

# A DESERVING SOLDIER

ser4044 God in the Real World, Pt 4

Memorial Day, Pt 1 May 30, 2021 E & L

*by Bob Gambino*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Good Morning church family! For those of you who don't know me, my name is Bob Gambino. I have the honor and privilege of addressing you today on this Memorial Day weekend. I want to say up front that public speaking is way out of my comfort zone, so I got some good advice from a wise old pastor. Thank you, Pastor Ron!

My wife Arleen and I have been attending GCCC for over 15 years. We oversee the Meals of Mercy ministry here at the church, and I also help out with the stage crew for the Easter play, and I am a member of The Riders of the Lamb motorcycle ministry.

## II. MY RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

I was raised Roman Catholic and attended both Catholic grammar school and High School. I have always believed that Jesus died on the cross for me and rose from the dead. Although, I don't think it ever really sank in until much later. My first marriage failed, and I was pretty much lost spiritually. Arleen, who was raised as a fundamental Christian, has helped me immensely along the way. We have been married for 27 years. I also have two children Nicole and Bob Jr, her boyfriend Mike, a daughter-in-law Diviya, and a new grandson who is 6 months old. We lift them in prayer daily for their salvation.

Placing my trust in Jesus happened in October of 1996 when I was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, following what was supposed to be a simple surgery to remove a couple of lipomas. When you hear the word "cancer," it is like a death sentence. But shortly after the diagnosis I turned it over to God to let him handle it since I knew I couldn't do anything about it. I felt calm in the belief that He would take care of it, and he did. It has been 25 years since I was diagnosed. Never underestimate the power of prayer!

### **III. MILITARY BACKGROUND**

I joined the Army National Guard in October of 1970 during Viet Nam and served until I retired as a warrant officer in February of 2006. Just over 35 years doing mostly mechanical work on artillery and all types of vehicles. I am also a retired Detective Sergeant from Washington Twp. police where I served for 25 years, so much of my adult life has been protecting and serving others. I have made some great lifelong friends because of both services. One of my favorite things about serving in the military was that you were recognized for your hard work and accomplishments.

One of my strongest memories about serving isn't a favorite memory but more like what it means to serve. When the World Trade Center was hit on 911, everyone remembers where they were and what they were doing. I remember vividly that all I could think about was getting in touch with my unit because our country was being attacked and I needed to be there to prepare for what might be coming in the near future. My Dad served in the army during World War II. He saw action in the liberation of

the Philippines and in New Guinea. So, for me service of some type was in my blood.

Memorial Day was something that my dad always celebrated and honored. He would always come home from the food store with a red poppy that he picked up from the VFW or American Legion...whoever was standing outside the store. It wasn't until I was asked by Pastor Bruce to speak that I researched Memorial Day and found out what significance the Poppy has.

#### **IV. SOME HISTORY OF MEMORIAL DAY**

Memorial Day has several meanings to different people. In this area Memorial Day signifies the beginning of summer with the opening of businesses and beaches at the Jersey shore. If you live in the Midwest near Indiana, it signifies the Indianapolis 500 motor car race. One of car racing's biggest spectacles.

The real significance of Memorial Day is the honoring of the men and women who died while serving this country in the US Military. Originally it was called "Decoration Day," since it was the placing of flowers and other decorations on the graves of the lost. It originated following the Civil War in which between 620,000 and 750,000 soldiers died, not counting an undetermined number of civilians, making it the deadliest war in our history. Waterloo, NY, is credited as the official place that Decoration Day was first celebrated on May 5, 1866.

There have been other earlier celebrations in other places. There are even some records of ancient Greeks and Romans honoring their fallen soldiers yearly; so, this has been a longtime practice throughout history. In 1868 Decoration Day was changed to Memorial Day and was celebrated on May 30th, today in fact!

That date was chosen since no Civil War battles took place on that day. Memorial Day became an official federal holiday in 1971 to be celebrated on the last Monday in May.

I mentioned the red Poppy earlier. It has marked Memorial Day since 1920 following World War I. The poppy is actually classified as a weed, so it is very hardy. In France and in Belgium poppies were the first thing to spring back to life following the devastation of battle. Lt Col John McCrae was serving as a brigade surgeon in Belgium during the First World War. He was very moved by the red flowers that seemed to flourish especially in Flanders, Belgium. After a horrific battle that killed over 87,000 allied troops including one of his closest friends, he wrote a poem called "In Flanders Field." It is short, so I would like to read it.

