

# ★ ARMED FORCES ★

Special Edition

## Pounding Pavement to Honor Troops

*Veteran completes Oregon to Maine Run* (AP) -- An Army veteran who pounded the pavement from coast to coast to honor the nation's fallen



Mike Ehredt, of Hope, Idaho, celebrates the completion of his 4,425-mile coast-to-coast run from Astoria, Ore. to Rockland, Maine.

troops finished his grueling journey in rain and high winds on Friday in Maine.

Mike Ehredt of Hope, Idaho, placed a flag in the ground every mile along the way to honor military personnel killed in Iraq.

The 49-year-old extreme runner kicked off his journey on May 1 in Astoria, Ore., averaged about 29 miles a day and took only four days off. All told, he ran 4,425 miles.

Howling winds and sheets of rain accompanied his finish on the Rockland waterfront, where supporters gathered wearing bright yellow T-shirts emblazoned with "Thanks Mike!"

The operation ran with military precision. Ehredt kept to his schedule and stayed with a different family every night. He suffered no knee or hip problems, which often plague distance runners. He didn't even lose any weight. Each morning, he popped a couple of painkillers, and hit the road.

Ehredt hatched the idea for the coast-to-coast run three years ago. And it took three years of planning to pull it off. It took 4,424 small flags and 1,000 feet of yellow ribbon to create the tributes, each bearing the name of a service member, that he placed on the ground at 1-mile intervals.

Along the way, Ehredt went through 19 pairs of trail-running shoes, drank 40 gallons of chocolate milk (one quart a day) and consumed 668 Aleve (two each morning and night).

Though he didn't personally know any military personnel killed in Iraq, Ehredt said he felt a kinship that all former service members feel and wanted to honor the fallen. And many were moved by his gesture. A mother from Alabama drove 28 hours to Colorado to be there when he placed a flag honoring her son, he said.

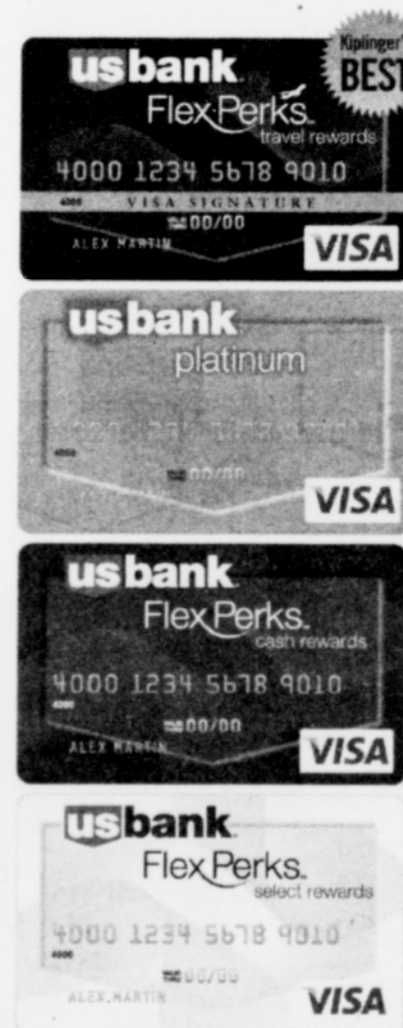
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