

## **OREGON HONORS 480,000 WARTIME VETERANS WITH SIGNS ON 8 MAJOR HIGHWAYS ACROSS OREGON**

During the last 13 years, the non-profit Bend Heroes Foundation was successful in requesting the Oregon legislature and Oregon’s Governors to adopt 5 laws honoring nearly one-half million Oregon veterans who served during 5 major wars: **WWI, WWII, Korean War, Vietnam War, Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq Wars.**

Almost 6,000 veterans from Oregon made the supreme sacrifice, an estimated 15,000 Oregonians were wounded and over 920 veterans and civilians became Prisoners of War (POWs) during those wars. One thousand (1,000) Oregonians (999 veterans and 1 civilian) still remain Missing in Action (MIA) from WWI to the Vietnam War. Twenty nine (29) Medal of Honor recipients (Civil War to Vietnam) have close ties with Oregon.

The honors to Oregon’s 479,800 wartime veterans were accomplished by 93 large (4 ft. x 8 ft. or 6 ft. X 8 ft.) signs installed by Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and others on 8 border-to-border highways totaling almost 3,000 miles in length across Oregon. The first sign was installed in 2010 and the last in 2020. Each highway displays 10 -18 signs with half facing in each direction. The highways range in length from 292 to 471 miles. On average, highway travelers will view a sign every 65 miles.

The 8 Veterans’ highways are:

WWI Veterans Memorial Highway.....	10 signs on U.S. Hwy 395
WWII Veterans Historic Highway.....	18 signs on U.S. Hwy 97/S.R. 126
Korean War Veterans Memorial Highway.....	10 signs on Interstate 5
Vietnam Veterans Memorial Highway.....	17 signs on Interstate 84
Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq Veterans Memorial Highway.....	11 signs on U.S. Hwy 101
Purple Heart Trail.....	5 signs on Interstate 5
Oregon Medal of Honor Highway.....	12 signs on U.S. Hwy 20
POW/MIA Memorial Highway.....	10 signs on U.S. Hwy 26

A map displaying the 8 border to border highways is attached. Five are “firsts in the USA.”

The 292 mile **WWII Veterans Historic Highway** is the first highway to honor WWII veterans as well as inform travelers of 8 nearby WWII training sites. The **Purple Heart Trail** on Oregon’s 308 mile long I-5 connects with California’s and Washington’s Purple Heart Trails on Interstate 5 thereby creating the first Purple Heart Trail spanning our nation in any direction as well as between Canada and Mexico. Likewise the 338 mile long border-to-border **Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq Veterans Memorial Highway** along the beautiful Oregon coast on U.S. Hwy 101 is another first in our nation. And the 451 mile border to border **Oregon Medal of Honor Highway** along U.S. Hwy 20 is our 4th “first in the nation” highway. The 471 mile **POW/MIA Memorial Highway** along U.S. Hwy 26 is the 5<sup>th</sup> “first in the nation” highway. At the

Foundation's request, Idaho has designated its 401 mile U.S. Hwy 26 as POW/MIA Memorial Highway. The Foundation has requested the **National League of POW/MIA Families** to extend the highway across the USA. The Oregon POW/MIA Memorial and Oregon Medal of Honor Highways intersect all of the war highways.

Crossing the other war highways is the 451 mile **Oregon Medal of Honor Highway** honoring 29 Medal of Honor recipients connected with Oregon who acted with "***conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty at the risk of his life***" during combat with an enemy of the United States thus receiving our nation's highest award for military valor during 8 wars over a 108 year period (Civil War to Vietnam War).

Since completion of the Oregon Medal of Honor Highway almost 5 years ago, Bend Heroes Foundation has been coordinating the designation of 11 more state Medal of Honor Highways across America on U.S. Highway 20, the longest highway in the nation and stretching 3,365 miles from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean between Newport, OR and Boston, MA.

All 11 states east of Oregon have adopted the Oregon precedent, thus completing the coast to coast highway and first veterans west - east highway across our nation on Nov. 17, 2022. See attached map. The 12 states account for about 60% of all 3,515 Medal of Honor awards made to recipients in all 50 states since the Civil War. The remaining 38 states account for 40% of all 3,515 recipients.

Bend Heroes Foundation has requested the U.S. Congress to designate US Hwy 20 as the **National Medal of Honor Highway** honoring all 3,515 recipients from all 50 states and territories and all future recipients. That highway would overlay the **Medal of Honor Highway Across America** and run parallel to the coast to coast Lincoln and Eisenhower Highways..

Oregon's 8 veterans' highway signs were funded by veterans' groups, Boards of County Commissions, civic organizations, several non-profits, businesses and individuals. Bend Heroes Foundation raised over \$110,000 to pay Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) and others to fabricate and install 93 honorific signs across Oregon. The replacement cost would be over \$200,000. No state highway funds were used.

