

## We Honor Veterans Newsletter



March 2023 Edition

Special Edition

This is a special edition of the Gilchrist We Honor Veterans Newsletter. The beginning of 2023 has been very busy, and we wanted to share stories about some special veterans we have been honoring. We also wanted to make sure you knew about our Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration.

### 2023 Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day Celebration

Gilchrist's Fifth 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. Gilchrist is a nationally recognized nonprofit that provides care and support for people with serious illness through the end of life, through elder medical care, counseling and support, and hospice care. Many of the people we care for at Gilchrist are veterans, and many of them served during the Vietnam era.

One of the most painful chapters in our nation's history was the treatment of our Vietnam veterans and Vietnam-era veterans when they returned home. Gilchrist is committed to making things right and giving a long overdue and joyous welcome home to Vietnam veterans everywhere. On **March 25, 2023, at Martin's West** in Baltimore we will come together as a grateful community to honor, thank and celebrate the veterans in our care as well as all of the veterans who served during the Vietnam War and their loved ones. This celebration is one of the many ways Gilchrist recognizes the unique needs of these veterans and thanks them for their sacrifice and service to our country.

Gilchrist is excited to announce that our keynote speaker is Rocky Bleier, four-time Superbowl Champion and Vietnam Veteran. For more information about Rocky, visit his website at [Rocky Bleier](#)

#### Event Details:

- 8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.: Resource Fair
- 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.: Buffet Breakfast
- 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.: Program

**Register today!** Click on the link below and then click "Register Now!" –  
[Welcome Home Celebration for Vietnam Veterans | Gilchrist \(gilchristcares.org\)](https://gilchristcares.org)

**Register Now!**

## Navy Corpsman Bill Barker

Bertram "Bill" Barker served as a Navy Corpsman for four years in the 1950's. Bill was recently honored by Gilchrist with a Salute to Service Tribute. Bill received the We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration, a certificate from Gilchrist, a patriotic blanket made by a Gilchrist volunteer, and a thank-you card made by an elementary school student. At the conclusion of the tribute, the veterans presented Mr. Barker a formal salute.



## Sergeant Major Kurt Kuenzel

Kurt Paul Kuenzel, Jr. was born in 1937 on the second floor of 2107 West Lexington Street, Baltimore. Kurt graduated from Mergenthaler High School in 1956

Kurt enlisted in the Army National Guard in August of 1957. He remembers that as the regiment was at summer camp the first two weeks of August, they did not want him to start until they returned. Therefore, the day Kurt enlisted and after he completed his paperwork, they assigned him to scrub the outdoor cook pots that had been used during summer camp.

Kurt was stationed with the 5<sup>th</sup> Maryland. The term "5th Maryland" has most frequently been connected to militia units in Baltimore, even though the first unit to bear the designation was formed in 1776 from volunteers in rural Maryland. The "5th Maryland" designation is the officially recognized traditional designation of the 175th Infantry Regiment, Maryland Army National Guard. Kurt started out carrying the ammunition for machine guns. He was promoted to PFC and was rifle qualified at Fort Mead.

Kurt Kuenzel retired in 1999 at the rank of Sergeant Major. At the time of his retirement, he worked in communications security.

In 1956 in Miami Beach, Maryland, friends fixed Kurt up on a blind date with Patsy Ann Dickinson. They were married in June of 1957. Kurt and Patsy had four children: Katherine, Paul, Robert and Mark.

Sergeant Major Kurt Kuenzel was recently honored with a Salute-to-Service Tribute by Gilchrist staff and volunteers. The tribute opened with a prayer by a Gilchrist chaplain followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Kurt received a We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration, a certificate from Gilchrist, a patriotic lap blanket, and a thank-you card made by a Cub Scout. With the help of a Gilchrist music therapist, friends and family sang the National Anthem, God Bless America and several patriotic songs. The music therapist even played the Army song. The tribute concluded with a formal salute to honor Sergeant Major Kuenzel.

One of the veteran volunteers commented that it was an honor to salute Sergeant Major Kurt Kuenzel.



Kurt and Patsy  
Kuenzel



Sgt Major Kuenzel in uniform with Gilchrist Veteran  
Volunteers

## WWII Veteran Edward Signorino

Edward "Eddie" Signorino served as a First Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps during World War II. The Army Air Corps were the U.S. military service dedicated to aerial warfare between 1926 and 1941. It evolved from a component of ground-based infantry tactics into its own branch of the military, becoming the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) on June 20, 1941

Eddie, at 97 years young, was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute by a team of Gilchrist veteran volunteers. Eddie's wife Marie and their son David were there for the tribute.

As part of the tribute, Eddie received a We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration, a personalized certificate from Gilchrist, a handmade thank-you card from a school student, and a patriotic lap blanket made by a Gilchrist volunteer. The veterans presented Eddie with a formal honor salute at the conclusion of the tribute. When the veterans were signing patriotic songs, Eddie was waving his hands and tapping his feet. It was a joyful event.

The tribute was conducted by Army Veterans Ed Kaplan and Art Grau and Navy Veteran John Gonnella.



