



MacArthur Memorial Education Resources

Korean War Biographies



Neil Armstrong

Born August 5, 1930 in Ohio. Studied aeronautical engineering at Purdue University on US Navy scholarship. Became naval aviator in 1950, serving in Korea. Recipient of Air Medal for serving in 60 combat missions. After Korea, became test pilot for the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics. Joined NASA Astronaut Corps in 1962. Became NASA's first civilian astronaut in space in 1966 and the first person to walk on the moon. Left NASA in 1971 to teach at the University of Cincinnati. Passed away in 2012.



Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin

Born January 20, 1930 in New Jersey. Graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point in 1951. Entered the US Air Force and assigned to the 51st Fighter Wing in Korea. Served on 66 combat missions between 1951-1953. Recipient of two Distinguished Service Crosses and three Air Medals. Earned PhD in astronautics and selected as NASA astronaut after war. Became second person to walk on the moon after Armstrong. Left NASA in 1971 to serve as Commandant of US Air Force Test Pilot School. Retired in 1972 with rank of Brigadier General.



Charles Rangel

Born June 11, 1930 in Harlem. Enlisted in US Army in 1948 after dropping out of high school. Served with all-black 503rd Field Artillery Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division in Korea. Led 40 men to safety despite sustaining shrapnel wounds during an ambush at the Battle of Kunu-ri. Recipient of the Bronze Star. Honorably discharged in 1952 with rank of staff sergeant. Completed law school in 1960. Became lawyer and civil rights activist, marching in 1965 from Selma to Montgomery. Won congressional seat in 1970 and second-longest serving member of the House of Representatives. Retired in 2017. Passed away in 2025.



Johnny Cash

Born February 26, 1932 in Arkansas. Enlisted in US Air Force a few weeks after Korean War began in June 1950. Assigned to serve in West Germany as a high-speed Morse Code intercept operator, monitoring transmissions from Soviet Army in Korea. Began writing songs while off-duty, including “Folsom Prison Blues.” Honorably discharged in 1954 with rank of staff sergeant. Returned to US to settle in Memphis, Tennessee and launched musical career in 1955 with Sun Records. Passed away in 2003.



Kemal “Casey” Kasem

Born April 27, 1932 in Detroit to Lebanese parents. Studying at Wayne State University when drafted to serve in Korea in 1952. Served in Korea as DJ and announcer for the Armed Forces Korea Network (AFKN). After war, became host of “American Top 40” and “America’s Top 10.” Also worked as a voice actor and voiced Shaggy Roger in the *Scooby-Doo* franchise (1969-1997), Robin in *Super Friends* (1973-1985), and many other roles in other children’s television series including *Sesame Street* and *Transformers*. Passed away in 2014.



Theodore “Ted” Williams

Born August 30, 1918 in San Diego. Began playing baseball with the Boston Red Sox in 1939. Enlisted into the Marine Corps and trained as a pilot and gunner during WWII but didn’t see combat before the war ended. Became slugger for the Red Socks but recalled to duty in 1952 to serve in Korea. Recipient of Air Medal for serving over 39 combat missions as a Marine Corps pilot. Honorably discharged in 1953 and returned to baseball career. Considered one of the greatest hitters in baseball history. Played entire career in Major League Baseball with Boston Red Sox from 1939-1960. Passed away in 2002.



Richard Cavazos

Born January 31, 1929 in Texas to Mexican-American parents. Earned bachelor's degree and graduated from Reserve Officers' Training Corps in 1951, becoming lieutenant in US Army. Deployed to Korea with the 65th Infantry, a primarily Puerto Rican unit. Recipient of Distinguished Service Cross and Silver Star for leading men in repeated assaults and rescuing wounded men while under fire. Became Army's first Hispanic 4-star General and served over 30 years. Retired in 1984. Passed away in 2017. Fort Hood, Texas was renamed Fort Cavazos in his honor in 2022.



David Bleak

Born February 27, 1932 in Idaho. Dropped out of high school to join US Army in 1950. Trained as a combat medic and deployed to Korea with 40th Infantry Division. Recipient of Medal of Honor for service at Minari-gol, where he administered lifesaving aid to several soldiers while fighting off attacking enemy troops. Honorably discharged in 1953 with the rank of staff sergeant. Worked several jobs after the war, retiring from his position as a radioactive waste technician in the mid-1990s. Passed away in 2006.



