

## Pham: For God and country

Tony H. Pham | Posted: Sunday, May 25, 2014 10:30 pm

The month of May is such an important part of my life and for several reasons. The month encompasses Memorial Day, a day we remember the folks in our armed forces who gave the ultimate sacrifice so we can enjoy our freedoms. It is also designated as Asian-American Heritage month, and is the month my family and I became United States citizens more than 29 years ago.

**Remembrance:** As immigrants to the United States, our journey could not have been possible but for the sacrifices of the thousands of young men who died in the fields in Vietnam, fighting a polarizing war that produced a generation of heroes. Husbands, fathers, brothers and sons were lost fighting for our freedom and way of life. However, the war also produced a generation of folks, such as myself, who have been blessed with the good fortune of relocating to a nation of freedom, opportunity and hope. Our path to freedom was paved by those who sacrificed for this great nation. What we do with that freedom, those opportunities and that hope will define my generation.

**Citizenship:** It was because of the sacrifices of these brave men that in May, 29 years ago, I was able to take my oath of citizenship and pledge allegiance to the flag of these United States. For me, no other month carries with it the single most important and significant impact in my life than the month when I became a citizen. You see, without it, we were a Phamily with no home and no country to call our own. Gaining something significant that so many others are born with made us appreciate the value of our freedoms and opportunity. It gave us hope. Becoming citizens made us feel like we belonged to a collective community. We were no longer strangers on the outside looking in. What we do with our citizenship will also define my generation.

**Heritage:** While it is important this month to celebrate the cultures that add to the tapestry of the American experience, I believe it is equally important to celebrate this month as Americans. We have so many other elements in our society that seek to divide us; this is the month which can unite us as a community. We can celebrate our unique cultures that help us grow as a community. It makes us become more tolerant and appreciative of one another. I, for one, am appreciative of every person who has made this journey such a remarkable one.

So why "for God and country"? While so many perished in the oceans fleeing a communist country, a generation, including my Phamily, survived. God had a plan for our generation and that plan is coming to fruition. That plan is to give back to our community in

the hopes of bringing the community together. Surviving a perilous journey when so many others perished should make persons appreciative of their lives. For country? We love this country and everything it stands for. Our love is based upon the sacrifices of those who gave all protecting these very same freedoms we enjoy today. Those sacrifices assured my generation an opportunity to become productive members of our community. Where else other than these United States could my war-torn family of refugees come and establish a new life? Where else other than these United States could my family become U.S. citizens and produce a physician and an attorney?

**For God and country.** Because without either, my Phamily wouldn't be where we are today.