



gilchrist

Live Every Moment

Honoring Our Veterans Newsletter

July 2026

Air Force Chief Master Sergeant Marc Skurow

Marc Skurow was born in 1948. He graduated from Woodward High School in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1967. Marc enlisted in the United States Air Force in 1970.

Following boot camp, Marc was trained as a loadmaster and was in that job for his entire military career. During his career he was stationed at a number of bases including Lockbourne AFB (now Rickenbacker AFB) in Ohio, Langley AFB in Virginia, Ching Chuan Kang Air Base (CCK) in Taiwan, Selfridge ANG Base in Michigan, and Andrews AFB in Maryland. Marc also spent time in Vietnam during the war. Marc flew on several different planes, including the C-123, C-130, and C-141.

Marc likes telling the “jumper cables” story. He was on a C-130 plane while in Vietnam, and the pilots were unable to get the plane’s engines to run. Marc climbed out of the plane, flagged down an Army truck, and asked if they had jumper cables. They used the cables to jump-start one of the engines. The crew was able to take off with a single engine while under enemy fire.

Marc retired at the rank of E-9 Chief Master Sergeant in 2004 after serving for 34 years.

When Marc was in elementary school in Cincinnati, he met Elaine Donny who lived next door. They continued in school together and became high school sweethearts. Marc and Elaine were married in 1972. They would have three children: Aaron, Kami, and Tori.

When the family was asked about Marc, they replied that he was a proud veteran, strong in his Jewish faith, was very involved with his local synagogue, and loved traveling the world during his military service. In 2023, Marc and Elaine traveled to Israel as this trip had been on his bucket list his entire life.

Marc was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by a team of Gilchrist volunteers. Attending the tribute were family and friends. The tribute opened with a prayer, the singing of the National Anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance. Marc was presented with a certificate from Gilchrist acknowledging his military service. Marc was presented with an Honoring Our Veterans pin and a Vietnam Veteran pin from the Veterans Administration. He was also presented with a patriotic blanket made by a Gilchrist volunteer and a thank-you card made by a school student.

Elaine was presented with a patriotic scarf and a Proud Wife of a Veteran pin. Kami and Tori were presented with Proud Family Member pins. Everyone then sang several patriotic songs, including the Air Force song. The Gilchrist military veteran volunteers then presented Marc with an honor salute, which Marc proudly returned. The tribute concluded with a prayer.



Coast Guard Veteran and Eyewitness to History David Pearson

David Pearson was born in Bennington, Vermont in May of 1932. He graduated from Saints Peter and Paul High School in Miami, Florida in 1950 and enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1951. David became a Yeoman Second Class Petty Officer and served aboard the US CGC Juniper. This ship was a 180-foot buoy tender homeported in Key West, Florida during World War II and tended aids to navigation in the 7th Naval District. David was discharged from the Coast Guard in 1954.

David then attended Emory University in Atlanta to study history. In 1956, David and a buddy headed to St. Petersburg, Florida for spring break. David was familiar with the beach at St. Petersburg from his days in the Coast Guard. One day on the beach he met Anne Bates. Anne was there vacationing with her family from the mid-west. Following spring break, David returned to Emory University to continue his studies, graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in History.

Anne and David were married in 1960. They would have three children: Christopher, Maggie and Katie.

David was hired as a White House information officer in 1962. After a period of time, he was promoted to work for Sargent Shriver who served as the Director of Information. David was the Deputy Director of Information for the US Peace Corps from 1963-64.

On the night of November 22, 1963, David Pearson became an eyewitness to history. Then a second-level press officer for the Peace Corps, he was summoned to the White House to fill in for regular press staffers who were traveling with the President. His primary responsibility that night was handling the press and assisting with arrangements to receive President Kennedy's body as it was returned from Dallas.

Because much of the official White House press staff was out of town in Texas, David Pearson was tasked with managing the influx of media and facilitating communication during the chaotic transition. David was present in the East Room when the casket arrived, where he observed an intimate moment of Jacqueline Kennedy weeping over her husband's casket before being comforted by Robert Kennedy.