Maps and photos of signs on each highway are shown below. Note the display of the familiar **Purple Heart** and **Medal of Honor** Medals and **POW/MIA** logo on highway signs.

Now that Oregon's wartime veterans have been honored with the 8 border to border highways, Bend Heroes Foundation has submitted draft legislation to the Oregon Legislature to designate the 477 mile US Hwy 30 between Astoria and Idaho as "**Oregon Gold Star Families Memorial Highway**" honoring the families of the 6,000 Oregon veterans who perished during wars since WWI.

On Dec. 8, the undersigned testified to the Oregon House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management on the proposed highway. The Committee Chair agreed that the proposed highway was appropriate and should receive public hearings after the Legislature convenes in January.

As US Hwy 30 spans the USA between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, there is the possibility of a **Gold Star Families Memorial Highway Across America** following the **Medal of Honor Highway Across America** precedent set by the Foundation. We would ask American Gold Star Mothers and Gold Star Wives groups along US Hwy 30 to advocate state legislation across America.

Almost 90 Blue Star Memorial Highway signs (photo attached) have been installed along Oregon's major highways (mostly in rest stops) by the Oregon State Federation of Garden Clubs and ODOT. The Foundation has requested the Garden Club to add US Hwy 20, US Hwy 26 and US Hwy 395. The number of Blue Star Highway signs almost equals the number of war veterans highway signs and honor both "peacetime" and "wartime" veterans.

Oregon's Legislators, Governors, Department of Transportation and many patriotic donors have made this 13 year and counting project a reality.

It has been a high honor and privilege leading this legacy project honoring Oregon's veterans and Gold Star Families. **They will not be forgotten.**

Dick Tobiason

Chairman, Bend Heroes Foundation, a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization located in Bend, Oregon

