

MEMORIAL SERVICE

Carl Robert "Bob" Leal

Remembering Bob Leal

Delivered by James Brown

July 29, 2026

Good morning. My name is James Brown. Jill asked me to speak regarding Bob's Legacy.

I am a Marine veteran, and I chair two nonprofit organizations. One is a veterans and military nonprofit called the Wine Country Marines. The other is a law-enforcement nonprofit called the San Mateo County Sheriff's Activities League. I also serve on the advisory board for the VA Palo Alto Health Care System.

But more important than any title or position, Bob was my friend. He was a man I admired greatly - as I know so many of you here admired him, too.

I want to speak this morning about two things: the power of prayer and the enduring legacy of Bob Leal.

In 1984, during a low point in my life, I said a prayer.

I was an 18-year-old Marine, and I prayed that someone would enter my life who could be a role model - someone who could show me what a man should be. Someone I could learn from, aspire to be like, and perhaps one day become.

Sometimes the answer to a prayer is no.

Sometimes the answer is not yet.

And sometimes the answer is: "You are not ready yet - but let Me prepare you."

At the time, I thought my prayer had been answered by a new roommate who helped me through the immediate problem I was facing.

What I could not have known was that, 30 years later, that same roommate would introduce me to Bob and Jill Leal.

And Bob was exactly the kind of man I had prayed for.

The truth is, when I was 18, I probably was not ready for the lessons Bob could teach me. But when I finally met him, I was.

One day, Bob asked me about my parents and my background. Like Bob, I grew up in the country, where farming was a way of life. It was a different part of the country, but much of it was the same.

I told him about losing my dad. The last conversation with my dad, before I left, he stopped me and said:

"Son, When you die - it won't matter how many toys you had. But it will matter how many souls you touched before you go."

He died just days later.

Bob smiled and said, "That is me. That is how I see things."

He told me that he had once enjoyed the toys - the fast cars, the faster helicopters, and the even faster airplanes. But those things no longer mattered to him.

What mattered was helping people.

And help people he did.

There are people alive today who might not be here without Bob's help.

We know about the farms Bob helped start and the farmers he taught, mentored, and encouraged. But his compassion reached far beyond agriculture. He helped veterans, first responders, children, families, and people from every walk of life.

Bob never asked how someone voted.

He never asked what color their skin was.

He never asked which faith they followed.

He simply asked, "What do they need?"

And after he helped, he would say, "Let me know what else they need."

Then, whenever we spoke again, he would ask, "Are they still okay?"

That was Bob.

Let me tell you about just a few of the lives he touched.

[ADVANCE TO THE JASON HALLETT SLIDES. PAUSE AND LOOK TOWARD THE SCREEN.]

The man you see on the screen is Corporal Jason Hallett, a United States Marine who suffered catastrophic injuries, losing his right arm and both legs above the knee.

Often, a young marriage doesn't survive catastrophic combat injuries.

Jason was a young father of twins. He was fighting not only for his physical recovery, but also for the opportunity to remain the active and loving father he had always been.

During a custody dispute, questions were raised about how Jason could care for his children during a fire or another emergency. It did not seem to matter that he was a devoted and capable father. His injuries - sustained in service to his country - were now being used as a reason he might lose time with his children.

I was deeply concerned about him.

On that same day, I happened to be having lunch with Bob and Jill in Nevada.

During lunch, Bob told me he was considering building homes for disabled veterans, and he asked for my opinion. I told him that several organizations were already addressing housing, while many other serious needs faced by wounded veterans were being overlooked.

I told Bob about Jason.

Bob could not stop thinking about this young Marine - a man he had never even met.

He pulled me aside and said, "I am going to give you the money to get him a nanny so he can keep his kids."

Bob did not form a committee.

He did not ask what recognition he would receive.

He saw a person in need, and he acted.

I honestly believe Bob helped save that Marine's life and preserved his family.

Please look at the screen. This is Corporal Jason Hallett and his family. What you see is Bob's legacy - living and breathing in a Marine whose life and family Bob helped preserve.

[ADVANCE TO THE MICHELLE HOWARD SLIDES. PAUSE AND LOOK TOWARD THE SCREEN.]

The woman you see on the screen is Michelle Howard, a Marine veteran from the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Michelle's husband had been diagnosed with stage-four cancer. She lost her job after missing work to care for him, and her family soon fell behind on rent and other bills. By the time she reached us, they were only days away from eviction.

When Bob learned what had happened, he did not hesitate.

He simply said, "Let us help her."

Bob provided the funds, and we arranged for two young active-duty women Marines to deliver the assistance.

Bob did more than rescue a veteran and her family during one of the darkest moments of their lives. His generosity also taught those two young Marines what charity - and Semper Fidelis - look like in real life.

Both said they had never been more inspired. They planned to serve full careers in the Marine Corps and, afterward, follow Bob's example by giving back to others.

[PAUSE BRIEFLY ON MICHELLE'S PHOTOGRAPH.]

Michelle and those two young Marines are part of Bob's legacy - living, breathing, and carrying his example forward for years to come.

