

Names added annually

**MEMORIAL continued
from front page**

"This project has the full support of the Elders," said Tribal Elder Merle Holmes, who served in the Army. He said he was very interested in the memorial's eventual design.

"The design is important to me because we should make sure that a Native American theme is incorporated into it. It is an important part of our Tribe's history and culture," Holmes said.

In the July 15, 1999, *Smoke Signals*, a list of almost 200 Tribal veterans with their respective branch of service appeared. "If you know of a veteran whose name does not appear here, or if you see a misspelled name, please call June Sell-Sherer," the list's introduction said. Sherer, who is currently serving on Tribal Council, is a Vietnam-era Army veteran.

On April 25, 2000, *Smoke Signals* reported that a new Ad Hoc Veterans Memorial Committee was established because participation and interest in the initial committee wavered.

"The committee is looking for more participation from Tribal member veterans and community member veterans," reported *Smoke Signals* editor and Tribal member Brent Merrill.

"We need leadership to get this thing going," said Tribal member and Navy veteran Mike Larsen, who is now the Tribe's Facilities Program manager.

Also about this time, Tribal Council member and Marine veteran Reyn Leno called fellow Tribal member and Marine veteran Steve Bobb Sr. and asked if he would be interested in designing the memorial, which received an enthusiastic positive response from Bobb.

Tribal member and Air Force veteran Lewis Younger was elected chairman of the new ad hoc committee and Tribal members and veterans Bobb, Norris Merrill, Russ Leno and Herman Hudson Jr. and non-veteran Brent Merrill were unanimously voted on to the committee.

In the May 1, 2000, *Smoke Signals*, a photo of a sign announcing the future location of the Veterans Memorial with Tribal Council members surrounding it appeared. Larsen was listed as the contact person if anyone had questions or needed more information.

By November 2000, progress had been made.

A renewed effort by the Tribe's Ad Hoc Veterans Memorial Committee had selected the site — between the Tribal Governance Center and the Tribal Community Center — and expanded the veterans to be honored to all veterans — Tribal and nonTribal — from Grand Ronde, Willamina and Sheridan in an effort to be more inclusive.

Bobb remembers that, at first, only Tribal members were going to be included on the granite pillars with nonTribal members' names engraved on a separate wall, but it

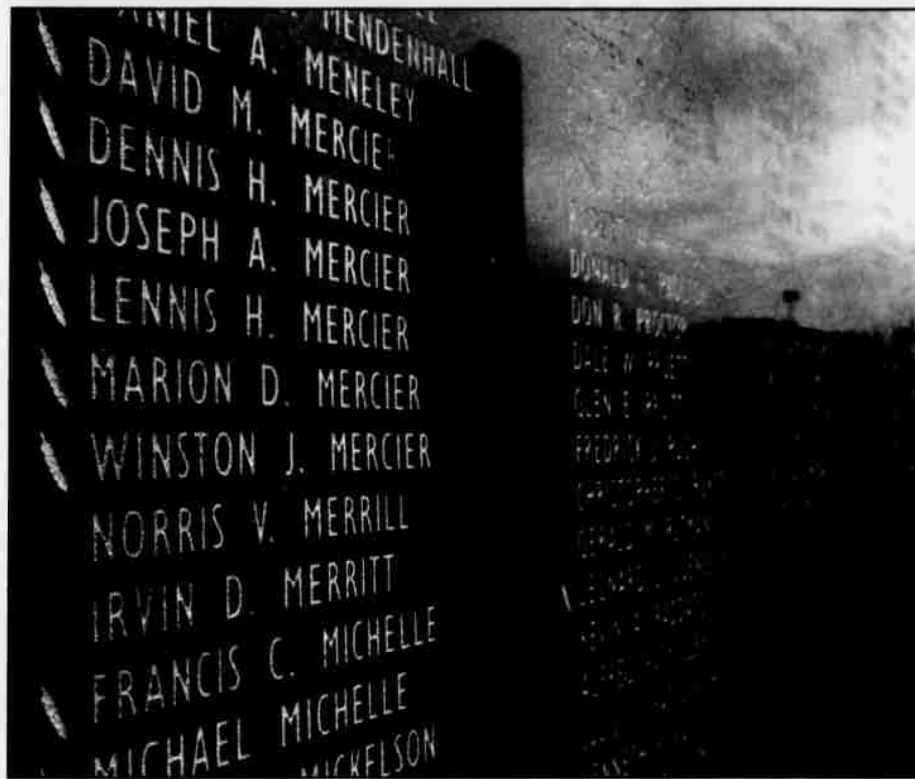


Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Names of new West Valley veterans are added every year before the Tribe's Memorial Day ceremony that takes place at the West Valley Veterans Memorial.

was decided that all veterans' names would be engraved on the pillars.