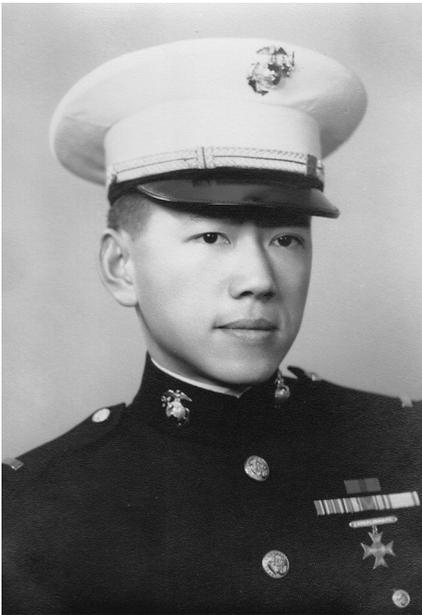
Joseph Kittinger

Born July 27, 1928 in Tampa. Graduated from US Air Force aviation cadet training in 1950. Served in West Germany during Korean War as test pilot and in Vietnam War was a fighter pilot, when he was shot down as taken as a POW. Recipient of Distinguished Flying Cross, Silver Star, and Air Medal for service in 78 combat missions during career. Returned to US after war and became involved in high-altitude research projects. Set world record in 1960 for highest parachute jump and became known as "the man who fell to earth." Also set world records for longest free-fall and fastest speed ever attained by a human being through the atmosphere. Retired in 1978 with rank of colonel. Passed away in 2022.



Hector Cafferata

Born November 4, 1929 in New York to Peruvian-American family. Enlisted in US Marine Corps in 1948 and deployed to Korea in 1950 as a rifleman. Recipient of the Medal of Honor for actions at the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir, where he singlehandedly held off several waves of Chinese attack for an entire day despite sustaining wounds from sniper fire and grenade. Actions allowed his unit to hold a critical supply route. Continued to serve with the Marine Corps Reserves until 1959. Worked for the Division of Fish and Wildlife and ran a tavern after the war. Passed away in 2016. Quoted as saying, “I protected my fellow Marines. They protected me. And I’m prouder of that than the fact that the government decided to give me the Medal of Honor.”



Kurt Chew-En Lee

Born January 21, 1926 in San Francisco to Chinese parents. Enlisted in the US Marine Corps in 1944. Graduated from Officer Candidate School and became first Chinese-American Marine officer. Deployed to Korea in 1950 as platoon commander. Recipient of Navy Cross and Silver Star for actions during the Battle of Inchon and the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir, where during both battles he led his platoon on several engagements against Chinese forces despite sustaining wounds. Retired in 1968 with rank of major. Known for aggressive leadership during career and quoted as saying it was a “teaching tool to dispel ignorance.” Passed away in 2014.



Hiroshi “Hershey” Miyamura

Born on October 6, 1925 in New Mexico as a *Nisei* (second generation Japanese American). Nickname was an incorrect pronunciation of his first name. Drafted into US Army in 1945. Served with all Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team during WWII. Reenlisted in 1948. Served in Korea as machine gun squad leader. Recipient of Medal of Honor during Battle of the Imjin River when he repelled waves of enemy assaults throughout the night, then covered unit’s retreat singlehandedly. Captured and held as POW for over two years. Released and repatriated to US in 1953. Was honorarily discharged and worked as mechanic after war. Active in veterans’ organizations including the Wounded Warrior Project. Passed away in 2022.



William H. Thompson

Born on August 16, 1927 in New York. Joined US Army in 1945 and served in Alaska during WWII. Reenlisted in 1948 and served in South Korea and Japan during American occupation. Deployed back to Korea in 1950 after outbreak of the war as a heavy weapons specialist. Recipient of Medal of Honor for service during the Battle of the Pusan Perimeter in 1950, when his platoon was attacked in the middle of the night. Covered unit's retreat despite being severely wounded, refusing to leave until rest of men reached safety. Killed in action during the attack and posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor in 1951.



Cornelius H. Charlton

Born July 24, 1929 in West Virginia. Enlisted in US Army after high school in 1946. Sent to serve during occupation of Japan but requested transfer to fight in Korea. Served with segregated 24th Infantry Regiment during Korean War and earned position as platoon sergeant. Medal of Honor recipient for service in 1951 when he took command after his commander was wounded in action. Led men in three uphill charges until successfully destroying enemy position, despite sustaining severe injuries. Passed away a few weeks later from his injuries. Posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.



Roscoe Robinson, Jr

Born October 11, 1928 in St Louis. Graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point in 1951 and served as platoon leader and rifle company commander during Korean War. For actions in Korea, he received the Bronze Star. Served in Vietnam War and as US Military Representative to the NATO Military Committee. Became first black four-star General in the US Army in 1982. Retired and passed away in 1993.



