

Afghan-Iraqi Freedom War Memorial has union ties

Bill McMichaels of UA Local 290 designs the memorial and acts as the construction project manager

SALEM — A ceremony honoring Oregonians who have died while serving in U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan will be held at 1 p.m. on Monday, May 28 — Memorial Day — at the Afghan-Iraqi Freedom War Memorial located on the grounds of the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs at 700 Summer Street NE, Salem.

The war memorial has deep union ties.

Bill McMichaels, a 33-year member of Plumbers and Fitters Local 290, designed the memorial, helped spearhead the drive to raise funds, and was the project manager responsible for finding skilled workers and contractors to donate their time and materials.

McMichaels contacted his union friends from the building trades — Iron Workers, Cement Masons, Carpenters, Electricians, apprenticeship training centers and others.

“No one turned me down. It was a real brotherhood,” he said.

McMichaels estimated it would have cost \$800,000 to build the memorial without the 750 volunteers and all the donations.

A Salem resident, McMichaels, 60, is a Marine veteran of the Vietnam War who lost many friends in that war.

He also is friends with Clay and MJ Kester-son of Independence, Oregon. The couple lost their son, Army Warrant Officer Erik Kesterson, in a Blackhawk helicopter crash in Iraq in 2003.

Together the trio formed a non-profit foundation to create a memorial honoring all Oregon military members who have been killed in



Bill McMichaels, a 33-year member of Plumbers and Fitters Local 290, stands next to the Afghan-Iraqi Freedom War Memorial located on the grounds of the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs in Salem. McMichaels donated countless hours to the design and construction of the memorial, which he said is the first one to be built in the United States honoring troops who have been killed in the Afghan and Iraq conflicts.

Afghanistan and Iraq. It is the first memorial to be built in the United States for the Afghan-Iraq conflicts and the first memorial ever to be built before a conflict was over, McMichaels said.

“It took 60 years to get a memorial for soldiers in World War II,” McMichaels said. “We weren’t going to wait that long.”

The design and site location for the memorial were approved by the Oregon Legislature and signed by Gov. Ted Kulongoski on Sept. 2, 2005.

“The hardest part of this whole project was getting through the bureaucratic red tape,” McMichaels said. He acknowledged the efforts of Rep. Donna Nelson for helping get the bill passed.

Construction on the memorial began in June 2005.

The erection of the statue and fountain began on Sept. 11, 2006, with Kulongoski setting a goal for completion on Veterans Day — Nov.

11, 2006.

“Everybody said it couldn’t be done in two months. They said it would take at least five,” McMichaels told the Northwest Labor Press. McMichaels, who has committed to handling all the maintenance work at the memorial for the next five years, was there installing a new granite bench and pulling stakes on concrete pathways that had been poured earlier that week.

“I’m really proud of Oregonians, the way they stepped up to do whatever was needed to make it happen,” he said.

McMichaels himself was at the site seven days a week, oftentimes for 16 hours a day.

The war memorial features an illuminated 40-foot-wide fountain with an 8-foot bronze statue of a soldier kneeling on a pedestal rising out of the United States. With an outstretched hand, the soldier is gesturing “freedom to the world.” The world is displayed in the form of a stainless steel map at the bottom of an oval pool. Surrounding the pool are flags representing every branch of the military, prisoners of war, the United States and the State of Oregon.

A specially-designed tank pumps 900 gallons of water a minute through the fountain, and jet sprayers create a constant mist. The water features shut off automatically if the outside air reaches a certain temperature or the wind reaches a certain level. The memorial also has a granite wall inscribed with the names of Oregon soldiers who have died in Iraq or Afghanistan.

A “Support Our Troops” motorcycle rally will precede the service on Memorial Day. McMichaels said riders from all corners of the state will meet at the Afghan-Iraqi Freedom War Memorial at 12:30 p.m. on May 28 to honor veterans who died and who served the country. He encourages all union members to ride their motorcycles to the Memorial Day event.

Workers’ Rights Board on Safe RN Staffing and Collective Bargaining

The Workers’ Rights Board is a group of community leaders coordinated by **Jobs with Justice** who are committed to protecting the rights of workers. They use their public visibility and moral authority to intervene when workers’ rights are being violated.



**Thursday May 31st
7 pm
Portland Community College
Cascade Campus
Moriarty Arts and Humanities Bldg
Room 104 Auditorium
705 N Killingworth St**

**Support the 3,000 Legacy RNs who
are working to form a union with
AFT Healthcare NW/OFNHP 5017**

WORKING UNITED WORKS

SERVING UNIONS FOR OVER 25 YEARS



QUALITY, AFFORDABLE FAMILY DENTAL CARE

- ♥ General, cosmetic, and specialty care
- ♥ Most insurance and union plans accepted
- ♥ Easy credit and low monthly payments, O.A.C.
- ♥ Evening and Saturday appointments
- ♥ Ask about our **Confident** Dental Discount Program

BEAVERTON, OR*
4655 S. W. Griffith Dr.
Beaverton, OR 97005
(503) 644-1400
Ben Sutter IV, D.M.D.

GRANTS PASS, OR
1021 N.E. 6th St.
Grants Pass, OR 97526
(541) 479-6696
Matt Hill, D.M.D.
Warren Grether, Denturist

GRESHAM, OR
443 N.W. Burnside Rd.
Gresham, OR 97030
(503) 492-8487
Vicki Reichlein, D.M.D.
Brandon Lee, D.M.D.

**HILLSBORO, OR
ORENCO STATION***
7206 N.E. Cornell Rd.
Hillsboro, OR 97124
(503) 640-9999
Irene Glanville, D.M.D.

MILWAUKIE, OR
17186 S.E. McLoughlin Blvd.
Milwaukie, OR 97267
(503) 659-2525
Linh Tran, D.M.D.
Dmitriy Lyubchenko, D.M.D.

PORTLAND, OR
3580 S.E. 82nd Ave.
Portland, OR 97266
(503) 777-0761
Adam Ho, D.D.S.
Tom Hicks, D.M.D.

SALEM, OR
831 Lancaster Mall Dr. NE.
Salem, OR 97301
(503) 362-8359
Sean Hansen, D.M.D.
Julie Dewey, D.D.S.
Michelle Kirkpatrick, D.M.D.

WILSONVILLE, OR
25700 S.W. Argyle Ave.
Wilsonville, OR 97070
(503) 682-8552
Jeffrey Dewey, D.D.S.

**VANCOUVER, WA
FISHER’S LANDING**
3250 S.E. 164th Ave.
Vancouver, WA 98683
(360) 891-1999
Peter Vu, D.M.D.
Charles Stirewalt, D.D.S.
Chou Ngo, D.D.S.

**VANCOUVER, WA
SALMON CREEK**
2101 N.E. 129th St.
Vancouver, WA 98686
(360) 574-4574
Phong Bui, D.M.D.
Charles Stirewalt, D.D.S.
Chou Ngo, D.D.S.

*A New Bright Now! Dental Location.

**Protecting Union Member
Smiles and Wallets.**

ORTHODONTICS AVAILABLE!

1-888-BRIGHT NOW

www.BRIGHTNOW.com



Northwest Dental Associates, P.C./Stirewalt, P.C.
©2007 Bright Now! Dental, Inc.

Bright Now! Dental

A BETTER WAY TO SEE THE DENTIST.