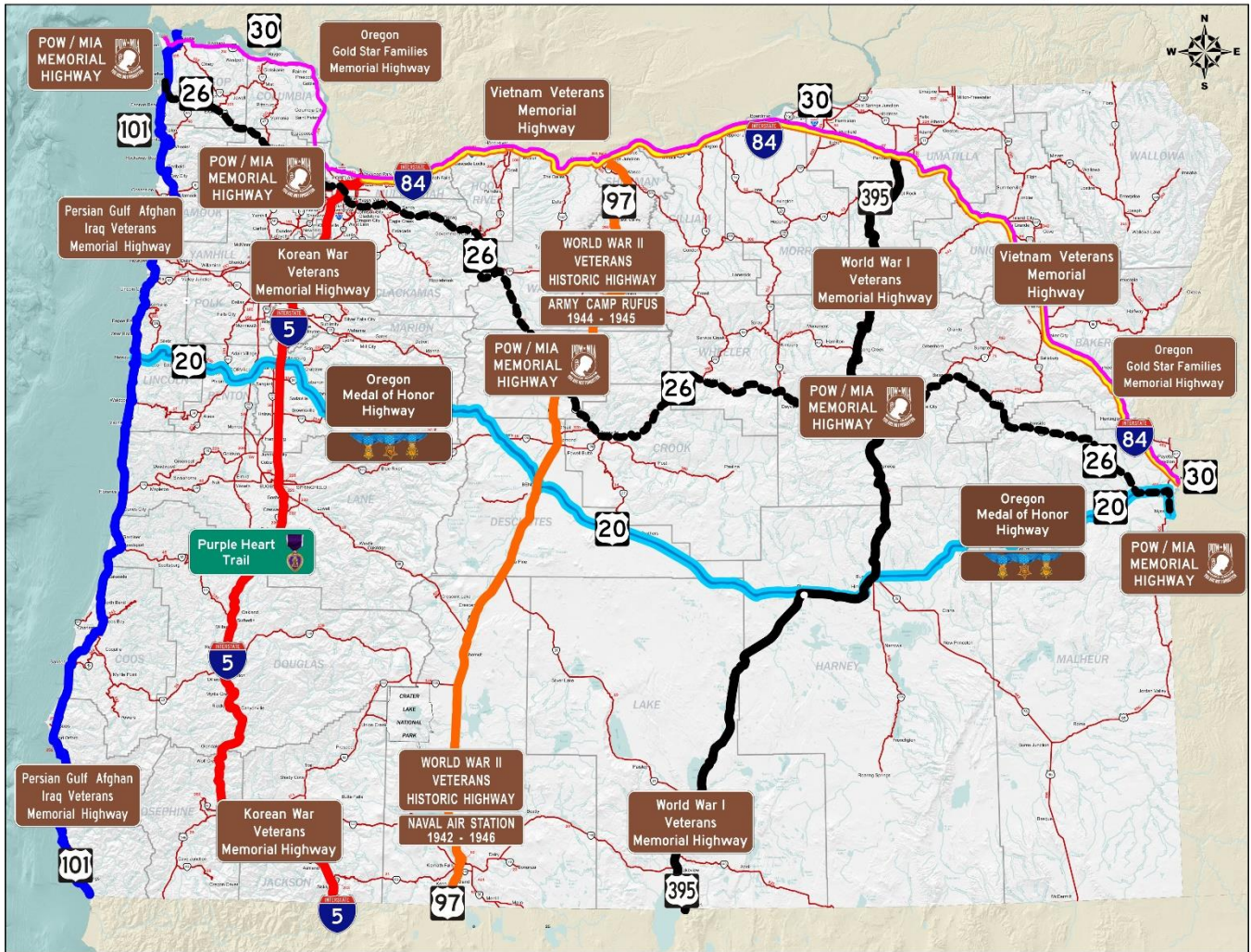
<https://www.facebook.com/bendheroes/>

Project Manager, Oregon Veterans Highways, Medal of Honor Highway Across America, National Medal of Honor Highway

LTC US Army Retired, Master Army Aviator

Member: American Legion, DAV, MOAA, MOPH, VFW, VVA

# Oregon Veterans Memorial Highways



8 BORDER TO BORDER VETERANS HIGHWAYS ACROSS OREGON

HONOR 480,000 OREGON WARTIME VETERANS

93 SIGNS INSTALLED 2010-2020

TOTAL LENGTH 2,970 MILES



WWI VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY U.S. HWY 395



WWII VETERANS HISTORIC HIGHWAY U.S. HWY 97, PORTION S.R. 126



KOREAN WAR HIGHWAY AND PURPLE HEART TRAIL I-5



VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY I-84



PERSIAN GULF, AFGHANISTAN, IRAQ VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY U.S. HWY 101



OREGON MEDAL OF HONOR HIGHWAY U.S. HWY 20



POW/MIA MEMORIAL HIGHWAY U.S. HWY 26



PROPOSED DESIGN FOR 4 FT X 8 FT SIGNS ON US HWY 30 ACROSS OREGON



## U.S. HIGHWAY 20 3,365 MILE MEDAL OF HONOR HIGHWAY ACROSS AMERICA



STATE	US HWY 20 MILES	MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS	LIVING RECIPIENTS	ORGANIZATION
OREGON	451	30	0	BEND HEROES FOUNDATION
IDAHO	411	48	1	CDR. DEPT MOPH
MONTANA	12	94	0	CHAPTER 2016, MOPH
WYOMING	525	18	0	CDR. MOPH REGION 3
NEBRASKA	432	73	2	PRES. NE MOH FOUNDATION
IOWA	302	54	1	CDR. AMERICAN LEGION DEPT
ILLINOIS	234	204	2	MOAA STATE CNCLIAM LEGION
INDIANA	156	75	0	REP. DENNY ZENT
OHIO	260	331	5	BEND HEROES FOUNDATION AMERICAN LEGION
PENNSYLVANIA	45	382	1	PRES. MOAA STATE COUNCIL
NEW YORK	372	701	10	CDR. VFW DEPT
MASSACHUSETTS	153	372	4	CDR. DEPT MOPH

BLUE = STATES ADOPTED LAWS DESIGNATING US HWY 20 AS MEDAL OF HONOR HIGHWAY  
MANAGED BY BEND HEROES FOUNDATION, BEND, OREGON

OUR NATION'S HIGHEST MILITARY AWARD  
PRESENTED TO AN INDIVIDUAL  
OF THE ARMED FORCES  
FOR ACTING WITH  
CONSPICUOUS GALLANTRY AND INTREPIDITY  
ABOVE AND BEYOND  
THE CALL OF DUTY  
AT RISK TO ONE'S LIFE DURING COMBAT  
WITH AN ENEMY OF THE UNITED STATES

OVER 3,500 AWARDS  
HAVE BEEN MADE SINCE 1863

<http://www.cmohs.org/>  
<https://www.mohhsus.com/>

MAP BY MIGUEL A.D.DOMINIC

ALL 12 STATES ALONG US HWY 20 HAVE ADOPTED LAWS CREATING STATE MEDAL OF HONOR  
HIGHWAYS ACROSS THE COAST TO COAST 3,365 MILE US 20 HIGHWAY HONORING 60% OF OUR  
NATION'S 3,515 MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS FROM ALL 50 STATES



TYPICAL OF 86 BLUE STAR MEMORIAL HIGHWAY SIGNS INSTALLED ACROSS OREGON  
TYPICALLY IN REST STOPS