



We Honor Veterans Newsletter

July 2025

Air Force Medic Andy LaMarche

United States Air Force veteran Andrew “Andy” LaMarche served during the Korean War. Andy was a medic and was stationed in Korea.

Andy was recently honored with a salute to service tribute by a team of Gilchrist veteran volunteers. The purpose of the tribute was to thank Andy for his service to our country.

The tribute started with an opening prayer, singing of the National Anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance. Andy was presented with a certificate from Gilchrist, a We Honor Veterans pin from the Veterans Administration, a patriotic blanket made by a Gilchrist volunteer, and a thank you card made by a school student.

Andy’s wife Pamela was presented a patriotic scarf and a Proud Wife of a Veteran pin. Andy and Pamela have been together well over 60 years.

An Air Force veteran read *The Airman’s Creed* which was followed by patriotic music including the Air Force song.

The tribute concluded with a formal salute, proudly returned by Air Force medic Andy LaMarche.



Andy LaMarche proudly saluting the Gilchrist team

Chief Master Sergeant Charlie Gratz

Charles "Charlie" Gratz was born in 1936 in Dundalk, Maryland. Charlie had eight sisters and three brothers. He attended St. Rita School and then went on to graduate from Patterson Park High School. Charlie entered the United States Air Force at the age of 18.

Charlie was trained to work in aircraft quality maintenance. He was stationed at Cannon Air Force Base in Clovis, New Mexico. He was also stationed in Germany and Panama at several different times.

Charlie served for over 30 years, retiring in 1992 at the rank of Chief Master Sergeant.

Approximately one percent of the enlisted force will be chief master sergeants. It is very difficult to attain this rank. Promotion from senior master sergeant to chief master sergeant is via a promotion board. Factors include education obtained, experiences, technical skills, performance reports, and completion of the Senior Noncommissioned Officer Correspondence Course.

Charlie had two daughters: Dawn and Patricia.

Charlie enjoyed running the Christmas parties on base every year. He made sure each of the children received the perfect gift. He also ran the NCO Club on the base. Charlie is very sociable and enjoys being with his military friends. According to his daughter Patty, the military is a very big part of his life.

Charlie was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by Gilchrist staff and a team of military veteran volunteers. Attending the tribute were family members, friends, and a number of Charlie's Air Force buddies.

The tribute began with an opening prayer, singing of the National Anthem, and reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. Charlie was presented a certificate from Gilchrist as well as a We Honor Veterans pin and a Vietnam Era pin from the Veterans Administration. Charlie was also presented a patriotic blanket made by a Gilchrist volunteer and a thank-you card made by a school student.

A Gilchrist music therapist played several patriotic songs including the Air Force song. All of the military veterans then presented Charlie with a formal salute. The tribute concluded with a prayer and the singing of God Bless America.



Chief Master Sergeant Charlie Gratz saluting the Gilchrist team



Chief Master Sergeant Charlie Gratz with the Gilchrist team and some of his Air Force buddies



Charlie Gratz (right) at one of his many promotion ceremonies

Army Veteran Frankie McLaurin

Frankie McLaurin was born in 1956 in North Carolina. Frankie entered the Army at the age of 17 and served for two years on active duty. He then served 20 years in the Army Reserve. Frankie worked in artillery and maintenance. At one point, Frankie's unit was in Germany guarding the Berlin Wall.

After completing active duty, Frankie continued to work mechanical and maintenance jobs throughout his career.

In August of 1994, Frankie was asked to speak at the White House on behalf of his employer, Ellicott Machine International. The focus of the meeting was on the anniversary of the President's economic plan. Frankie spoke with President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore seated on stage (see photo below). Here is a link to a video of the event at the White House, which includes Frankie's comments:

[Clinton Economic Plan First Anniversary | Video | C-SPAN.org](#)

Frankie was very active in his community, supporting a number of local activities.

Frankie was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by a team of Gilchrist military veteran volunteers. Frankie was surrounded by family and friends as the veterans thanked Frankie for his service to our country. The tribute opened with a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. Frankie was presented with a 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 a school student. Frankie's wife Wanda was presented with a patriotic scarf and a Proud Wife of a Veteran pin. The tribute concluded with an honor salute given to Frankie by the Gilchrist team and then a

closing prayer.



