please email [remembrance.wall@maryland.gov](mailto:remembrance.wall@maryland.gov) and provide the following information (feel free to copy and paste the text below in to your email).

**MDVA Virtual Remembrance Wall Information:**

- Your name: (please confirm if OK to publicly share your name)
- Your email:
- Your relation to the service member:
- Service members name:
- Branch of service:
- Years of service:
- In what era did they serve (World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Gulf War to Present, Other):
- Brief narrative of their service:
- What would they would want the living to know:

*By sending this email, the sender agrees to have the information contained therein shared on the MDVA website and other MDVA social media channels.*

Thank you for supporting the MDVA and for honoring the fallen in this manner.

Questions regarding the Remembrance Wall can be directed to [remembrance.wall@maryland.gov](mailto:remembrance.wall@maryland.gov)

## Operation Roll Call

### **Maryland's Commitment to Veterans (MCV) Operation Roll Call**

How MCV Roll Call works:

Veterans and/or Veteran's family members (with the veteran's written or verbal consent to the MCV Regional Resource Coordinator {RRC}) can be a part of the MCV Roll Call by calling the MCV 24/7 Hotline at 1/877-770-4801 to register for a once a week or bi-weekly call or as we say "Roll Call" check-in.

Who Qualifies for MCV Roll Call:

To be a part of the MCV Roll Call, you must have served in the military and reside within the State of Maryland.

What is needed to be a part of the MCV Roll Call:

The veteran must have a working cell phone and/or land line. The veteran will also need an alternate person (family member, friend, neighbor, etc.) who will agree to check on the veteran if the RRC is unable to reach them after three call attempts.

How does the veteran register:

The veteran will need to call the MCV 24/7 Hotline at 1/877-770-4801 to request to be a part of MCV Operation Roll Call. The call information will then be directed to their local RRC. The RRC will then reach out to the veteran to obtain the information needed to place them in the MCV Operation Roll Call program. Once the veteran has completed registration, the RRC will call to check in on the veteran once a week or once every two weeks (whichever the veteran chooses). A copy of the form can be mailed/emailed to the veteran upon their request.

What else should the veteran know:

If the veteran does not respond after at least 3 attempts, the RRC will then call the alternate contact to have the contact check on the status of the veteran. This is a voluntary program which the veteran may opt out of at any time. None of the veteran's information will be shared with any other organizations.

## Uniform Smiles

As A.J. and his platoon of recruits were marching, their sergeant slipped and tumbled

down a ravine. The irate sergeant scrambled back up amid guffaws and barked, "Those who laughed, get down and give me 20!" A.J. and some others fell to the ground quickly and did their push-ups. Meanwhile, the sergeant glared at the others. "As for the rest of you, get down and give me 40 for lying!"

## Please Share

If you enjoyed reading this edition, please forward a copy to other veterans that you know so that they can also enjoy the newsletter. If you are reading a shared copy and would like to receive your own copy of future editions, please send an email with your request to [wehonorveterans@gilchristcares.org](mailto:wehonorveterans@gilchristcares.org)

## Looking For a Few Good Volunteers

**Would you like to be a Gilchrist volunteer?** We are always looking for volunteers – especially those who have military experience. Our military veteran volunteers are involved in Salute to Service Tributes for veterans under hospice care, visiting public schools to talk about military service, meeting with veterans to talk about their military service, supporting our annual Welcome Home event for Vietnam Veterans, and many other activities.

**If you would like to learn how to become a volunteer**, contact Gilchrist at [wehonorveterans@gilchristcares.org](mailto:wehonorveterans@gilchristcares.org).

## We Want Your Input

If you have suggestions for content you would like to see in future issues of the Gilchrist We Honor Veterans Newsletter, please contact us at [wehonorveterans@gilchristcares.org](mailto:wehonorveterans@gilchristcares.org).

The logo for Gilchrist features the word "gilchrist" in a bold, green, lowercase sans-serif font. A single green leaf is positioned above the letter "i", with its stem extending over the "i" and "c".

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