

July 26, 2021

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Board of Supervisors,

As a combat veteran and Major in the US Army Reserves, I am writing to you today regarding an issue of importance on your agenda for July 27th 2021 regarding Captain Paul Jacobs [It is important to note that I share my voice as an individual and my words do not represent any group, individual, or organization (including the DoD)].

Having returned last year from a deployment to a combat zone in the Middle East I worked firsthand with Americans that are by every definition a hero - we were confronted by two enemies---international terrorist organizations and COVID.

Some of these soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen received awards but most did not – what was clear is that most of the acts of valor I witnessed were just a part of their service to our great nation. That experience, the training that preceded it and my service in the Army generally has, among other things, only heightened my respect and admiration for the men and women of our armed services, what they do ---and what they sacrifice—to defend our country, and one another.

Captain Paul Jacobs was a hero and should be honored and recognized on our Veterans monument. It is critical to that we recognize the military accomplishments of soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen. Our Veterans monument is a way to recognize his life and service.

Additionally, for heroes whose heroism was recognized by our nation with the bestowing of the highest possible commendations---the Congressional Medal of Honor and the four Service crosses – we need to create an additional space for those specific awards. There are three main reasons for creating a separate space for these awards:

- First, it creates a dedicated location to recognize acts of valor under the established criteria; that is, to honor those persons who were awarded either the Medal of Honor or a military service cross medal.
- Second, it allows more plaques to be placed on the monument's plaza wall that may recognize notable military events or units, including Captain Jacobs' incredible humanitarian feats off the coast of Vietnam in the spring of 1975;

- Third, it refines the established criteria for military honoraria to remove ambiguities, and to reflect the changes inherent in the proposed resolution---in short, the hope is to avoid similar such controversies in the future.

It is important that our County and community use this moment to honor Captain Paul Jacobs, as well as take the opportunity to establish a place and a clear process by which we can honor other heroes. Their lives should serve as an inspiration to Americans of what is possible when we do what is right and fight for those that need our strength.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Joshua Elder, MD

**EL DORADO COUNTY VETERANS MONUMENT PROPOSAL
“Resolving Unintended Plaque Constraints”**

**Submitted by: Richard W. Buchanan
July 27, 2021
Before the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors**

SLIDE 1



EL DORADO COUNTY VETERANS MONUMENT
Resolving Unintended Plaque Constraints

SLIDE 2

Approved Forms of Military Honoraria

- ★ Engraved bricks or markers
- ★ Engraved benches
- ★ Bronze plaques for military events
- ★ Bronze plaques for military units
- ★ Bronze plaques for recipients of the Medal of Honor, or military service cross medal



SLIDE 3

Proposal 1 - Install Jacobs Plaque on Plaza Wall

- ★ Install Jacobs plaque as intended by the Veterans Alliance
- ★ Utilize remaining space for military units or events plaques
- ★ Eliminates unintended competition for existing space



Left hand plaque space



Right hand plaque space

SLIDE 4

Individual Brass Plaque Honoraria

- ★ Honors recipients of the Medal of Honor or military service cross medals
- ★ Original design intent of the plaza wall
- ★ Only one existing plaque meets criteria
- ★ Installation of other plaques creates an unintentional resource competition



SSgt Sky Mote, Navy Cross
(Posthumously)



MSgt William Cathcart
Distinguished Service Cross



1LT Andrew LePeilbet
Distinguished Service Cross



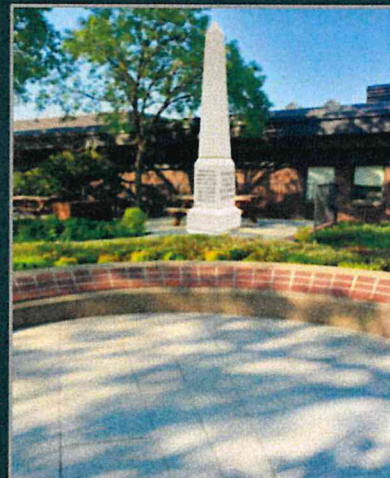
LTC Gregory Etzel
Air Force Cross



SLIDE 5

Proposal 2 - Create New Valor Plaza

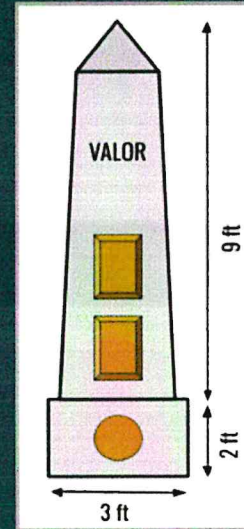
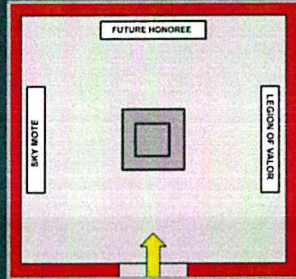
- ★ Install obelisk and base to display individual bronze plaques
- ★ Eliminates competition for plaza wall space
- ★ Fulfills original design intent of monument
- ★ Allows long overdue recognition of eligible veterans
- ★ Preserves space for future honorees



SLIDE 6

Proposal 2 - Create new Valor Plaza

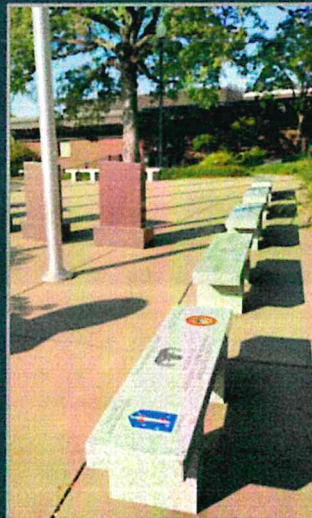
- ★ 17 x 16 foot pad is publicly accessible and installation ready
- ★ Install obelisk and base in center of pad
- ★ Install individual bronze plaques on obelisk
- ★ Install three valor related benches surrounding obelisk



SLIDE 7

Relocate 2 Valor Related Benches

- ★ Relocate USMC Staff Sergeant Sky Mote bench to valor plaza
- ★ Relocate Legion of Valor Regional Honorees bench to valor plaza
- ★ Install two new benches for future recognition and fundraising



July 27, 2021

El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
% 330 Fair Lane
Placerville, CA 95667

Subj: Proposed Resolution of Appeal Matters

Dear Board Members:


As presented to you today, I request your approval of a community proposal to resolve all issues related to the placement of a bronze plaque honoring the late Captain Paul Jacobs at the El Dorado County Veterans Monument.