## Air Force Major Alan Lupfer

Alan Lupfer enrolled in the Penn State University ROTC program and following graduation in 1964, he spent 12 years on active duty in the Air Force. Alan spent time at bases in California, Louisiana, New York and at National Security Agency (NSA) headquarters at Fort Meade, Maryland.

Alan Lupfer was assigned to the Manned Orbiting Laboratory. The Manned Orbiting Laboratory (MOL) was part of the United States Air Force (USAF) human spaceflight program in the 1960s. The project was developed from early USAF concepts of crewed space stations as reconnaissance satellites.

After serving in the Air Force, he was employed by the NSA as a civilian analyst where he worked until retiring.

Alan Lupfer and his wife Judith have four children and several grandchildren.

Major Alan Lupfer was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute by Gilchrist military veteran volunteers. The purpose of the tribute was to thank Alan for his service to our country. During the tribute, Alan received a We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration, a certificate from Gilchrist, a thank-you card from an elementary school student, and a handmade patriotic lap blanket crocheted by a Gilchrist volunteer. Mrs. Lupfer received a proud family member pin and a patriotic scarf. The veterans presented Alan with a formal honor salute – thanking him for serving his country.

Based on his smile, Alan really enjoyed the tribute.



## Brigadier General (MD, Retired) Virgil Stemple

Virgil A. Stemple was born in Philippi, WV on July 18, 1926. His childhood was the rural, not always easy, but free life as a son of a no-nonsense, coal miner father and a Godly, country mother who set standards of conduct for their sons and gave their all to their family and their commitments.

Virgil was drafted during his senior year of high school into the U.S. Navy and served aboard the USS Adirondack during World War II. Following discharge in 1946, Virgil attended and graduated from West Virginia Wesleyan University with a bachelor's degree in business and a minor in physical education in 1950.

Virgil's military career continued with service in the Maryland National Guard and the 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and saw him promoted, in a 23-year period, from First Lieutenant to full Colonel and included active service during the Baltimore riots of the late '60s and a command tour as Commandant of the Maryland Military Academy. Retiring in 1981 he was soon back in uniform for another 10 plus years in the Maryland State Defense Force. First as a Brigade Commander and ultimately as the Commanding General of that force. This last chapter of service saw his promotion to Brigadier General (Maryland). All told, beginning in 1944, Virgil served his country and his state for over 50 years and his community even longer. His leadership was defined by example, by a broad view, by responsibility to the job one was entrusted with, and by always putting people first.

In 1948 Virgil married Mary Anne Simons. They had three children Phil (b. 1960), then Kim (b. 1963) and finally Matt (b. 1967). Like Mary Anne, Virgil was highly active in the community. This included continuing his military service, coaching little league baseball, building anything made of wood or masonry for neighbors to include back decks, patios, doll houses and most of all heavy involvement in Presbury United Methodist Church – being the Lay Leader of that church for a period of over 30 years.

Brigadier General (MD, Retired) Virgil A. Stemple was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute by Gilchrist staff and military veteran volunteers. The purpose of the tribute was to recognize and thank General Stemple for his lifetime of service to his country and community.

The tribute included an opening prayer, the Pledge of Allegiance, presentation of a certificate from Gilchrist, presentation of the We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration, and a copy of a letter from President Truman sent to all veterans at the end of World War II. Virgil also received a handmade patriotic blanket from a Gilchrist volunteer and a thank-you card made by a Cub Scout. The tribute concluded with a formal salute to General Stemple. The General proudly returned the salute.



Virgil Stemple in the Navy



Virgil and Mary Anne on the day of Virgil's promotion to Brigadier General. Also pictured, their son Phil, at the time an Army Captain.



Virgil Stemple with his three children and the Gilchrist veteran volunteers



Brigadier General (Ret) and Gilchrist volunteer Ed Nolley (standing) saluting his long-time friend and colleague Brigadier General (MD, Retired) Virgil A. Stemple

## Honor Flight Maryland

Honor Flight Maryland is excited to announce Saturday, June 17 as **Honor Flight Maryland's** first Mission of 2023. They are encouraging Maryland veterans to sign up as soon as possible, so they can go on an all-expense paid hero's journey to Washington, DC to see memorials built in their honor.

Priority is given to World War II, Korean and catastrophically ill veterans of any era. All other veterans will be served based on their application date. Any veterans not selected for this mission will be selected for a future trip.

All veterans must complete a preliminary application as soon as possible through their website:

[Home | Honor Flight Maryland \(honorflightmd.org\)](https://www.honorflightmd.org)

Please contact Honor Flight Maryland with any questions.



## Uniform Smiles

A veteran shared this story. Anyone wanting to take pictures on our base's airfield needs a letter from public affairs, which happens to be me. One day, while out snapping photos, I was stopped by the military police, who asked for my letter from public affairs. "But I am public affairs," I said. "Without a letter from public affairs, we'll have to take your camera." I did the only thing I could do: I pulled a notepad and pen from my bag and wrote a letter giving myself permission to take photos. The MPs read the letter, saluted, and left.

## 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).



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