

We Honor Veterans Newsletter



June 2024 Special Edition

Memorial Day Event at Heartlands

Memorial Day is observed on the last Monday of May, honoring the men and women who died while serving in the U.S. military. Originally known as Decoration Day, it originated in the years following the Civil War and became an official federal holiday in 1971. Many Americans observe Memorial Day by visiting cemeteries or memorials, holding family gatherings, and participating in parades.

This Memorial Day, Gilchrist volunteer and Army Veteran Ed Kaplan and a team of eight military veteran volunteers presented a program for the residents and family members at Heartlands Senior Living in Ellicott City.

The program included the Pledge of Allegiance, the National Anthem, an opening prayer, patriotic readings, the singing of America the Beautiful, a closing benediction, an honor salute, and the singing of God Bless America.

Army Veteran and Heartlands resident Bill Meade attended the Memorial Day event wearing his original Army jacket. Bill and the other residents enjoyed the program.



Salute honoring those who died while serving in the U.S. military



Army Veteran Bill Meade (seated – center) with the Gilchrist Team

Veterans History Project

The Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress collects, preserves, and makes accessible the firsthand recollections of U.S. military veterans who served in World War I through more recent conflicts and peacekeeping missions so that future generations may hear directly from veterans and better understand what they saw, did and felt during their service.

Gilchrist conducts several video interviews each year, which are then sent to the Veterans History Project. After a thorough review and approval process that takes a few months, these interviews are posted and made readily accessible for viewing, joining the vast collection of many thousands of others.

Here are several of the interviews available through the Veterans History Project.

Sean Casey: [Sean M. Casey Collection | Library of Congress \(loc.gov\)](#)

Lanny McDonald: [Lanny Walter McDonald Collection | Library of Congress \(loc.gov\)](#)

We Honor Veterans Newsletter Issues Available

Gilchrist is dedicated to honoring those who have served our country in the military. We publish an e-newsletter for military veterans and their families, focusing on the veterans under our care.

The first edition of the newsletter was published in January 2020. Four or more editions are published each year, each telling the stories of some of the amazing veterans we have honored.

All issues of this newsletter are now available on the Gilchrist website. Please take a few minutes to learn about some of our incredible veterans. Please share this link with others interested in learning how Gilchrist honors our military veterans.

[We Honor Veterans | Gilchrist \(gilchristcares.org\)](#)

B24 Waist Gunner John Kitz

John Kitz was born on September 5, 1924, in East Baltimore and lived in Highlandtown. John attended Patterson High School, where he met Frances "Fritzie" Shenk. After graduation in 1942, John joined the United States Army Air Forces.

John was trained as a waist gunner and assigned to the crew of a B24. The B24 waist gun was a .50 caliber hand-operated machine gun placed in the open side doors of the plane. John's crew flew 43 missions across Europe near the end of WWII. John maintained a detailed log describing each of their 43 missions. The image below shows John's description of sortie #1, flown on December 28, 1944. As you read this description, remember that John was 19 years old.

While John was overseas, Francis worked at the Third Service Command. The Third Service Command was part of the Army Service Forces (ASF), established in March 1942. It covered activities in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the District of Columbia and was headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland. The ASF was created to supervise and coordinate various units and services within the War Department. These included procurement, industrial mobilization, technical services, administrative services, and the corps areas (which were later redesignated as service commands).