"Efforts to establish the memorial are being supported by the Tribe's Veterans' Committee, local veterans and their families and the Grand Ronde Tribal Council," a story said.

A local veterans group donated \$500 toward the memorial and each member of the ad hoc committee pledged \$100 each to the effort.

In addition, Bobb's design was starting to take shape, featuring a man and woman dressed in traditional Native attire reaching toward the sky surrounded by four black pillars representing the four branches of the armed forces — Marines, Army, Navy and Air Force.

Tribal members Courtney Galigner and Mark LaBonte posed in traditional regalia for the statue, which honors both male and female veterans.

The memorial was scheduled to be built in three phases with an ultimate dedication set for Memorial Day 2003.

In 2001, fundraising to pay the estimated \$300,000 cost to build the memorial became a priority after Tribal Elder and veteran Russ Leno said that he would like to see the memorial built before he was gone.

"Those strong and powerful words from a normally quiet guy set in motion an urgency to make this happen," Bobb recalled.

In March 2001, a first annual Dinner and Auction was held at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall in Willamina. The committee had raised more than \$40,000 at that point.

Later that year, a Bottle and Can Drive at the Competition Powwow, a garage sale at the Depot building and a fall auction were all slated to help raise funds to build the Veterans Memorial.

At the fall auction, held Oct. 20, Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison donated \$1,000 to bring the evening's take to \$6,500. With those funds, the drive was close to \$70,000,

the plans developed, Bobb said.

In February 2003, Bobb visited the studios of Burning Palace Bronze in Boring, Ore., to give final approval and sign the base of the sculpture. A tentative date of late April was set for a sculptor's installation in Grand Ronde.

With the approaching Memorial Day dedication of the Veterans Memorial, the need to raise funds did not end. On April 26, 2003, a Spring Auction and Spaghetti Dinner was held at the Willamina VFW Hall. It also was announced that eight benches would be available on which to have a family name engraved. Bids started at \$900.

The four-year project came to fruition on Saturday, May 31, 2003, when Gen. Alexander Burgin, Cherokee recording artist Lee Greenwood and Congresswoman Darlene Hooley attended the dedication of the West Valley Veterans' Memorial.

Smoke Signals reported that Ad Hoc Veterans Memorial Committee members raised almost \$450,000 to fund the project, including \$175,000 from Spirit Mountain Community Fund and \$113,000 in Tribal dollars taken out of the Capital Improvement budget after Tribal Council received a funding request from Norwest.

In addition, Tribal staff helped trim \$100,000 from the cost by performing project design refinements. The dedication ceremony was punctuated by a fly-by from an Air Force F-15E Eagle.

Since that memorable dedication nine years ago, the West Valley Veterans Memorial has been maintained by Tribal staff and Veterans Special Event Board volunteers, and names of new West Valley veterans have been added annually. Those names can be reviewed on the Tribal Web site at www.grandronde.org, broken down by branch of service.

The memorial also has been the location of annual Memorial Day ceremonies on the Tribal campus.

The ad hoc committee disbanded after accomplishing its goal, but the result of its members' hard work and dedication continues to reach for the sky in Grand Ronde daily, remembering those from the West Valley who gave of their time, and some of their lives, in service to the United States. ■

Smoke Signals reported.

The next year was perhaps the most pivotal year in the Veterans Memorial effort.

On Feb. 23, 2002, Bobb and Merrill started a 265-mile, 14-day journey from Table Rock to Grand Ronde to raise money and, perhaps more importantly, awareness for the Veterans Memorial effort. The trek followed the path of Grand Ronde Tribal members' Trail of Tears in 1856.

Upon their arrival in Grand Ronde, Bobb and Merrill were greeted by a smiling crowd of on-lookers at the Tribal Governance Center.

Tribal Elder Marce Norwest, an Army veteran, spoke admirably of the two long-distance walkers and said that their effort may be the turning point for the Veterans Memorial effort.

Norwest was right. By mid-September, *Smoke Signals* ran a photo of the Veterans Memorial under construction and said that names were still being submitted to the Tribe's Veterans Memorial Committee.

On Nov. 1, Navajo code talker Roy Hawthorne was the keynote speaker for a Veterans Memorial fundraiser. The original cost of the memorial had grown from \$300,000 to \$360,000 as

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