Father Bob, are you a Florida native?
No. Born and raised mostly in Ohio; lived in Ohio & Pennsylvania through school years. Moved to Clearwater, Florida in 1987 from Connecticut.

Can you share a few details of your family life and childhood?
Raised in the Roman Catholic faith; educated in Catholic parochial schools through high school; graduated from University of Scranton, a Jesuit college.

What did you do after high school?
In my freshman year at the University of Scranton, I enrolled in the United States Marine Corps and began their Platoon Leaders Class for the next four years.

When you were young, did you envision yourself joining the military? **Yes. I was influenced by my two uncles; one who served in the Far East and the other in Germany during WW II.**

What were some of the reasons you joined the military? **Belief that it was a call of duty for those qualified to do so. Love of our Country. (Ask not what your Country can do for you; but what you can do for your country).**

How did your family feel about you joining the Marine Corps? **Ha - Not overly enthused.**

How did you select the branch of service you did and where did you serve? **Decision made while attending the University of Scranton. My service began in Marine Corps Quantico, Virginia; next I deployed to Vietnam; I was medically evacuated to the Philadelphia Naval Hospital; after I was discharged, I was deployed to Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Iwakuni, Japan. After that tour of duty was completed, I was transferred to my final duty station, Camp LeJeune, North Carolina.**

The Purple Heart medal is presented to service members who have been wounded or killed as a result of enemy action while serving in the U.S. military. A Purple Heart is a solemn distinction and means a service member has greatly sacrificed themselves, or paid the ultimate price, while in the line of duty.

Father Bob, you have earned the Purple Heart medal. I extend to you a sincere thank you for your sacrifice for our country. Would you care to share any details of this solemn distinction? **Simply, I zigged when I should have zagged.**

What do you think is most important for Americans to recognize about Veteran's who serve our country? **A bit of respect would be nice. A helping hand to those transitioning, which can be hugely traumatic. There's a reason why some 22 Veterans commit suicide each and every *day*!**

Here's a link to some statistics and resources related to Military Veteran's suicide rate/resources:
https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2022/2022-National-Veteran-Suicide-Prevention-Annual-Report-FINAL-508.pdf

Resources for Veterans: https://www.va.gov/resources/

Soon after I left the military, a group of former active-duty Marines formed a support group in Ridgefield, CT where I was living, at the time. We found each other through an advertisement in the *Ridgefield Press*. It was 1972. Initially, about 20 of us started to meet to help process what we had been through in Vietnam. Looking back, we all had PTSD and had no idea what the hell was going on. The group continued to grow; it gave us Vets a place of camaraderie and allowed us to exhaust our angst. We channeled that energy into doing good for our community. Although we are now spread out geographically and some of the original members have passed, as a founding member of this stellar organization, I am proud to say the unit is thriving and continues to help its community: Little League sponsors, annual (for 51 years!) Toys for Tots campaigns and many other good services for Ridgefield and all of Fairfield County,

How long did you serve, and what did you do once you left the military? **I served eight (8) years in the Marine Corps. After that I was successfully engaged in business both in corporate service, with Dun & Bradstreet as an account executive, and independently.**

Did you marry and have a family life? **I was married for 54 years to my wife, Masuko Hamada Swick who went home to God in**

2021. Masuko was the most courageous lady I have ever met. We met and married in Japan, and she gave up family, friends, culture and language to follow me to the United States (and stick with me through thick and thin) to make her home here, with me. That's courageous and the epitome of patience! We have one daughter, Mika Christina Swick, and one grandson, Justin.

When did you decide to become a religious leader? **At the tender age of 69, when I discerned for a year and was ordained at the age of 70 in the Ukrainian Orthodox Catholic Church and subsequently incardinated in the Old Catholic Church.**

Can you tell us how you came to lead St. Francis of Assisi Old Catholic Church in Dunedin? **Its origins actually began eleven years ago when I began serving Sunday Mass at Regency Oaks Retirement Community in Clearwater. I subsequently began holding Mass separately as well at my Veterans Alliance headquarters facility at the Clearwater Air Park. That was the formation of St. Francis of Assisi Old Catholic Church. We now have our permanent location at 545 Wood Street in Dunedin.**

In 2021 St. Francis of Assisi Old Catholic Church raised over $17,000 to abolish nearly $4 million in medical debt for over 2,000 residents in our region. That was a phenomenal undertaking with life-changing impacts for individuals and families. Thank you so much for leading this initiative! Readers can learn about it here: https://www.tbnweekly.com/north_county/article_8210d34a-6812-11ec-a089-9b22612d22fa.html

You must be so proud. What are you working on now? **This was all due to the wonderful generosity of our small number of parishioners. We have a number of fronts where we help serve Social Justice: feeding the poor every week; reaching out to once again attempt to take down medical debt where possible; helping children in the Head Start program; helping kids get their own sets of clothes; helping build community with daily Random Acts of Kindness.**

You have lived a life of service, Father Bob: in our military, and in our Veteran's community, and in our community at large. Has serving others been

a life-long calling? **Not consciously but I suppose so. It certainly has taken on a new dimension since I was ordained.**

How can members of our community best honor and show appreciation to those who serve in our military? **At least two significant ways from my perspective. One is to contact our Veterans Service Office here in Clearwater, 727-464-8460, 2189 Cleveland St. Suite 263 and offer to be of service. The second is not just thank a young Vet (please keep in mind everyone is young in my eyes) but ask if you could buy that Vet a cup of coffee.**

A few quick "fun" questions:
Favorite type of music? **What else: Oldies but Goodies**
Favorite book? **Scriptures (of course)**
Favorite restaurant? **Two actually: Bon Appetit and Café Alfresco (both in Dunedin)**
Sports lover? Any favorite teams? **Of course. Tampa Bay Bucs and Kansas City Chiefs.**

What do you like to do on a day off? **Will let you know when that actually happens……**

Words of wisdom for young people, or the rest of us? **Start each day with a prayer. Continue on with a daily Random Act of Kindness. Everything else will take care of itself with or without your help.**

Thank you so much. **You're welcome**.
Thank you so much for your service to our country and to our community. **At your service**.