

# Roseburg VFW plans marble salute to combat veterans

*Ambitious post hopes to erect memorial resembling famous Vietnam wall*

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**R**oseburg Veterans of Foreign Wars members hope the dirt piles and ditches in the post's parking lot will be transformed by March into a veterans memorial for the post's 80th anniversary.

Combat veterans will be eligible to have their names engraved on marble forming the Veterans Remembrance Memorial around three flagpoles outside the post on Northeast Walnut Street.

"It's going to be dedicated to all veterans who have put themselves in harm's way for the cost of freedom," the post's commander, Mike Eakin, said. "If we can do this, it's going to be unbelievable."

Post members have spent three years planning the project. Plans include two walls for the names of veterans and sponsors, four benches, a pond and a 10-foot waterfall with red, white and blue lights. A stone wall and decorative pillars will surround the memorial, which will fit the names of up to 6,000 veterans.

Construction began about a month ago. The post is still raising money for the project, which Eakin said he expects to cost between \$20,000 and \$50,000.

The post has raised about \$700, but it's

also received a \$5,600 grant from Home Depot for trees and shrubs, he said.

The post plans to sell 4-by-8-inch bricks for about \$100 each that will include the veteran's name, branch of service, conflict served in and a barcode that can be read by a smart phone. The barcode will connect to an online database with biographies of each veteran.

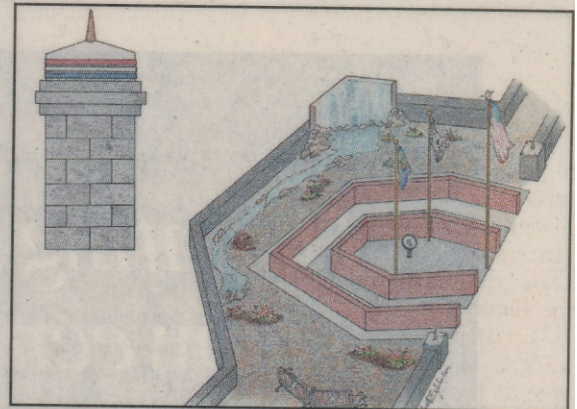
The memorial will complement American, Oregon and prisoners of war flags, which were installed at the post two years ago, Eakin said.

"It's going to be a beautiful tribute by the time it's done," he said. "This is going to be something that the whole community can be proud of."

Eakin and Bill Hamman, the chairman for the memorial project, said they hope to persuade the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs to make it a state memorial. This could attract visitors from outside Douglas County to Roseburg, they said.

Hamman said he sees the memorial becoming a place for veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder to find solace.

"This has been a dream of mine because we have so many veterans out there who served in combat who need this memorial to help heal them," he said. "The way it's going to look is going to be something that they can see, and it's going to make them



Courtesy photo

This rendering of a proposed memorial at the Veterans of Foreign Wars post in Roseburg shows what organizers would like to have in place by March.

proud. Everybody that comes and sees it as a tourist attraction is going to be proud."

Veterans' names will be carved into black polished marble bricks, giving the memorial an appearance similar to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., Hamman said.

"When you look at this wall, it's going to be solid black and shiny," he said.

Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs Director Jim Willis said he only recently learned about the Roseburg VFW's memorial project, but said his department will consider whether to make it a state memorial.

"I really like the design and what they're trying to do," he said.

If the Roseburg VFW's memorial were accepted as a state memorial, the Department of Veterans' Affairs would pay the maintenance costs, Willis said.

It would join 14 other state veterans memorials, he said.

Hamman said he hopes the memorial is completed by March 5, which is the Roseburg VFW post's 80th anniversary.

"We're looking for this thing to bring a lot of attention to Roseburg," Hamman said. "It's going to be big."

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