There is a photo of David Pearson meeting newly sworn in President Johnson. Under President Johnson, David was the Assistant Director, US Community Relations Service 1964-1965. After leaving government service, David operated a public relations firm.

When asked what people should know about David Pearson, his children said in his life he volunteered his PR services for the Audubon Society, he campaigned for Civil Rights, he worked on the Save The Manatee Campaign for Bob Graham, and on the political campaigns for Governor and then Senator Graham.

David Pearson always remained active in tennis, golfing, and boating. He taught his children to love and respect the ocean and to fish. David was environmentally aware and loved to plant and care for many fruit trees and native plants around his home in Coral Gables, Florida.

David is a voracious reader, chamber music lover, and was socially active with wife Anne throughout their 65-year marriage.

David is the author of two books. One is a memoir, and the other is a novella. The memoir is titled *JFK and Bobby, Arnie and Jack...and David!* The book includes his time serving in the Kennedy administration and working with golf icons Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus.

David Pearson was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by a team of Gilchrist military veteran volunteers. The tribute opened with a prayer, the singing of the National Anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance. David was presented a certificate from Gilchrist, an Honoring Our Veterans pin, a patriotic blanket made by a Gilchrist volunteer, and a thank-you card made by a school student. David's children were presented with Proud Family Member of a Veteran pins. Everyone sang several patriotic songs, including the Coast Guard song. The veteran team then presented David with an honor salute, which he proudly returned. The tribute concluded with a prayer.



(L-R) Sargent Shriver, President Lyndon Johnson, David Pearson



David Pearson Saluting the Gilchrist Team

Colonel Anthony Orlando, USAF (Ret.)

Anthony “Tony” Orlando served in the United States Air Force and as a pilot flew over 200 B-52 missions during the Vietnam War. During Operation Arc Light (sometimes Arclight) from 1965 to 1973, the USAF deployed B-52 Stratofortresses from bases in the U.S. Territory of Guam and other locations to provide battlefield air interdiction during the Vietnam War. This included strikes at enemy bases, supply routes, and behind the lines troop concentrations, as well as occasionally providing close air support directly to ground combat operations.

Colonel Orlando was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by a team from Inova and Gilchrist. The purpose of the tribute was to thank Colonel Orlando for his service to the country.

The tribute opened with a prayer, singing of the National Anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance. Colonel Orlando was presented with a certificate from Gilchrist, an Honoring Our Veterans pin, a Vietnam Veteran pin, a patriotic blanket made by a volunteer, and a thank-you card made by a school student. Colonel Orlando’s three children were each presented with a Proud Family Member of a Veteran pin.

Social worker Suzanne Andress-Udall read the poem “High Flight” which is a celebrated aviation poem by John Gillespie Magee, Jr., capturing the exhilaration and transcendence of flight. President Ronald Reagan famously quoted its opening and closing lines in a televised address after the Challenger Disaster. As Suzanne reached the final lines of the poem, Colonel Orlando joined with her reciting the poem from memory. Here is a link to the complete poem:

[High Flight | The Poetry Foundation](#)

As you can imagine, with the name Tony Orlando, the song “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree” was very popular in the Orlando household. Chaplain Jae distributed copies of the lyrics and played this popular song on his ukulele as family and friends sang along.

The military veterans then presented Colonel Orlando with an honor salute, which he proudly returned. The tribute concluded with a prayer.



B-52 during the Vietnam War



Colonel Orlando returning an honor salute



Colonel Anthony Orlando with the Gilchrist/Inova team

Navy Veterans Dorothy and Leo Heid

Leo Heid was born in 1932 in Baltimore, Maryland. Leo graduated high school from Mount St. Joseph's College in Baltimore in 1950.

Dorothy Myers was born in 1933 in Colchester, Vermont. Dorothy graduated from Burlington High School in Burlington, Vermont in 1951.

Leo entered the Navy in 1952. Following boot camp, he was trained as a hospital corpsman.

Dorothy entered the Navy in 1952. Following boot camp, she was trained as a communications technician.

In 1953, Dorothy became ill and was admitted to Bethesda Naval Hospital. As you can guess, Leo was working at that hospital. Dorothy and Leo met and were married in 1955. Leo and Dorothy were discharged in 1956 after completing their four-year enlistments.

