

Amazing “Grace for Vets”

I was sitting at our booth at ICA talking with an industry Icon, friend and the man who brought me into the car wash industry Tom Hoffman Sr. We were enjoying an emotional moment as we watched a phone video of Tom’s 101 year old Dad singing a patriotic song he learned in grade school during World War I. Very moving! As the song ended we looked up and saw Mike Mountz coming into the booth. We stood up to congratulate him on his induction into “The Carwash Hall of Fame”. A very remarkable achievement! Mike humbly thanked us but said he was here to talk about something very dear to him “Grace for Vets” I had seen articles about the program and read the list of car washers that had participated last November 11th. I had thought at the time it was a great program but knew little of the story behind it. It took about 60 seconds of listening to Mike talk, hearing the passion in his voice and seeing the watery eyes to realize how special this program is to Mike and why he started it. His outpouring of emotion and his enthusiasm as he speaks of vet’s reactions to a free car wash as a small thanks for their service to our country were extremely moving. This prompted me to find out more about why Mike started this wonderful program. I had missed Mike’s interview in PC&D but gratefully was sent it to read. I defy anyone to read this interview and not participate in this program come November 11th. A very brief recap of the article (I would suggest reading it in it’s entirety) is; Mike enlisted and was injured and hospitalized stateside. After two months in a body cast he was sent to the Veterans Hospital in Valley Forge Pa. for therapy. Surrounded by amputees and those

seriously wounded had a lasting impact on Mike. Awed by the spirit and bravery of these soldiers Mike vowed that some day he would help veterans in some way. Saying thanks to the men and women who give so much personally to serve and protect their country became a goal. After reading the interview I had to stop and reflect on family members who had served their country. I called them and asked if they had heard of “Grace for Vets” and how they felt about it. My Dad is a WWII vet, my Uncle Ray served in the Navy, my youngest brother Jim a Vietnam vet and our youngest son Jason a Marine with 5 deployments to the middle east is the youngest vet. These are the only surviving vets left in our family. All were moved to think they would be honored in such a way, but admitted they had not heard of the program. My Dad’s concern was “I’ll have to find my discharge papers or will they accept my VA card?” Happily I told him it’s all on the honor system. It hit me like a thunder bolt that like so many people today, when I see one of our military personnel in an airport, at the mall or even on the street I always try and thank them for their service to our country, but had I done this to my own family? There is no statute of limitations on thanking a Vet for the sacrifices they made for all of us! Consider my obligation fulfilled!

I will have flyers to hand out at our Memphis Road Show, our Expo in September and wherever I may travel until then. In the meantime you can go to www.graceforvets.org and register NOW for this year’s event on November 11th. The web site is extremely user friendly and has everything you will need to make this the best year ever! One of the comments Mike made that is so imbedded in my mind and whenever I look at their pamphlet I hear it as if he were standing in front of me... “bring tissues that day, you’ll need them”. Mike quickly

points out that our industry is one of caring and giving people. Always willing to help, always willing to do right. Our vets so deserve this recognition and thanks for the contributions they have made for all of us. Please, take a minute and register, read all the literature, use the promotional materials made available to you, press releases and signs, think about what a great deed this is, how you can show your community and all the vets how much their sacrifices are acknowledged and appreciated. "UNITED WE STAND, UNITED WE WASH" Grace for Vets trade mark slogan!

Gene Montenieri

Clean Gene Car Wash Support