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders Fields.*

I would like to sum up what Memorial Day means to me. Besides the honoring of the fallen troops, who we thank for our freedom, which should not be taken lightly, I place Jesus at the top of that honor since He was the ultimate sacrifice for not only our country but for the souls of every person on this earth. We honor Him by celebrating His sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin in this world. There is not a more deserving soldier than Jesus Christ, who as the Messiah saves all who believe and trust in Him. In **John 15:13**, Jesus himself says, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."

Jesus, thank You for who You are and for fighting my battles on the Cross so that I would have eternal life.

Again, thank you for the honor of addressing you on this Memorial Day weekend.

# GRATEFUL TO HAVE SERVED MY COUNTRY

**ser4044 God in the Real World, Pt 4**

Memorial Day, Pt 2 May 30, 2021 E & L

*by Angie Pachini*

## **I. INTRODUCTION / PT OF INTRIGUE**

I'm Angie Pachini. I am a wife and the mother of one child, Skyler. My husband, Bryan, is also a Navy veteran. He works for the Department of Homeland Security as an Agent on a Fugitive Field Team in the Philadelphia area. Bryan and I met when we were both stationed in Rota Spain. In 2000 we started dating and a year later were married. We have been married for 19 years.

We have been attending GCCC for about 3 years. Strangely enough, although I was a PK, I didn't give my life to Christ until I walked through the doors of GCCC.

Professionally, I work as an administrative assistant and coordinator to the Dean of Education and Humanities of Rowan College of South Jersey.

I am a graduate of GCG, currently a student in Leadership Development Institute, serve in Kingdom Kidz (Sunday School) checking in children, host GCCC's Facebook live, and serve on the platform team.

## **II. MY RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND**

Growing up I was raised in a strict Pentecostal home. I grew up thinking that everything was a sin and felt so restricted. I had a skewed perception of who God was. I thought he was a God that was always punishing and condemning. I wanted nothing to do with being a Christian. I remember telling my mother that I will no longer be attending church. I felt I had no freedom, and I needed an escape.

### **III. MY TIME IN THE MILITARY**

I always loved the military and I thought this would be my perfect get away, so I enlisted in the world's finest Navy. This was my first taste of freedom.

In December of 99 I was station in Rota, Spain, serving in a Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron. This Fleet Air Reconnaissance Squadron would deliver critical electronic combat information to US forces. The mission was to conduct airborne electronic reconnaissance to obtain information on areas and targets of naval and national interest.

### **III. MY FAVORITE PART OF SERVING IN THE MILITARY**

My favorite part of serving in the Navy was the traveling. I knew that joining the Navy would give me the opportunity to travel and see the world—it did, and I loved it. My other favorite part was the people I met; the ones I served with, those serving for other countries, and their families. The diversity of culture, landscapes, foods, and the list goes on was so interesting. To this day these people are still a part of my life.

#### **IV. MY FAVORITE MEMORY WHILE SERVING IN THE MILITARY**

The one memory which most stands out in my mind was when 911 happened. I'm sure we can all agree we know where we were when it happened. I remember the overwhelming feeling of helplessness, especially knowing that you are a part of something great and powerful like the US Navy, and yet not being able to do anything about it. But our mission was to find enemy radar systems, identify those systems, locate them, and distribute that information to the fleet. (What is a fleet?)

#### **V. AS TO THIS MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND**

My story is not like others where I have lost friends due to war. Although, I did lose friends in the navy, and it hurt, I never blamed the Navy, because in more case than not, it was a wrong decision that cost them their life.

While serving you are taught that you must protect those serving beside you at all costs, so when you lose a friend, it is all the more painful; you blame yourself because you failed them. These are the friends that would give up their lives for you to protect and save yours. The bonds that I made with my brother and sisters was a camaraderie, the essence of what binds the men and women of our military.

#### **VI. WHAT I TOOK WITH ME WHEN I LEFT THE MILITARY**

Words cannot explain how grateful I am to have served this country. It has molded me into the person I am today. It has made me grateful for the things that we often take for granted. My service has given me the respect I have for my country and my

fellow countrymen. I will never forget the values that were instilled in me, by which I still live by today. Words like *honor*, *courage* and *commitment* are thrown around often these days, but serving gives these words meaning. These are the core values that is ingrained of all the men and women who serve.

To conclude my story, I would like to finish by saying that my real freedom wasn't until the day I walked through these doors and excepted Jesus as my Lord and personal savior, for scripture says "***...he who the son sets free, are free indeed.***"

I have reenlisted in the military serving alongside every one of you in God's army. How cool is that! For we are called to be soldier and warriors for Christ. I gained a new sense of camaraderie here—my church family, and my brothers and sisters in Christ.

So, on this Memorial Day weekend let us honor those who have died while serving, those who continue to serve, and fight for our freedom. And let's celebrate our true freedom in Christ.

Thank you.