Dorothy and Leo have nine children: Jody, Sharon, Theresa, James, Gary, Barbara, Carol, Keith, and Kevin.

After leaving the Navy, Leo attended the University of Baltimore, graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Management. Following graduation, he went to work at General Motors in several departments including the payroll department. Leo also worked as the manager in the paint department and also as a time study coordinator.

With nine children, Dorothy was initially a stay-at-home mom for several years until she decided to go to nursing school at the age of 40. She worked at several hospitals for the next 20 years including Mt. Washington Children's Hospital, Franklin Square, John's Hopkins Bayview, Sinai Hospital, and John's Hopkins Hospital.

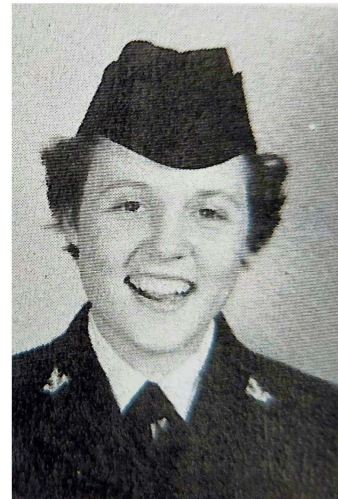
After retiring, Dorothy and Leo traveled with the General Motors Retirement Club. Their travels took them to England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Hawaii, Alaska, and several National Parks on the west coast. Dorothy also volunteered for several years delivering Meals on Wheels. She also volunteered at The Nearly New Shop at GBMC for 17 years. Leo played golf three days a week with his buddies and on Sundays with his sons.

Dorothy and Leo were recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by a team of Gilchrist staff and volunteers. The tribute opened with a prayer, the singing of the National Anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance. Dorothy and Leo were presented with Honoring Our Veterans pins and certificates from Gilchrist. Dorothy and Leo were each presented with a patriotic blanket made by a volunteer. As a Gilchrist music therapist was part of the tribute team, Dorothy asked to sing the Navy Hymn and Leo asked to sing Anchors Aweigh.

Dorothy and Leo were presented with an honor salute by the military veterans. The tribute concluded with a prayer and the singing of God Bless America.



Leo Heid Boot Camp Photo



Dorothy Myers Boot Camp Photo



Air Force Veteran John M. Porter

John “Rusty” Porter was born in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1932. He attended Wakefield High School and played on their football team. During one game, Rusty made an extraordinary shoestring tackle that resulted in a scholarship at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. He studied landscape architecture and graduated in 1955. Rusty went on to complete his Masters in Engineering Management from George Washington University.

After college, Rusty played as a defensive back with the Chicago Cardinals football team for two seasons. Then Uncle Sam came calling and Rusty entered the United States Air Force. He completed flight training and was assigned to the Strategic Air Command. Rusty flew B-52s over Vietnam during the war. Rusty’s B-52s were based in Thailand at the U-Tapao Royal Thai Navy Airfield.

While in the Air Force, Rusty received the Air Force Commendation medal and personal letters of commendation from the Strategic Air Command, Tactical Air Command and the British Royal Air Force. After completing his Air Force duty, Rusty spent several years working for the CIA. He then joined the Director, Defense Research and Engineering in the office of the Secretary of Defense for eighteen years. During his time in the office of the Secretary of Defense, Rusty received a number of awards and honors.

Rusty was the Director of Electronic Warfare (EW) when he left the Office of the Secretary of Defense in 1984 to form Rus Porter Associates, an electronic combat (EC) consulting company. Rusty also served on a number of boards and task forces focused on electronic warfare.

Rusty married the former Virginia Bradley. They have six children and a number of grandchildren and great grandchildren. His principal community service activities have been with the local affiliate of Habitat for Humanity of which he is Past President and a volunteer worker – building decent homes for people in need. He also served with a number of other community service organizations.