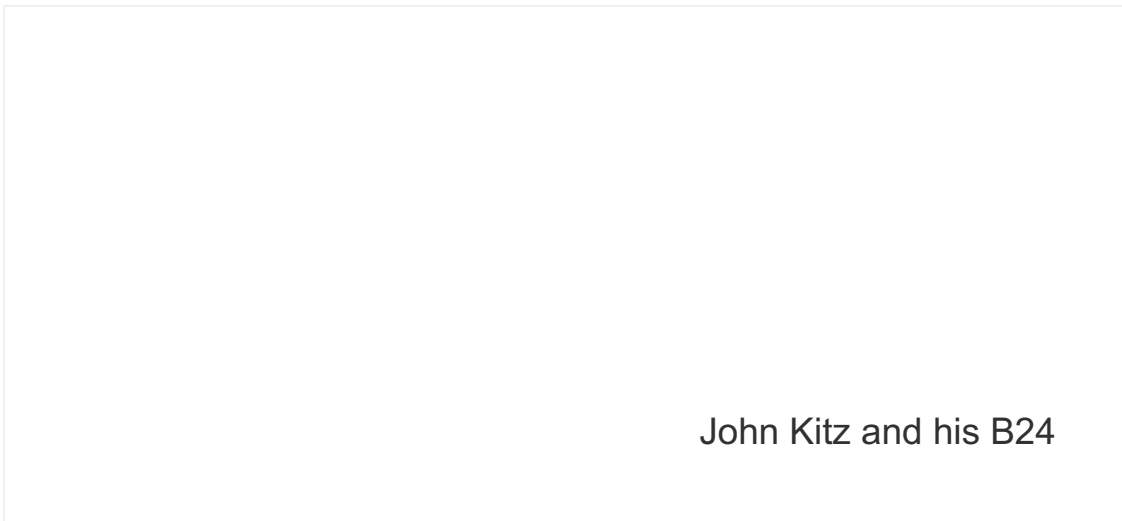
John and Francis married on April 13, 1946, following the war. They would have two daughters – Cheryl and Karen.

John took over his dad's automotive parts and motor repair shop. Francis worked with John to help run the business. Later, John moved the business from East Baltimore Street to South Bouldin Street. He added assembling tow trucks – Wreck Masters, to their business.

John and Francis were proud of the home they built, which was completed in 1956 and had an in-ground pool installed twelve years later. The daughters fondly remember their dad taking a week off on July 4th every year. They would go to the beach or the mountains. Later in life, John and Francis enjoyed traveling to Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and California.

John Kitz was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by Gilchrist veteran volunteers and staff. The tribute opened with a prayer followed by the National Anthem and Pledge of Allegiance. John was presented with a We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration, a certificate from Gilchrist, a thank you card made by a Cub Scout and a handmade patriotic blanket. Francis was presented with a Proud Wife of a Veteran pin and a patriotic scarf. The veterans presented John Kitz with a formal salute, and the tribute concluded with a closing prayer and the singing of God Bless America.

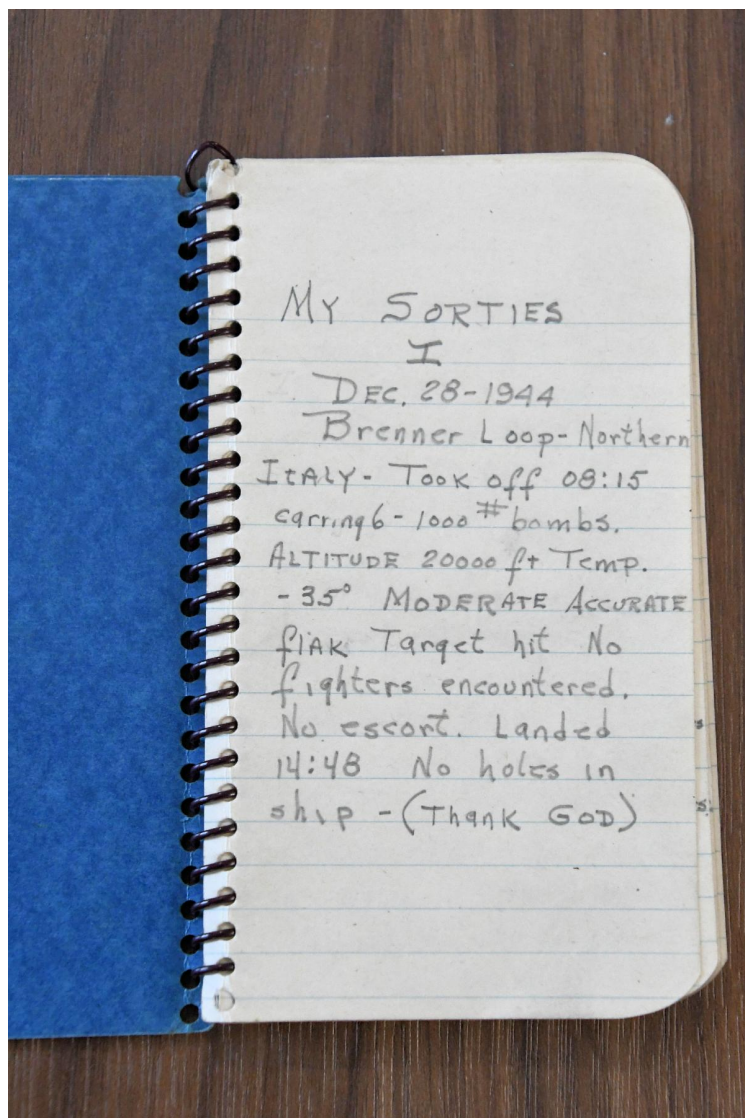
As of the day of the tribute, John was 99 years old, and Francis was 101 years old. John and Francis recently celebrated their 78th wedding anniversary.



