

[Draft] We Honor Veterans Newsletter - Special Edition February 2026 Edition

From

To WeHonorVeterans <WeHonorVeterans@gbmc.org>



## Special Edition February 2026 Edition

### Special Edition

Gilchrist veteran volunteers conduct several hundred tributes each year to honor veterans under hospice care. We would like to share the story of one of our very special veterans.

Also, in this newsletter there is an announcement about a course to develop more veteran volunteers. If you are a veteran or activity duty military and would be interested in becoming a volunteer, then this course is for you.

There is also information on how to register for the upcoming Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans event.

### WWII Army Veteran Donald Regier

Donald Regier was born May 20, 1924, in Hastings, Nebraska. Don grew up in Hastings and graduated from Hastings High School in 1941. He entered the Army in March of 1943.

After completing boot camp, Don was trained as a combat infantryman, eventually achieving the rank of Technician Fifth Grade. Technician Fifth Grade (abbreviated T/5 or Tec 5) was a rank of the United States Army from 1942 to 1948. The rank was created to recognize enlisted soldiers with special technical skills, but who were not trained as combat leaders.

Don headed for Europe on the RMS Aquitania, sailing from the USA to England via Scotland. He was part of the 106th Infantry Division, 422nd Regiment. The 106th Infantry Division was formed for service during World War II. Two of its three regiments were overrun and surrounded in the initial days of the Battle of the Bulge, and they were forced to surrender to German forces. Don was captured on 19 December 1944 in the Ardennes Forest, near Belgium, close to St. Vith.

Don and his fellow POWs spent a harrowing week traveling by train in 40 & 8 boxcars. Introduced in the 1870s, the boxcars were pressed into military service by the French Army in both world wars. Between 1940 and 1944, occupying German forces used 40 & 8s to transport troops, POWs, horses, freight, and civilian prisoners. The 40 & 8 refers to their capacity: 40 men or 8 horses.

Don was first held at Stalag IX-B. Stalag IX-B (also known as Bad Orb-Wegscheide) was a German POW camp located south-east of the town of Bad Orb in Hesse, Germany. During World War II, more than 25,000 POWs at a time were housed here. Don was then transferred to Ziegenhain, Stalag IX-A, in January 1945. Addressing a church group many years later about his imprisonment, he said, "Anyone who loses his freedom for twenty-four hours or for a given period of time, without any knowledge of when he's going to be freed and returned to freedom, has experienced an aspect of life that can't be explained. I don't think other people can understand, but I think it probably has made me a better person."

Don and his fellow POWs were liberated on Good Friday, March 30, 1945. He was repatriated at Camp Lucky Strike in St. Valery, France. This camp was a massive tent city for American troops preparing to embark on the voyage home. Demobilization in Western Europe was carried out primarily through Camp Lucky Strike and nine other camps, eight in France and one in Belgium.

Don returned to the USA via the RMS Queen Mary, from which he was greeted by the Statue of Liberty as he entered the New York harbor. That summer, he was on leave with his family in Nebraska, where he awaited reassignment for the then-presumed invasion of Japan. He was discharged from the Army in November 1945.

Don married Catherine Louise Meedel on September 11, 1948, in Hastings, Nebraska. They would have five children: Rodney Regier, Suzanne Regier Page, Steven Regier (deceased), Ann Regier, and Lynne Regier Gunning.

Don loved music. In 1941, he entered Hastings College in Hastings, Nebraska, where he studied voice, the string double bass, conducting, and music education. After the interruption of the war years, he returned to Hastings College and in 1948 earned a BA in Music. He then attended Columbia University in New York City, earning a MA in Music in 1949. Don then earned his DMA (Doctorate in Music Arts) in 1966 at the Peabody Institute of Music in Baltimore, Maryland.

