

We Honor Veterans Newsletter



January 2022 Edition

Gilchrist Achieves WHV Level Five Status

We Honor Veterans (WHV) is a program of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The goal of the WHV program is to support and honor America's veterans under hospice care. Gilchrist is proud to be a WHV partner.

We Honor Veterans provides tiered recognition to partner organizations that demonstrate a systematic commitment to improving care for veterans. There are five levels that partners can achieve in the program. This highest level demonstrates a commitment to educating and training staff to better meet the needs of veterans who served during the Vietnam War, which now comprises the largest group of veterans served on hospice care. Additionally, this level requires a welcome home celebration that Gilchrist has hosted for thousands of Vietnam veterans and their families over the past four years. Finally, in achieving this highest level, Gilchrist mentors other hospice organizations across the country to improve their care of veterans and their families. Unlike the first four levels, partners need to demonstrate their commitment to excellence by submitting an application annually that meets the stringent requirements of level 5.

When first implementing the WHV program, Gilchrist leadership assembled a task force of active duty and veteran military personnel along with civilian volunteers to guide and implement a comprehensive program to meet the needs of veterans. Members of this task force are involved in all of the activities required by the WHV program.

In December of 2021, Gilchrist was notified that all of the requirements for level five had been met and that Gilchrist was being certified as a level five partner.

While Gilchrist staff and task force members are honored to be a level five partner, what this means is that we are being recognized for all of the great work we do with and for the military veterans under our care. This is all about supporting veterans at the end of life.

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Event

Gilchrist's annual Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration 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. This celebration is one of the many ways Gilchrist recognizes the unique needs of veterans and thanks them for their sacrifice and

service to our state and our country.

Our last “live” Welcome Home event was held in 2019. In 2020 we cancelled the event due to the pandemic. In 2021 we held an online virtual event. You can watch the online event by going to: [Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration 2021 - YouTube](#)

We are excited to announce that in 2022 we are planning to once again holding a live event (depending on the status of the pandemic). The event will also be broadcast online for those unable to attend in person. The Welcome Home event is scheduled for Sunday, March 20, 2022. The event will be held at Martin’s West, 6817 Dogwood Rd, Windsor Mill, MD 21244.

Early in 2022 we will be sending out more information including a description of the program, speakers, and how to register for the live or online event. Watch for a special edition of this newsletter and register as soon as you receive the information.

Kenneth Hatter - Proud Navy Veteran

Now nearly 95 years old, Ken Hatter remembers December 8, 1941 in vivid detail. Then just 15 years old, he lived with his parents and five older siblings in a working-class neighborhood near Baltimore’s Druid Hill Park.

“I was in the living room listening to the radio with my brother Charles, who was home on leave from the Army, when President Roosevelt asked Congress for a declaration of war with Japan as a result of their attack on Pearl Harbor,” said Hatter. “All service men on leave and liberty were ordered back to their bases immediately. Charlie packed his bag and returned to Fort Meade. We were at war.”

“Most of my friends were older and they were enlisting,” Hatter recalls. “I felt like I had to go too.” So less than two years later, and just a month after his high school graduation from Baltimore Poly, Hatter convinced his father to sign a permission slip so that he could enlist at 17. The hitch would be Victory plus Six Months. His mother cried. Then she said, “Make sure you come back.”

In July, 1944, Hatter enlisted at the Fifth Regiment Armory. “I remember they said ‘line up over there *boys*.’ Then they swore us in and said, ‘congratulations *men*, you’re in the U.S. Navy.’ Five minutes later, we were on a bus headed to Bainbridge, Maryland for boot camp.” Hatter ultimately completed Signalman’s School and demonstrated a proficiency with anti-aircraft weapons.

His orders called for him to take a cross-country train to San Francisco, where he boarded the *USS General MB Stewart* and headed to the Philippines and the island of Samar. On the way to the Philippines, his ship stopped at Pearl Harbor for a night. “When I saw all of the damage still there two-and-a-half years later — saw where all the men were entombed in their ships — I felt sick to my stomach,” Hatter remembers with a great sadness in his voice.

Three days later he arrived at the Lingayen Gulf before disembarking at the Island of Samar, where the Navy, CBs, and Airforce were stationed. “There were people from all over the country, representing different states, different backgrounds, different socio-economic groups” he said. “Day-to-day life was busy. Things needed to be done immediately. They didn’t tell you much, but when they told you to do something, you did it. You didn’t question it.”