[ADVANCE TO THE CARLA DE LUNA AND ALEXZANDER SLIDES. PAUSE AND LOOK TOWARD THE SCREEN.]

The little boy you see on the screen is Alexzander, the four-year-old son of Corporal Carla De Luna, an active-duty Marine. Alexzander was diagnosed with stage-four brain cancer.

When Carla and her children needed help, Bob was there.

While Alexzander was being treated at Oakland Children's Hospital, Bob helped provide food, assistance with bills, and a few birthday presents. Alexzander turned four years old in the ICU.

Tragically, Alexzander lost his battle with cancer.

But because of Bob's help, Carla was able to remain beside her son - every day and every hour of that fight. She did not have to choose between being with her child and trying to keep the bills paid.

After Alexzander passed, Bob also helped provide for his celebration of life, giving the family an opportunity for closure, remembrance, and healing.

[PAUSE BRIEFLY ON ALEXZANDER'S PHOTOGRAPH.]

Alexzander's life mattered. The time his mother was able to spend beside him mattered. That, too, is Bob's legacy.

There are so many other stories I could tell.

Bob helped members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps.

He helped military families who lost loved ones just before the holidays. He helped service members who were victims of crimes, fires, accidents, and combat injuries.

When help was needed, Bob was there.

When I think about the very root of who Bob was, one phrase captures it:

"Sown in Love - Reaped in Grace."

Bob built things. He built farms, businesses, opportunities, and organizations. But more important than any of those things, Bob built people up. He encouraged them, mentored them, believed in them, and helped them become stronger. Everything he built began from a place of love.

Life was good to Bob, and Bob knew it. But he never treated his blessings as something he was owed. He accepted them with grace. He understood how richly he had been blessed, and that understanding moved him to give back to people in need.

Bob sowed love into the lives of others, and grace grew from what he planted. That was not merely something Bob did. It epitomized who he was.

So, what is Bob's legacy?

Bob's legacy is compassion in action.

And where is Bob's legacy?

It is in New Jersey, with a young Marine and the family Bob helped preserve.

It is in the Sacramento Valley, with soldiers and military families he helped through their darkest hours.

It is with the Garlit family, who lost a husband and father in service to his country - a wife and three children who learned firsthand that great men care, and that great men show up when they are needed.

Bob's legacy is also found on the tables of millions of families sharing meals made from crops grown on land Bob cultivated - and from farms whose farmers Bob taught, mentored, and helped develop.

Bob's legacy is not contained in the things he owned.

It lives in the people he helped.

It lives in the families he strengthened.

It lives in the examples he set.

And it lives in every one of us who chooses to continue his work, in his honor and in his name.

Bob's life and service were recognized by people far beyond this room. Before I close, I would like to share several formal tributes honoring him.

[READ THE LETTER FROM PRESIDENT DONALD J. TRUMP.]

We are honored to have received a letter recognizing Bob from President Donald J. Trump.

[INSERT OR READ THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER HERE. PAUSE WHEN FINISHED.]

We also received a certificate honoring Bob from United States Senator Alex Padilla.

[DISPLAY AND READ THE CERTIFICATE FROM SENATOR ALEX PADILLA.]

I would also like to share a letter honoring Bob from Lieutenant Colonel Shannon Potts.

[READ THE LETTER FROM LT. COL. SHANNON POTTS.]

And we have a letter honoring Bob from Major General Douglas Clark.

[READ THE LETTER FROM MAJ. GEN. DOUGLAS CLARK.]

[READ ANY ADDITIONAL LETTERS, CERTIFICATES, OR FORMAL TRIBUTES HERE.]

Each of these tributes reflects the extraordinary reach of Bob's life. But the greatest tribute to Bob will always be found in the people he helped and in the example he left for all of us.

That is why I am proud to announce that the Wine Country Marines - a military and veterans nonprofit that was near and dear to Bob's heart - has established an annual honor: the Bob Leal Enduring Legacy Award.

This award will be presented each year at the Marine Corps Birthday Ball. It will recognize an individual who leads by example and champions the cause of those who are struggling, just as Bob taught us to do.

The 2026 recipient of the Bob Leal Enduring Legacy Award will be Mrs. Jill Leal - Bob's champion and his bride of 48 years.

Jill shares Bob's servant's heart and has lived the command of Christ by caring for those in need.

Bob's favorite Scripture was Isaiah 41:10:

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God."

Those words are a source of comfort today - but they are also a call to action.

We honor Bob by refusing to look away when another person is suffering.

We honor him by asking, as he always did, "What do they need?"

We honor him by following up and asking, "Are they still okay?"

And we honor him by remembering that a life is not ultimately measured by what we accumulate, but by how many souls we touch along the way.

In 1984, I prayed for a man I could learn from - a man I could admire and aspire to be like.

God's answer was not no.

It was not yet.

The answer was Bob Leal.

And I will always be grateful that, when the time was right, God brought Bob into my life.

May we honor Bob by sowing in love, so that others may reap in grace.

May we carry his compassion forward.

May we protect his legacy.

And may we all try to live a little more like Bob.

Thank you.