Fred Vann Cherry

Born March 24, 1928 in Suffolk, Va. Entered US Air Force in 1951 after college. Earned pilot wings in 1952 and deployed to serve in Korea. Served on over 100 combat missions with the 58th Fighter-Bomber Wing. Later served in Vietnam, where he was shot down, captured, and tortured as one of the first and highest ranked black officers to be made a POW during the war. Released after seven years in 1973 and returned to US and career in Air Force with the Defense Intelligence Agency. Retired in 1981 after 30 years service and served on the president's Korean War Veterans Memorial Advisory Board. Passed away in 2016. The Colonel Fred Cherry Middle School in Suffolk is named in his honor.



Harvey Milk

Born May 22, 1930 in New York. Joined US Navy after college and served onboard the *USS Kittiwake* as a diving officer during the Korean War. Later served as a diving instructor at Naval Station San Diego. Forced to resign his commission in 1955 or undergo a court martial over his sexual orientation. Held several jobs after military including teaching and stock analysis. Began political career in 1970s and became first openly homosexual man to be elected to public office in California. Assassinated in 1978.



Clerow "Flip" Wilson, Jr

Born December 8, 1933 in New Jersey. Lied about his age and joined US Air Force at age 16. Outgoing personality and sense of humor made him popular, and he was sent on tours of other military bases to cheer up servicemen, who gave him the nickname "Flip." Honorably discharged in 1954 and eventually became a comedian and actor best known for appearances in 1960s and 1970s. Performed under the name Flip Wilson. Became one of the first successful black tv personalities when he created his own tv variety show, *The Flip Wilson Show*, which hosted many African American personalities and entertainers. Continued performing until passing away in 1998.



James McEachin

Born May 20, 1930 in North Carolina. Enlisted in US Army before outbreak of Korean War and deployed with 2nd Infantry Division. Unit was ambushed and he was severely wounded and left for dead. He was rescued, one of only two soldiers of his unit to survive the attack. Recipient of the Silver Star for actions in Korea. After war, became record producer in California and then an actor. Made appearances in numerous tv shows and movies including *Hawaii Five-O*, *Matlock*, *Fuzz*, *Sudden Impact*, *Double Exposure*, and the *Perry Mason* franchise. Active in veterans' organizations in the Army Reserve and Purple Hearts Reunited. Passed away in 2025.



Arie Mae Parks Taylor

Born March 27, 1927 in Ohio. Joined Women's Air Force (women's reserve branch of the US Air Force) after graduating from college in 1951. Served as staff administrator and recruiter and became first black WAF officer. Honorably discharged in 1955. Worked as hospital administrator after war before entering politics in 1960s. Became Colorado's first African American female representative in the Colorado State House in 1972. Advocate for women's rights and protection against domestic and police violence. Retired from politics in 1984 but recalled in 1991 as first black woman to serve as Denver's Clerk and Recorder. Held position until 1995. Passed away in 2003.



Della H. Raney

Born January 10, 1912 in Suffolk, Va. Graduated from nursing school in 1937 and became first black nurse to serve in the US Army Nurse Corps in WWII when she enlisted in 1941. Worked at several military bases in US as chief or head nurse, including Tuskegee Air Field, and became Army's first black nurse to attain the rank of major. Served at Percy Jones Army Medical Hospital in Michigan during the Korean War. Retired in 1978. Passed away in 1987.



Annie L. Grimes

Born December 6, 1925 in Tennessee. Enlisted in US Marines Corps in 1950. Third female African American Marine in its history. Served in Supply Branch at Marine Corps Headquarters until 1953, becoming the first black female Marine officer. Retired with rank of Chief Warrant Officer in 1970. Continued to be active in Montford Point Marine Association. Passed away in 2019.



Mildred Kelley

Born Jan 24, 1928 in Tennessee. Graduated from college and taught high school before enlisting in US Army Women's Army Corps (WAC) in 1950. Served as a clerk and personnel officer during and after Korean War. Became first black female in US Army to be promoted to rank of sergeant major in 1974. Retired in 1976. Went on to serve with many organizations, including the Veterans Advisory Board, the National Association of Black Military Women, and Women's Army Corps Veterans Association. Passed away in 2003. Quoted as saying, "Keep in mind- that anything worth having is not easy to come by."



Sergeant Reckless

Born in South Korea around 1948. Procured by US Marine Corps' 5th Marine Regiment in 1950 to serve as an ammunition carrier. Became beloved mascot. Famous for carrying heavy loads of artillery and injured men across difficult terrain without a handler, including one instance during the Battle for Outpost Vegas, when she made over 50 solo trips to resupply men fighting on the front. Injured twice and given battlefield promotion to sergeant in 1954. Brought back to US after

war ended and retired from active service in 1960. Lived out rest of days at USMC Camp Pendleton. Passed away in 1968.