In addition to the hard work, there was one other constant — their pet monkey, Tuba. He was their constant companion. He subsisted on beer and hard candy — and seemed to have an uncanny sensitivity to how the sailors were feeling. “He was a godsend; and when he died, the quartermaster made a regulation uniform for him and he was given a military funeral,” Hatter recalls. “And let me tell you, when the rifle was fired over the little guy’s grave, I don’t think there was a dry eye to be found.”

The fighting was sporadic, but Hatter was called upon to participate in the Battle of Leyte, serving short stints on the *USS New York* and the *USS Pennsylvania*. “We were expected

to win. We were trained to win. We were destined to win,” Hatter said emphatically.

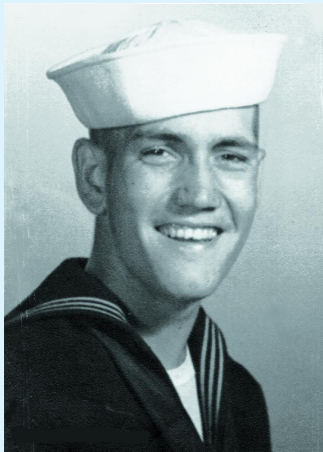
“Nobody told us that we had won,” Hatter shared. “I remember walking along the beach near the harbor in Samar. All of the ships had aimed their search lights into the sky to form the shape of a V. I didn’t believe it. I was very surprised and happy. We had done our jobs and we were going home.”

“I never regretted one day I spent in the Navy,” he said. “It was an honor to me. We did a good job serving our country.”

On September 27th, Hatter received a *Gilchrist Salute to Service Tribute* in the back yard of his Towson home. Surrounded by family and friends, Hatter was honored by seven veterans from various branches of the service — Navy, Marines, Army, and Air Force — all in full military regalia. The ceremony included military and patriotic songs, the Pledge of Allegiance, proclamations, presentations, and a formal salute.

Hatter thanked the veterans who participated and continues to refer to the touching ceremony with gratitude. “It was a first-class operation,” he tells everyone. “So many people thank me for my service. The only thing I can say is ‘Thank you for remembering.’”

This story written by Ken Hatter’s son, Boh, based on talks with his father.



Kenneth Hatter



Kenneth Hatter being honored by Gilchrist volunteers

James Greeley & Navy Wings of Gold

James Horace Greeley was born on 14 January 1925. Jim graduated from high school in 1942 and wanted to go into the Army Air Force. His father would only sign for a Navy program at Wheaton College. After a semester there, he thought he was going to miss the war, so he left college and enlisted in the Navy.

Initial training took Jim to Great Lakes, IL, Norman, OK, Jacksonville, FL, and Kansas to be trained in the B-24. Jim’s squadron was stationed in Guam, via Hawaii, where he served as the Belly Gunner on a B-24. Jim’s crew took aerial pictures before and after the invasion of Iwo Jima. Jim then capitalized on his childhood dream of becoming a Navy pilot, being accepted into the NAVCADET program.

After completing ground school, subsequent training took Jim to Glenview Naval Air Station and Corpus Christi, TX, where Jim completed his carrier quals and earned the coveted “Navy Wings of Gold.” He was commissioned an Ensign in 1947. Jim loved the speed of jets, but the Navy’s demand was for Patrol Bombers. Initially stationed in Banana River, FL, Jim qualified on the PBM “flying boat.” After electronics school in San Diego, Jim reported to his squadron in Saipan. Jim described his 18 months on Saipan as “Paradise.” Besides the flying, Jim learned to sail, rode his motorcycle around the island and had a pet monkey named Ziggy, all while enjoying the company of the DOD teachers on the island.

Jim left active duty after Saipan, attending Penn State University where he played lacrosse. With the start of the Korean War, Jim was recalled to active duty. After training on the P2V, he reported to Eniwetok, an atoll in the Marshall Islands, providing security for atomic bomb testing. He subsequently got his plane commander qualification in Kodiak, AK, and followed Russian intelligence boats on the Aleutian chain. His final duty station was as an instructor at Whidbey Island.

After retiring from the Navy, Jim attended and graduated from U of Penn Dental School in 1959. He received his specialty training in Prosthodontics at Indiana University. Jim became board certified while teaching at Temple where he became a full professor. Dr. Greeley then accepted a full professor position at the University of Maryland and retired in 1990.

