

## **Bob Macauley**

Have you ever watched or read a news story that gripped your heart like no other? Did it motivate you to take action? If you are Robert C. Macauley, founder of AmeriCares, your answer is a resounding "Yes!" Bob was a paper broker living in New Canaan, Connecticut. He had served in WWII as a Lieutenant in the US Army Air Transport Command. I saw the story of this great philanthropist on "The Today Show" and knew it was one that I had to share.

Bob Macauley also saw a television story in April, 1975. It was just days before the fall of Saigon and Vietnamese were pouring out of their country in the thousands escaping the communist takeover of their country. The North Vietnamese Army was preparing for its final push to take the entire country. The roads leading out of the city were choked with refugees. Humanitarian aid workers loaded a US C-5A with orphans to evacuate them to the United States. Planes were flying refugees out on a continual basis. The US Air Force jet, carrying 243 Vietnamese infants and toddlers crashed 20 minutes after take-off in the dense jungle. Over a third of the children were burned to death, and many of the others were severely injured. The Pentagon announced that it wouldn't have the resources to launch a rescue of the maimed infants for ten days. That's where Bob Macauley came in.

Bob was gripped by the story and within 24 hours wrote a check for \$251,000 to charter two Pan American 747's to fly the surviving children to the United States and safety. The problem was his check would not clear. Bob didn't have more than \$10,000 in his account. He and his wife decided to mortgage their house for \$241,000 to cover the rest of the money needed. That didn't matter to Bob. In fact, Bob said, "By the time my \$251,000 check to Pan Am bounced the children were safely in the United States." Three weeks later, Saigon fell to the Communists. "I gave my house to the bank, and it worked out fine. The welfare of the children was utmost on my mind." His wife, Leila said it was a fair trade: "The bank got the house and Bob got the kids."

People around the world heard about Bob (and his bounced check) and donations came pouring in. News about Bob's selfless act swept around the world. It would become the first of many on his part. "When human lives are at stake, you act now," Macauley advised, "and worry about the red tape later." Bob gained a reputation for stepping into human crises and helping out. In 1981, Pope John Paul II invited him to Rome to discuss the crisis in Poland. Martial law had been declared and medical supplies were virtually gone. The Pope and Bob agreed to set a goal of \$50,000 in medical supplies to help relieve the suffering in the Pontiff's native Poland. That goal was exceeded and over \$3.2 million in medical supplies was airlifted to the country.

The Poland mission an overwhelming success, Macauley quickly realized the same model could be used to help those suffering in other countries around the world. It was out of this act of charity that Bob founded the AmeriCares Foundation the following year, 1982. Their mission statement reads: "AmeriCares is a nonprofit disaster relief and humanitarian aid organization, which provides immediate response to emergency medical needs -- and supports long-term humanitarian assistance programs -- for all people around the world, irrespective of race, creed or political persuasion. AmeriCares solicits donations of

medicines, medical supplies and other relief materials from U.S. and international manufacturers and delivers them quickly and efficiently to indigenous health care and welfare professionals around the world." Since its founding, AmeriCares has provided more than \$3.4 billion of aid in more than 137 countries.

Today, Bob Macauley serves as the Founder and Chairman of the AmeriCares Foundation, but still works with the paper brokerage company he founded, now Grief Brothers. In addition, Bob serves as an advisor to the National Executive Service Corps and New York Medical College. Previously, he served as an advisor to World Share and "Christmas in April." AmeriCares was the child of the philanthropic mind of Bob Macauley. It came out of not listening to people say, "No," or "It can't be done." With Bob Macauley, it can be done, and right away.

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