

We Honor Veterans Newsletter



July 2024

World War II Veteran Albert Long

In 1941 Albert Long enlisted in the Coast Guard. Following basic training, Albert was assigned to duty with the Merchant Marines. Albert was discharged from military service in 1947.

The casualty rates during World War II were dramatically higher for the men who served on Merchant Marine ships than in any formal branch of the military. Working sometimes without escort and with only modest firepower aboard, the ships of the Merchant Marine sailed through minefields and dodged submarines and bombers to deliver invaluable cargo everywhere from Arctic Russia to the Persian Gulf.

At 101 years old, was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by Gilchrist veteran volunteers and staff. Gathering with family and friends in the front yard of his home, the tribute began with a prayer followed by the singing of the National Anthem and the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. Albert was presented with a We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration, a certificate from Gilchrist, a handmade patriotic lap blanket made by a Gilchrist volunteer, and a thank-you card made by a Cub Scout. The Gilchrist music therapist sang several patriotic songs including the Coast Guard song. The veteran team then saluted Albert to recognize his service to our country. The tribute concluded with a prayer followed by the singing of God Bless America.



Albert Long with the Gilchrist Team

World War II Navy Veteran Jack Van Natta

Jack Van Natta was born in 1925 in Oak Park, Illinois. Jack graduated from Hinsdale High School as part of the class of 1943. Immediately after graduation, Jack entered the Navy in July of that year.

Following boot camp, Jack was trained as an electronics technician. He was then assigned to the USS PC-578, also known as PCC-578. This was a 173-foot steel-hull patrol craft (PC) submarine chaser that played a significant role during World War II. Jack was discharged from the Navy in March of 1946.

After leaving the military, Jack worked as a TV repairman and eventually worked at Western Electric as a senior engineer.

In June of 1955, Jack married Barbara Ann Schemmel in La Grange, Illinois. They moved to Towson, Maryland, in 1965. Jack and Barbara had nine children: David, Mark, Kevin, Kathy, Paul, Laura, Mary, Karen, and Beth Ann, as well as 24 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren with another due to arrive in August.

Jack loved to golf and liked to talk about shooting a hole-in-one twice. He shot the second hole-in-one when he was 97 years old! Jack and Barbara loved to travel with Myrtle Beach being one of their favorite destinations. They also liked lawn care, participating in bridge and card leagues, and were involved at the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Towson.

Navy veteran Jack Van Natta was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by Gilchrist military veteran volunteers. The tribute included opening and closing prayers. Jack, along with children, grandchildren, and friends then recited the Pledge of Allegiance. Jack was presented with a We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration, a certificate from Gilchrist, a patriotic lap blanket made by a Gilchrist volunteer, and a thank-you card made by a Cub Scout. The tribute concluded with an honor salute presented by the veterans. Jack Van Natta returned a very sharp salute that would make his boot camp drill instructors proud.



Jack Van Natta proudly wearing his Navy uniform



Jack Van Natta with Gilchrist Veteran Volunteers

Vietnam Veteran David Reese

David Reese was born in 1947 in Baltimore, Maryland. David attended Overlea High School in Baltimore. David entered the Army in 1969.

Following basic training, David was trained to work with tanks and served in Freiburg, Germany, and Vietnam. While in Vietnam, David served in the infantry as well as working with tanks. David was made a tank commander and was very proud of his attachment to the 11th Cavalry. David was honorably discharged in 1971.

David Reese met Denise Willis Stephens in Middle River, Maryland in 1973. They were married in 1976. David and Denise had two children, Jennifer Renee (Reese) Trout and Ryan David Reese.

David worked as a field engineer for Penn State and Northrop Grumman.

David Reese was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by Gilchrist veteran volunteers. The tribute included an opening prayer, the National Anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance. David was presented with a We Honor Veterans

pin from the Veterans Administration, a certificate from Gilchrist, a patriotic lap blanket made by a Gilchrist volunteer, and a thank-you card made by an elementary student. Denise Reese was presented with a patriotic scarf and a Proud Wife of a Veteran pin. Jennifer and Ryan received Proud Family Member pins. The tribute concluded with a formal salute. David Reese proudly returned the salute.

David Reese in Uniform



David Reese and family with Gilchrist volunteers (center) Denis and Barbara Ahr (Denis is a Navy Veteran)

Vietnam Combat Surgeon Charles Jan Dyke

Charles Jan Dyke was born at Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, D.C., in 1934. Jan grew up in Sheldon, Iowa and was very involved in Scouting – becoming an Eagle Scout. Jan attended Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, NH, Yale University, and graduated from Cornell University School of Medicine receiving his M.D. in 1958.