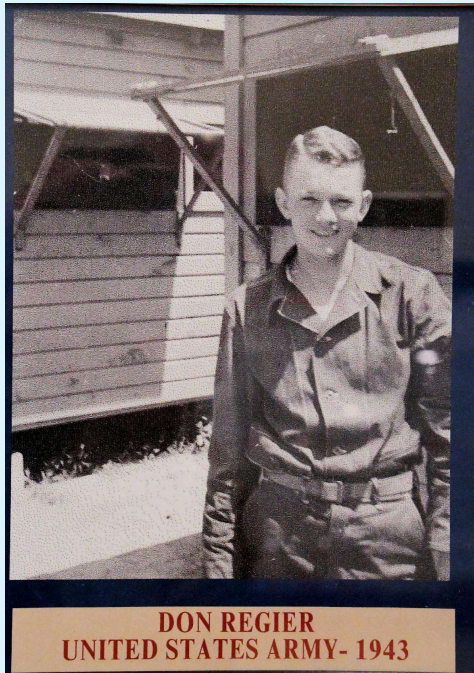
Don started teaching in 1949 at Baltimore City College High School in Baltimore, Maryland. He advanced through administrative levels of increasing responsibility until he was ultimately Director of Music Programs, Baltimore City Department of Education until 1974. Don then became the Supervisor of Vocal Music, Secondary Schools, Baltimore County Department of Education from 1974-1984. Don retired in June of 1984.

Over the years, Don served as the director of local choirs, including the Johns Hopkins University Glee Club, the Kenwood Presbyterian Church, the Peabody Institute of Music Preparatory Choir, and the Second Presbyterian Church.

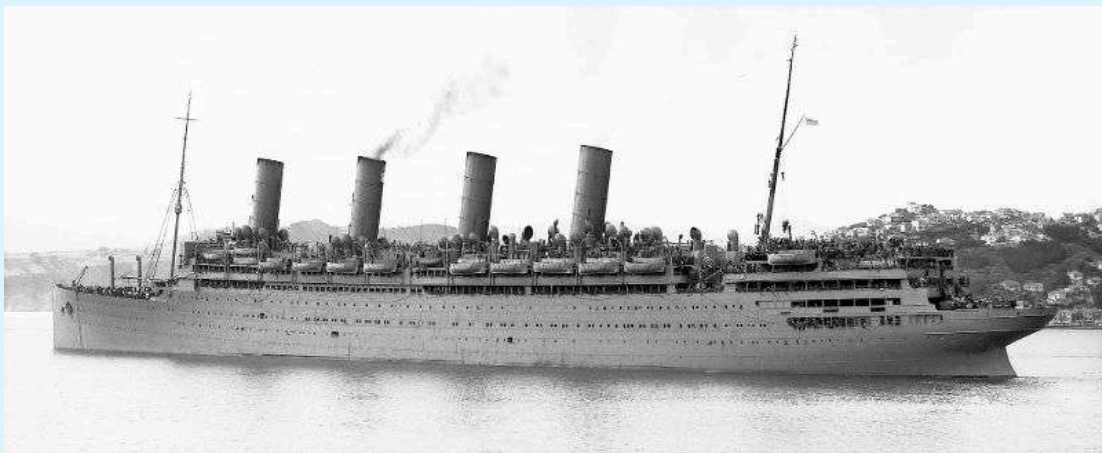
When asked about her dad, one of his daughters said he loved being with his family, playing music, woodworking, reading historical biographies, restoring antique furniture, and traveling around the US and in Europe. Don enjoyed tennis and played into his 80s.

Donald Regier was recently honored with a salute to service tribute conducted by a team of Gilchrist staff and military veteran volunteers. The tribute opened with a prayer, the singing of the National Anthem, and the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. Don 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. The Gilchrist music therapist played several patriotic songs, including the Army song. The military veterans then presented Don with an honor salute. Don sharply returned the salute. The tribute concluded with a prayer.

Following the tribute, one of the veteran volunteers commented: "It was such an honor to salute a WWII Battle of the Bulge combat veteran."



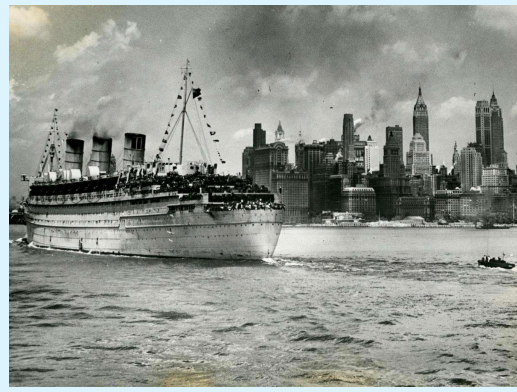
Don Regier in 1943



RMS Aquitania



40 & 8 Boxcar



RMS Queen Mary, American troops filling her decks, pulling into New York harbor



Donald Regier with the Gilchrist team



Donald Regier proudly returning an honor salute

## Veterans Honoring Veterans

Are you a veteran or currently serving in the military? Would you like to join other veterans to honor veterans under hospice care?