John Kitz and his B24



John Kitz's Sortie
Log





John and Francis Kitz with Gilchrist Team

Marine James Edmonds – A Life of Service

James Edmonds served in the Marine Corps from 1957 until 1962. After being discharged from the Marines, he worked for the Baltimore City Police Department. He started as a patrol officer and worked his way into several positions before retiring many years later.

James then worked at the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., for a few years before returning to the Maryland Governor's office.

His room has photos and awards, including pictures of James with Pope John Paul II and President Bill Clinton. James Edmonds served his city, state, and country for most of his life.

James was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by a team of Gilchrist military veteran volunteers. The tribute started with an opening prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. James was then presented with a We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration, a certificate from Gilchrist, a patriotic blanket handmade by a Gilchrist volunteer, and a thank-you card made by a Cub Scout. James' wife Sandra received a patriotic scarf and a Proud Wife of a Veteran pin. The tribute concluded with an honor salute and a closing prayer.



James Edmonds greeting Pope John Paul II



James Edmonds greeting President Bill Clinton



James Edmonds being honored for his life of service

VA Mental Health Programs

Mental health is an essential part of how we feel every day. It affects what we think about ourselves, how we interact with the world around us, and how we generally approach each day. Changes in our mental health can get in the way of our routines, and—much like a sprained ankle, a lingering cough, or chronic pain—should be treated with the help of a health care provider.

VA's Million Veterans Program (MVP) studies how genes, lifestyle, military experiences, and exposures affect veterans' health and wellness, including mental health. As more diverse Veterans continue to join MVP, researchers can better study conditions that matter to those Veterans, hopefully leading to better preventions, screenings, and treatments.

Click here for the MVP: [MVP Home | Veterans Affairs \(va.gov\)](#)

MVP research supports the future of Veteran mental health care

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, so we're focusing on Veteran mental health research and care.

- Just like your physical health, mental health combines different factors. Veterans in MVP help researchers study those factors to find ways to improve mental health care.
- Researchers are using information from MVP to study posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), suicide prevention, depression, anxiety, substance use disorders, and other mental health conditions.
- This research helps us understand more about mental health conditions, which could lead to improved screenings, preventions, interventions, and treatments for Veterans.

VA offers many programs focused on mental health. Visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov to learn about resources and support, explore mental health topics and find treatment options.

Join MVP to make a difference for Veterans

Thanks to more than 1,000,000 Veterans who have joined MVP, researchers can study dozens of health conditions—both mental and physical—affecting Veterans, including:

- PTSD
- Depression and suicide risk
- Substance use disorder
- Cancers
- Diabetes
- Tinnitus
- And more

Sign up today on the MVP site or call 866-441-6075 to make an appointment at a participating VA facility. You don't need to receive your care at VA to participate.

Uniform Smiles

The company commander and the sergeant were in the field. As they go to bed for the night, the first sergeant said: "Sir, look up into the sky and tell me what you see?"

The commander said: "I see millions of stars."

Sgt: "And what does that tell you, sir?"

"Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Theologically, it tells me that God is great and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, it tells me that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. What does it tell you, Top?"

Sgt: "Well sir, it tells me that somebody stole our tent."

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 kmcdonnell@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 kmcdonnell@gilchristcares.org.

Gilchrist Cares

You may know Gilchrist best for the care we provide people near the end of life. But we offer so much more than hospice. Today's Gilchrist extends services to individuals with serious illness who need our care and support well in advance of hospice care. We also provide counseling and support before and after the loss of a loved one. Please visit the Gilchrist website to learn more.

[Gilchrist providing care at every stage of serious illness \(gilchristcares.org\)](http://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 kmcdonnell@gilchristcares.org.



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