Jim Greeley was recently honored by Gilchrist staff and volunteers with a Salute to Service Tribute. The tribute included an opening prayer, the National Anthem, Pledge of Allegiance, and military and patriotic music. The team presented Jim with a certificate, handmade lap blanket, door plaque and a handmade card from a student. Jim was also presented with a We Honor Veterans pin. Jim proudly returned the formal salute at the conclusion of the tribute.



James Greeley



James Greeley returns a salute

Colonel (Ret) Robert Venkus

Robert "Bob" Venkus was born in 1941 in Chicago, Illinois. As a youth, he rode his bike to the fence around Midway Airport and watched airplanes take off and land. The desire to fly took hold and never let go.

Bob attended the prestigious St. Ignatius Preparatory High School in Chicago which prepared him well for his appointment to the United States Air Force Academy. During his years at the Academy, he marched in the inaugural parade of President John F. Kennedy. Bob was a proud class of 1963 graduate. He received an engineering degree from the USAFA and a Masters Degree from Auburn University.

Bob attended pilot training at Williams AFB and was then assigned to Vance AFB where he was an instructor pilot. He attended survival schools and training on the F10 and was deployed to the Royal Thai Air Force Base in Takhli.

Bob flew 169 combat missions during the Vietnam War. He flew missions in the single seat F10 fighter and later as the pilot of a Wild Weasel crew (first in and last out on combat missions).

At George AFB, he served as Operations Officer for two squadrons and was Squadron Commander of the 562nd Tactical Fighter Squadron. Bob was promoted to full Colonel and assigned to U.S. Air Forces Europe (USAFE) as director of combat deployment and

then director of fighter operations and training. His next assignment was as Vice Commander of the 48th Tactical Fighter Wing at RAF Lakenheath.

The 1986 United States bombing of Libya, code-named Operation El Dorado Canyon, consisted of air strikes by the United States against Libya on Tuesday 15 April 1986. The attack was carried out by the US Air Force, Navy and Marines via air strikes. Col Bob Venkus was the command fighter pilot directing the US Air Force bombing run. Bob would later write about this in his book *“Raid on Qaddafi: The Untold Story of History’s Longest Fighter Mission by the Pilot Who Directed It”*.

The bombing of Libya would be documented in the July 1986 issue of Life Magazine. The magazine included a photo of the Air Force personnel instrumental in planning and conducting the bombing.

After 24 years in the Air Force, Bob retired as a command pilot with over 4000 flying hours. His numerous awards included the Legion of Merit, The Distinguished Flying Cross with one Oak Leaf Cluster and the Air Medal with thirteen Oak Leaf Clusters.

Following his military retirement, he was Programs Manager for Westinghouse/Northrup Grumman. Bob was a member of the River Rats, Society of Wild Weasels and the 65B American/German pilot training reunion group. He and his wife, Patti, enjoyed foreign travel. Bob has two daughters – Pamela Zedak and Amy Venkus.

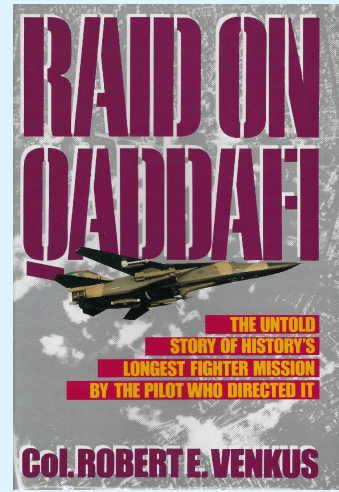
Bob Venkus was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute (SST) conducted by Gilchrist staff and veteran volunteers. The SST included an opening prayer, Pledge of Allegiance, National Anthem, patriotic music (including the Air Force song of course), and a closing prayer. Bob received the We Honor Veterans pin, a certificate, and a handmade patriotic blanket. At the conclusion of the tribute, one of the veteran volunteers commented “It was an honor to salute Colonel Venkus.”



Front (L-R) Col Bob Venkus and Col Sam Westbrook (In charge of the F-111 bombing of Libya) [Photo from July 1986 issue of Life Magazine]



Gilchrist Veteran Volunteers honoring Col (Ret) Robert E. Venkus



Raid on Qaddafi by Col. (Ret) Robert E. Venkus

Vet-to-Vet Café

A Vet-to-Vet Café is held for veterans at a healthcare or residential facility and allows them to come together to talk about their military service.