Did you read the story above about Donald Regier? Would you like to be on a team of veterans saluting veterans like Mr. Regier?

Gilchrist veteran volunteers conduct several hundred Salute to Service Tributes each year. We are looking for more veterans to join our tribute teams. In order to become a veteran volunteer conducting tributes in homes and healthcare facilities, you must complete a training course. We are proud to announce that a special course for veterans and active-duty military is being offered.

This **Volunteer Hospice Training for Veterans** to serve other veterans under Gilchrist's care is being offered in April:

- **Dates:** April 23, 2026, and April 30, 2026 (8:00am- 3:00pm and both days are required)
- **Location:** Gilchrist Hunt Valley offices at 11311 McCormick Road, Hunt Valley MD 21031 (Suite 350)
- Lunch provided

If you would like to become a qualified veteran volunteer and attend this 2-day course, please contact Kim McDonnell at [kmcdonnell@gilchristcares.org](mailto:kmcdonnell@gilchristcares.org)

## Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans

**Time to Register!**

**Sunday, March 22, 2026**

Event is in-person at 11:30 a.m. at Martin's West, Baltimore, MD.

**The Keynote Speaker will be Karl Arthur Marlantes, USMC:**

Join us to hear Vietnam War hero Karl Marlantes, recipient of the Navy Cross, Bronze Star, and two Purple Hearts. Bestselling author of *Matterhorn* and *What It Is Like to Go to War*, he will share unforgettable stories of courage, sacrifice, and resilience.

**We need your help! Please spread the word about this event. We would like to reach as many Vietnam veterans as possible.**

On the Gilchrist website you can read more about the event and click on the **REGISTER FOR FREE TODAY** button on the page to register. Just click on this link:

[Gilchrist Welcome Home | Powered By GiveSmart](#)

This free event is 100% supported by community donations. If you know of someone who would like to become a sponsor or if you would like to make a donation, please visit the Gilchrist website (link above), scroll down, and then click on "Donate Now," or call Kim McDonnell at 443-849-8337.

**We Hope to see you there!**

## **Join the Million Veteran Program & Take the Survey**

VA's Million Veteran Program (MVP) recently launched the Military Experiences and Toxic Exposures Survey to learn more about the ways military experiences and toxic exposures affect health. MVP, [VA's largest research effort](#), is studying health conditions that matter to Veterans, including mental health, heart health, cancer, tinnitus and more. All Veterans are invited to [join MVP and complete the survey](#).

### **What does the Military Experiences and Toxic Exposures Survey ask about?**

The survey asks questions about:

- Your military service and deployment history.
- Occupation(s) in and out of the military.
- Military job tasks and deployment activities.
- Exposure to toxic or hazardous substances while deployed.
- Exposure to loud sounds.
- Combat experiences.
- Lifestyle and home exposures.

By completing this survey, you can help researchers better understand how to screen for, detect, prevent and treat health conditions associated with military experiences and exposures. This survey is for health research purposes and will not impact your disability benefits or your access to VA health care.

### **How do I take the Military Experiences and Toxic Exposures Survey?**

All Veterans are invited to [join the Million Veteran Program and take the survey](#).

To join MVP today, visit [www.mvp.va.gov](http://www.mvp.va.gov), click “Sign in” and then “Get started.”

Veterans who are already part of MVP can take the survey using the following steps:

1. Visit [MVP Home | Veterans Affairs](#) and click “Sign in.”
2. Choose a secure VA partner to sign in.
3. Once you are signed in, select “Surveys” and then “Continue.”
4. Click “Toxic Exposures Survey” icon.
5. Click “Start the survey.”

## Uniform Smiles

Aboard a troop carrier crossing the Atlantic during WWII, a soldier noticed a seasick buddy losing it over the railing alongside several other soldiers. “I never knew you had such a weak stomach,” he said. “It’s not weak,” his buddy replied. “I’m throwing up just as far as the rest of these guys.”

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:kmcdonnell@gilchristcares.org).

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