



Oregon

November 26, 2019

The Honorable Jeff Merkley, Oregon Senator  
313 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Merkley,

I am writing on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Oregon to express our support for a bill sponsored by you and fellow legislators to name the Department of Veterans Affairs community-based outpatient clinic in Bend, Oregon, as the "Robert D. Maxwell Memorial Veterans Clinic".

Robert Dale Maxwell was born in Boise, Idaho, on Oct. 26, 1920. Raised by his grandparents in western Kansas, Bob, as he was known, left school as a young man to work on their farm. Bob finally received an honorary high school diploma in 2011, at age 90. Although he had a Quaker upbringing, Mr. Maxwell decided against becoming a conscientious objector and enlisted in the Army in 1942. He received the Medal of Honor, two Silver Stars, a Bronze Star Medal and two Purple Hearts and after the war taught auto mechanics at high schools and community colleges in central Oregon.

Maxwell rejoined the invasion of southern France, dubbed Operation Dragoon, shortly after convalescing from wounds he received in a previous engagement. By September, Mr. Maxwell's battalion had reached the city of Besancon. He was stationed with a few G.I.s at an old, pockmarked farmhouse on the outskirts of town, stringing wire on the roof of the observation post, when a German platoon suddenly opened fire with machine guns and 20mm antiaircraft weapons. As bullets sheared tiles from the roof, Mr. Maxwell leaped to the ground, taking shelter behind a short rock wall topped with a wire-mesh fence. The Germans were coming within 10 yards of the wall. Mr. Maxwell and his three comrades marshaled a defense, armed only with their .45's.

"Maxwell's courage was what held us together," Cyril F. McColl, a technician fourth grade, later told Collier's magazine. "The machine-gun fire was just clearing his head, but he sat there taking pot shots at everything that moved. Our wall was beginning to crumble, and I was thinking how nice it would be to get out of there, when a grenade came over the chicken wire and hit the cement floor right at our feet." It was about 2 a.m. when Mr. Maxwell threw himself on the grenade, losing consciousness in the explosion that followed. Mr. Maxwell was presented with the Medal of Honor in May 1945 for his actions in saving his fellow soldiers.

As combat veterans and residents of the State of Oregon, we carry a deep pride for the contribution of our states' veterans and the legacy they have left us. For this reason, we support your proposed legislation to rename the Bend, Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs' clinic as the "Robert D. Maxwell Memorial Veterans Clinic."

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at 541-678-3895. Thank you for your dedication to serving our nation's Veterans, and for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John R. Wrinkle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "J" and "W".

John R. Wrinkle  
Commander  
VFW Department of Oregon