On October 22, 2021, a team of Gilchrist military veteran volunteers conducted at Vet-to-Vet Café at Oak Crest Senior Living. Oak Crest resident John Ishikawa shared with the group that he served in the Army from 1943 to 1946 and received two Purple Hearts from injuries sustained in combat. William Schreiber told everyone that he served in the Navy from 1951-1955 aboard the USS Randolph (CV-15) which was one of 24 Essex-class aircraft carriers built during World War II for the United States Navy.

A Vet Café was held on December 3, 2021, at North Oaks. Resident Aaron Seiden shared that he entered the Army in 1943, landed in France on D-Day + 13, fought in the Battle of the Bulge, and earned two Purple Hearts. Bill Lewis talked about his time in the Army Air Corps aboard the propeller-driven Douglas DC-3.

These Vet-to-Vet Cafes provide these veterans with opportunities to talk with and share stories with other veterans. More Vet-to-Vet Cafes are scheduled for 2022.



Bill Hill (Gilchrist Volunteer and Army Veteran) talks with John Ishikawa (right)



William Schreiber (left) shares Navy stories with Rick Uhlig (Gilchrist Volunteer and Navy Veteran)



Gilchrist volunteers (standing L-R) Paul Sullivan (USMC), Mike Lachance (Army) and Rick Uhlig (Navy) talk with (L-R) Aaron Seiden and Bill Lewis

Trauma Informed Care, PTSD, and Suicide Prevention for Vietnam Veterans

Gilchrist cares for a number of Vietnam veterans. A learning forum entitled *Trauma Informed Care, PTSD, and Suicide Prevention for Vietnam Veterans* was recently held to help staff working with these veterans. There were 85 Gilchrist staff logged in to watch the virtual learning forum. In addition, the forum was recorded and placed in Gilchrist's learning management system so that this important information will be available for staff in the future.

Dr. Steven Butz spoke on the topic of *Trauma Informed Care, Awareness & PTSD at End of Life*. Dr. Butz graduated with a Psy.D. degree from Loyola University Maryland in 2005. In addition to pre- and post-doctoral experiences, Dr. Butz has extensive experience working with the Veterans Administration.

A panel discussion with three Vietnam veterans followed the presentation by Dr. Butz. Panelists included Diane Carlson Evans, Bill Hill and Tim Price. Bill and Tim are Army veterans, members of Gilchrist's Veteran Task Force, and are very involved in working with veterans under hospice care. Diane is a former Captain in the Army Nurse Corps who served in the combat zone of Vietnam and is the founder of the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation, leading the effort as president and CEO for thirty years. The panelists shared how their service in Vietnam affected their lives including thoughts of suicide, depression, or other mental health issues.

The final presenters focused on Gilchrist's role in meeting the needs of Vietnam veterans and included Kimberlee Kahl, We Honor Veterans Coordinator; Christine Avig, Veterans Administration Community Hospice Coordinator; Donnell Nelson, Chaplain; and Skip Krause, Social Work Clinical Specialist.

The learning forum concluded with a brief question and answer session.

Here are several comments received from participants immediately following the forum:

Thank you all so very much for your service and sacrifice. I'm so sorry our country and the VA did not support you when you needed it and as you deserved.

Powerful panel. Thank you all for your service and sharing so openly.

This was definitely a powerful and very thought-provoking session that had me talking with my daughter about it later on!

Diane, Tim, and Bill, Thank you for your service. Thank you for your dedication to, and advocacy for, all veterans. Thanks for your courage in sharing parts of your stories today. I gently hold your stories with gratitude and in love and light.

Parkinson's Disease Awareness for Veterans

Parkinson's disease (PD) is the second-most common neurodegenerative disease after Alzheimer's in the U.S. One million Americans live with Parkinson's today – and of those, approximately 110,000 Veterans with PD receive Parkinson's treatment through VA.

While the exact cause of Parkinson's is unknown, research suggests that its cause can be linked to genetic and environmental factors. For some Veterans living with Parkinson's, the disease can be associated with exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service.

To make life better for Veterans with Parkinson's, the Parkinson's Foundation has a partnership with the VA. For details, go to:

[Parkinson's disease awareness: Answering 9 most popular Parkinson's questions from Veterans - Vantage Point](#)

Uniform Smiles

The Annapolis grad walked into the bar, sat down and said, "Hey barkeep, you hear the joke about the four West Point football players in a farmhouse?" Chairs scraped behind him, and four of the biggest, meanest guys in the bar stood up.

"We played for Army. You sure you wanna tell that joke?"

The Navy grad smirked in disbelief and said, "What, and have to explain it four times?"

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.

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.

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.