Frankie McLaurin with the Gilchrist Team



Frankie McLaurin speaking at the White House

Marine Mark Kresel

Mark Kresel was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1949. He graduated from Jamaica High

School in Queens, New York and in 1968 entered the United States Marine Corps. After completing boot camp at Parris Island, Mark was trained to work within the supply system of the Marine Corps.

Mark served in Vietnam from 1968-1969 working as a supply sergeant. Mark was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps in 1972. After leaving the military, Mark worked in the sales field including becoming the vice president of sales for a textile company.

Mark met Robin Deutsch in 1972, and they were married in 1973. Mark and Robin had two daughters, Jodi and Karen. Mark loved being around people and especially his grandsons Gavin and Max.

Mark traveled the world visiting China, Russia, Canada, Egypt and many other countries. Mark even went sky diving in Germany. He loved woodworking and making birdhouses. He was an avid collector of coins and model trains.

Mark Kresel was a very active member of Detachment 1198 of the Marine Corps League. Mark's primary focus was on the Toys for Tots program. The Marine Corps established the Toys for Tots program in 1947. The mission of the program is "to collect new unwrapped toys and distribute those toys to less fortunate children at Christmas." Mark was highly effective as the Marketing Director for Detachment 1198. The Toys for Tots program was his pride and joy, and he was a very successful producer of toy and financial donations.

Mark was recently honored for his military service with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by a team of Gilchrist veteran volunteers and staff. Mark was surrounded by family members and a number of his Marine buddies from the Marine Corps League. The tribute opened with a prayer, singing of the National Anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance. Mark was presented with a certificate from Gilchrist, We Honor Veteran and Vietnam Veteran pins from the Veterans Administration, a thank-you card from a school student, and a patriotic blanket made by a Gilchrist volunteer.

Mark's wife Robin was presented with a patriotic scarf and a Proud Wife of a Veteran pin. Everyone sang patriotic songs including the Marine Corps Hymn. The tribute concluded with a formal salute by the veterans, the singing of God Bless America, and a closing prayer.



Marine Mark Kresel



Marine Corps League members Mark Kresel (L) and Clint Davis collecting for Toys for Tots at the Texas Road House in Fallston, Maryland



Mark Kresel Tribute with Gilchrist team and Marine Corps League members

Shopping at the PX

Veterans will remember shopping at the PX (also known as the Post Exchange). You may not know that even though you are no longer in the military, that you can still shop online at the PX.

While not all veterans are eligible for in-person privileges on DoD and Coast Guard installations, **all honorably discharged veterans are eligible for online military exchange shopping through the Veterans Online Shopping Benefit.** To access your online shopping benefit, veterans not eligible for in-person privileges should follow the instructions to establish an account at any of the following military exchange websites, or the VA's Veterans Canteen Service:

Army and Air Force Exchange System: <https://www.shopmyexchange.com>

Marine Corps Exchange: <http://www.mymcx.com>

Navy Exchange: <https://www.mynavyexchange.com>

Coast Guard Exchange: <https://shopCGX.com>

Veterans Canteen Service: <https://shopvcs.va.gov>



1942 Mobile PX

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, Veteran Buddy Check Week, which takes place October 20-24, 2025, builds on the success of the American Legion's Buddy Check program and the Veteran Wellness Alliance's Get Involved program.

Veteran Buddy Checks aim 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.

To take the pledge, take the training, and to find buddies, go to:

[Veteran Buddy Checks - Veterans Experience](#)

Uniform Smiles

A former Sergeant in the Marine Corps took a new job as a high school teacher.

Just before the school year started, he injured his back and was required to wear a plaster cast around the upper part of his body. Fortunately, the cast fit under his shirt and wasn't noticeable.

On the first day of school, he found himself assigned to the toughest students in the school. The smart punks, having already heard the new teacher was a former Marine, were leery of him and he knew they would be testing his discipline in the classroom.

Walking confidently into the rowdy classroom, the new teacher opened the window wide and sat down at his desk. When a strong breeze made his tie flap, he picked up a stapler and stapled the tie to his chest.

There was dead silence... the rest of the year went quite smoothly.

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.



gilchristcares.org • 888.823.8880

Gilchrist | 11311 McCormick Rd. Suite 350 | Hunt Valley, MD 21031 US

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