Rusty Porter was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by a team of Gilchrist volunteers. The tribute included an opening prayer, the singing of the National Anthem, and the Pledge of Allegiance. Family and friends were there to see Rusty receive

a Certificate from Gilchrist, an Honoring Our Veterans pin, a thank you card from a school student, and a patriotic blanket made by a Gilchrist volunteer. Virginia was presented with a patriotic scarf and a Proud Wife of a Veteran pin.

Everyone sang along as a retired Air Force Colonel played several patriotic songs, including the Air Force song. The military veteran volunteers then presented Rusty with an honor salute, which he proudly returned.



Rusty Porter making a shoestring tackle in high school





Rusty and Virginia Porter with the Gilchrist Team

Marine Margaret Deavers

Margaret Yirka was born in Maryland in 1935. She attended Seton High School, graduating in 1953. In 1956, a friend of Margaret's joined the Marine Corps Reserves, so Margaret joined.

Margaret's job in the Marine Corps was classification. A female Marine working in "classification" in the 1950s was performing a personnel-administration specialty focused on sorting, assigning, and managing Marines according to their Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) and qualifications. In that era, "classification" was one of the standard administrative billets assigned to Women Marines, alongside administration, supply, and disbursing. Margaret was discharged from the Marines in 1959.

In 1964, Margaret was out dancing with friends and met her future husband. They were married in 1965 and she became Margaret Deavers. They have one daughter, Cheryl.

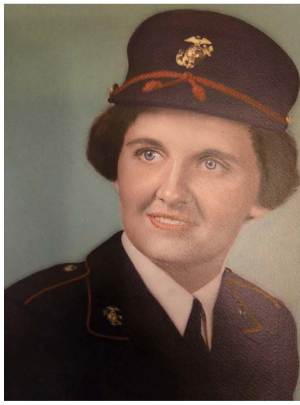
After leaving the Marine Corps, Margaret worked as a keypunch operator and then worked in the supply office for the U.S. Coast Guard. She also worked part time at Montgomery Ward and in a photo studio.

When daughter Cheryl was asked what people should know about her mother, she said that when she was younger, her mother enjoyed going dancing with the girls and playing shuffleboard. Margaret loved dogs and liked to provide foster care for older dogs. She enjoyed playing bingo and spending time with friends at the senior center. Once she became a grandmother, her world revolved around her grandson. She attended church weekly and was a member of the Church of the Crucifixion in Glen Burnie until it closed. She now attends St. Athanasius in Brooklyn Park.

Margaret was recently honored with a Salute to Service Tribute conducted by a team of Gilchrist volunteers. The tribute included an opening prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. Margaret was presented with a certificate from Gilchrist, an Honoring Our Veterans pin, a thank-you card made by a school student, and a patriotic blanket made by a Gilchrist volunteer. The military veterans then presented Margaret with a formal salute to recognize her service to our country. The tribute concluded with a prayer.



Margaret Yirka (seated – far right) with members of her platoon at Parris Island in 1956



Marine Margaret Yirka



A smiling Margaret with Gilchrist
volunteer and Marine Corps/Vietnam
Veteran Paul Sullivan



Margaret with family and the Gilchrist team

Veterans Administration Battle Buddy

The issue isn't a lack of resources. It's a lack of connection.

Every year, roughly 200,000 service members transition out of the military. They receive briefings on what they've earned, then step into civilian life expected to figure it out on their own. Months or years often pass before challenges begin to surface. That's where the breakdown happens.

VETLIFE has worked with thousands of Veterans who were eligible for benefits that could have changed their lives, but they didn't know where to start, didn't follow up or didn't realize action was required. Many faced mental health challenges made worse by financial instability, delayed care and system confusion.

Connection is the missing piece. Not another phone number or referral, but real, actionable connection that meets a Veteran where they are and helps them take the next step immediately.

VETLIFE's [Battle Buddy](#) app serves as a no-cost, always-available access point where Veterans can:

- Identify the benefits they've earned.
- Receive step-by-step guidance.
- Take action in real time.
- Stay engaged through ongoing follow-up.

For more information, go to:

[The power of connection: why access, not awareness, changes outcomes - VA News](#)

Uniform Smiles

The new recruit asked the drill sergeant, "Why do we run everywhere?"

The drill sergeant answered, "Because walking gives you time to think, and that's dangerous."

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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