Jan entered the US Army in 1960. Jan served in Vietnam from 1967-68 as a combat

surgeon at a MASH unit near the Cambodian border. His job was to stabilize the patient sufficiently to allow safe transfer to a larger military hospital in Saigon or Da Nang. As he explained once to his oldest son's graduate seminar in American history, he operated with equal diligence on American and ARVN military personnel as well as prisoners of war (POW). When operating on the latter, it was regulation to have an MP tableside since communist troops were known to attack their doctors, who were officers.

Jan comes from a strong military family. Jan's father was a 20-year Army doctor who ran the largest Allied military hospital in England during WWI. Jan and his twin brother were both Army doctors, and an older brother received the Bronze Star and Silver Star while serving in Korea and Vietnam. Jan and his brothers grew up on a series of Army posts ranging from Hawaii to Oklahoma to Puerto Rico. Jan was a lifelong patriotic American who loved his country.

Jan was honorably discharged from the Army in 1970 while at the USA hospital in Phoenixville, PA, near Valley Forge.

After leaving the military, Jan practiced general surgery as a partner at Yale Cornell Exeter Clinic, Moline, Illinois from 1970-2000. Jan saved many lives and has many grateful patients across the Quad Cities region in Illinois and Iowa

Jan has 5 children and 12 grandchildren who adore him. He also had an incredible and unrelenting sense of honor and humor. Jan was a voracious reader of literature and history, an opera buff, a traveler, and a gardener.

Charles Jan Dyke was recently honored with a salute-to-service tribute conducted by Gilchrist volunteers. The tribute included an opening prayer, the National Anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance. Jan received a We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration, a Vietnam pin also from the Veterans Administration, and a patriotic blanket handmade by a Gilchrist volunteer. Jan was also given a thank you for your service card made by a Cub Scout. The tribute concluded with a formal salute and a closing prayer.

As one of the Gilchrist volunteers commented, "There are many Vietnam veterans who owe their life to Doctor Charles Jan Dyke. It was an honor to salute a combat surgeon."



Doctor Charles
Jan Dyke in
Vietnam



Dr. Charles Jan Dyke with Gilchrist Team

Army and Vietnam Veteran Kirk Zylanz

Kirk Zylanz served in the Army as a medic in Vietnam. Kirk was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by Gilchrist staff and military veteran volunteers.

Following an opening prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance, Kirk was presented with a certificate from Gilchrist. Kirk then received the We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration. Kirk was then presented with a Vietnam Veteran Pin from the Department of Defense. The purpose of this pin is to recognize, thank and honor United States military veterans who served during the Vietnam War.

Kirk was also presented with a patriotic lap blanket handmade by a Gilchrist volunteer, a plaque for his room thanking him for his service, and a thank-you card made by a Cub Scout. Kirk's wife, Dena, was presented with a patriotic scarf and a "Proud Wife of a Veteran" pin.

The uniformed military veterans then presented Kirk Zylanz with a formal salute, which was followed by a closing prayer.



Kirk Zylanz being honored by (L-R) Gilchrist Chaplain Nathaniel Burrison, Gilchrist Social Worker Wendy Kobb, Army/Vietnam Veterans and Gilchrist volunteers Mike Lachance, Tim Price, and Bill Hill. Wearing her patriotic scarf is Dena Zylanz.

Veteran Buddy Checks

Veteran Buddy Checks encourage Veterans to connect or reconnect with their Veteran friends—just to check-in. As part of the effort, Buddy Check Week, which takes place October 21 – 25, 2024, builds on the success of the American Legion’s Buddy Check program and the Veteran Wellness Alliance’s Get Involved program. Talk to Ten Veterans, Be a Buddy!

What You Can Do

Veteran Buddy Checks aims to enhance peer-to-peer connections, improve mental health, and increase access to VA and non-VA resources. Take the pledge—take the training—find buddies. Take the training before reaching out and talking to your buddies. The training helps you recognize signs of distress and educates you on available resources you can recommend if needed.

For more information, or to take the pledge, take the training, and find buddies, click on the link below:

[Veteran Buddy Checks - Veterans Experience \(va.gov\)](https://www.va.gov/veteran-buddy-checks)

Uniform Smiles

An off-duty soldier took a train. When the train reached its first stop, a general walked in, and the soldier stood up. The General said, “At ease soldier, sit down.” The train reached its second stop, again the soldier stood up, and the General once again said, “At ease soldier, sit down.” When the train reached its third stop, again, the soldier stood up. This time, the General looked at him and said, “You don’t have to salute every time we reach a stop.” The soldier replied, “I want to get off, I missed my stop 2 stations ago.”

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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