



Craig Masterson

A Life of Service

By Jenna Caputo
 Photos by Angela Mia Photography
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Originally from Johnson City, NY, Craig Masterson grew up playing baseball and basketball, gardening with his mom, and partaking in student government. He went to school at Wesleyan University as a government major, but during his senior year in 1969-70, he learned he had the draft number six. After graduation, he decided to join the Marine Corps Officer Candidate Program (OCS).

“Marine OCS was extremely challenging. It was especially difficult from both a physical and mental perspective. It was 1970 and the Corps had lost many second lieutenants in Vietnam. After graduation from OCS, I spent another nine months at the Basic School in Quantico, VA. I spent three months in Ft. Sill, OK learning the finer points of artillery. After several months, I was sent to the First Marine Brigade, Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. I spent my time in Hawaii between an artillery battalion and flying backseat in OV 10s as an Aerial Observer for three years.”

His favorite activity during that time was flying around the Hawaiian Islands. “The beauty of the islands from the air was unforgettable,” he says. “Volcanoes, majestic mountains, lush green forests, and long stretches of beaches.”

Luckily, by 1973, Vietnam was winding down and he was able to finish his time over here. Afterwards, he moved back to New York State and joined the Police Academy, graduating in 1977 with honors. During his career there, he

served in the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, commanded State Traffic Programs, Planning and Research, became an Inspector in Internal Affairs, and a Lt. Col. in Employee Relations overseeing the Academy recruiting and handling grievances. Through the years, he trained over a thousand recruits and had many memorable experiences, including working at the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics.

The setup team needed to be there several weeks before the Opening Ceremonies, using a local minimum-security prison as sleeping quarters. Craig's job was to gas 200-300 troop cars every night. "My partner and I drove an Army tanker up and down the line of troop cars. It was incredibly cold, and even though we wore State-issued cold weather gear, we froze each night. My best memory of the 1980 Olympics was the hockey game when we beat the Russians—the Miracle on Ice."

In 1991, he received a call to head to a Native American Reservation in Massena, NY after several murders had occurred there within a Warrior Faction that week. Governor Mario Cuomo sent 300 troopers to the scene to help restore order. Intelligence said the faction was heavily armed, so the troopers were issued special armament and flak jackets for safety. Luckily, things went well, and the Warrior Faction was disarmed, and order was restored.

One of Craig's most fun work experiences was Woodstock 1994.



The original Woodstock in 1969 had nearly 250,000 fans in attendance. The producers were not prepared for that kind of turnout, and the crowd had shut down the NYS Thruway with traffic. This time, they wanted to be prepared. At this point, Craig was the Traffic Major for the NYSP, so he was tasked with the State Police response along with his friend, Col. Bill Deblock. Partnering with officials from the DOT NYS Thruway and the local police department, their goal was to control the mayhem and keep the Thruway open and traffic flowing.

Once again, the crowds were over 200,000 strong, and the private security and parking attendants the promoter had hired failed to show up. It was up to the combined police force to provide traffic control and public safety. "The weather on Saturday was wet and cold," Craig remembers. "The attendees were unprepared, and we handed out thousands of plastic bags to help the crowd. Thanks to good contingency planning, the NYSP controlled the event and kept traffic flowing. There were minimal injuries. Six months of planning and four stressful 20-hour days helped to keep the concert on track. I will always remember the view from the helicopter of the mass of humanity that came to Saugerties that weekend."

During this time, Craig decided to work on his master's degree, and in 1988, he graduated Rockefeller College SUNY Albany with a master's in Criminal Justice.





For the last nine years, Craig has been an active member with the Clifton Park Elks Club, working his way to Exalted Ruler. Last year he was named Elk of the Year. The Clifton Park Elks have three major areas of emphasis: Veterans, Youth, and Community. With over 480 members at the Lodge, they have provided nearly two million dollars to the local community in grants. One of Craig's favorite events is the Hoops Shoot—a foul-shooting contest for kids aged 8-13. The program starts in November each year with 250,000 kids participating. Each region has their own contest until 72 contestants end up in Chicago for the finals. The Capital Region knows how to show



up for this event! Aiden Karo from Chango School, finished third in the country in 2019, and Joseph Girard III from Glens Falls Elks won the national title in 2012. He is now playing for Syracuse University.

Craig has two sons who now have families of their own. Ryan, a VP of sales for Belkin, and his wife, Taraleigh, a senior VP for the Hilton Corporation, live in Wilton, CT with their two kids. Kyle is a singer and the Music Director at the New Hampton School, touring venues all around the country with his students to perform and record at various studios. He lives with his wife, Catherine, a grade school principal in NH, and their three kids in New Hampton, NH.

After retiring from the police force, Craig went to work as the security manager at National Grid, where he met his wife, Mary, and his stepdaughters Ashley (22), Gabrielle (21), and Kirsten (15). His grandkids include Grant (18 – West Point Class of 2027), Ashleigh (16), Carter (14), Ethan (12), Quinn (5), and Jackson (1). He also lives with his Chuggie dog, Milo.

Craig's favorite quote is "Don't give up, don't ever give up!" from the North Carolina State basketball coach Jim Valvano, and he takes that message to heart, always working for his family, his country, to help other people, and to be a mentor to kids. In his spare time, Craig loves to garden and hang out with Milo when they're not traveling to see their grandkids. When at home, he works out at the YMCA and enjoys Saratoga and Lake George in the summer. But Craig has always had a bug for travel. "I started with my junior year abroad in Munich, Germany," he says. "Fortunately, my jobs have required travel all over the USA. I have traveled in Europe and extensively in the Caribbean. The family loves Florida and Myrtle Beach." He is looking forward to returning to Aruba with his family soon.

After beating prostate cancer in 2016, Craig treasures every moment with his family more than ever. He enjoys watching them excel at their activities and grow throughout life. Craig lives each day according to the Golden Rule and urges others to always remember the importance of doing what's right.