It is my fervent hope that we might work together in order to resolve this matter in a way that honors Captain Jacobs, as well as all others from the County who have served our exceptional nation in the military. Beyond that, if we are able to resolve these issues, it might well provide an example of how men and women of equal goodwill and high civic values might address and reach accords on other contentious issues.

The proposal resolves all of the matters raised by the proposed Jacobs plaque installation, achieves an unfulfilled monument goal to recognize specific acts of valor, creates more space to install future plaques, and remembers the monument's donors, whose 2006 dedication plaques paid tribute to our Armed Forces.

I look forward to realizing these goals through the enactment of this proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Buchanan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

For, Richard W. Buchanan, by direction

Encl: (1) Proposed Resolution

PROPOSED RESOLUTION

I. INTRODUCTION.

The proposed plaque honoring the late Captain Paul Jacobs, USN, presents opportunities to strengthen the foundation of the El Dorado County Veterans Monument and achieve a crucial but as yet unfulfilled objective. The proposed plaque and the discussion sparked by it have highlighted the need to streamline or restate the applicable honoraria criteria; the process to this point has also brought to the public's attention the limited opportunities to recognize deserving veterans who met those criteria.

The community's desire to resolve these issues in a comprehensive, equitable and effective manner has been a central consideration in the development of this proposal.

The proposal that follows consists of three elements.

- First, it creates a dedicated location to recognize acts of valor under the established criteria; that is, to honor those persons who were awarded either the Medal of Honor or a military service cross medal.
- Second, it allows more plaques to be placed on the monument's plaza wall that may recognize notable military events or units.
- Third, it refines the established criteria for military honoraria to remove ambiguities, and to reflect the changes inherent in this resolution.

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF VALOR PLAZA

The current criteria allows for the placement of bronze plaques to honor individuals, provided they were awarded either the Medal of Honor or a military service cross medal. The intent was to limit recognition to acts of valor for "extraordinary heroism" and above, as recognized by the awarding of those medals.

The current design of the monument has a finite space for the installation of those plaques, and there are several local veterans who have met the criteria but have yet to be recognized. There was also a need to preserve space for future honorees. A separate plaza for acts of valor eliminates the need to limit utilization of the existing plaza wall.

The main plaza wall can then be utilized for the display of unit or event plaques without limiting space for individual valor plaques.

The monument grounds include two large concrete pads on the west side, adjacent to the government center building. (See highlighted area in Figure 1.) One of these pads can be utilized as the space for a valor plaza, since they are publicly accessible and on the existing grounds. These spaces were always intended for the memorialization of future events like this, so it is entirely appropriate to utilize them for the addition of a valor plaza.

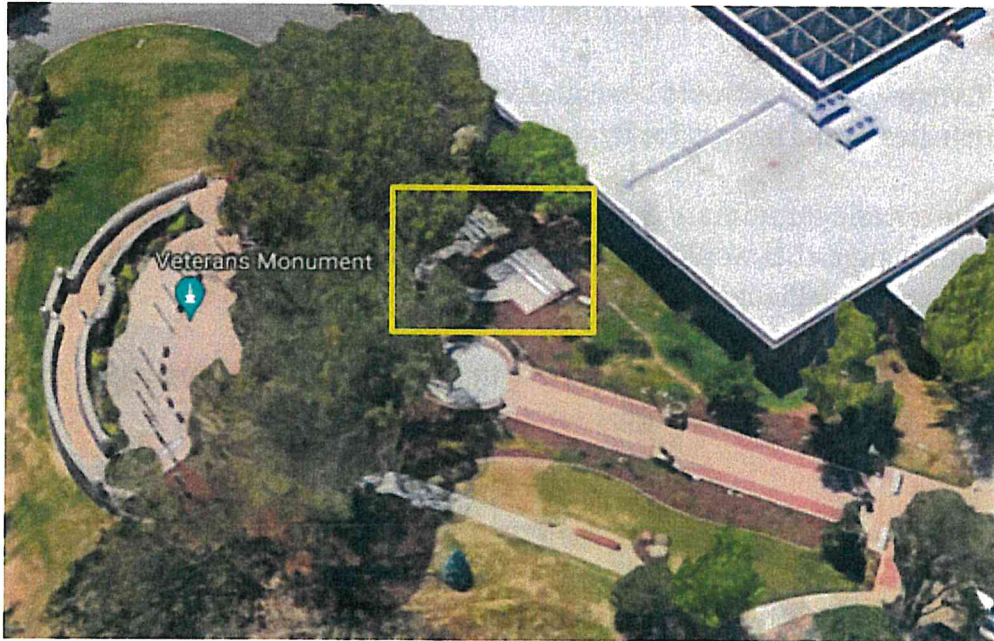


Figure 1
El Dorado County Veterans Monument

Elements:

1. The main element of a valor plaza would be an obelisk on a square base, centered on the pad. An obelisk is an homage to the American history of obelisks as “a monument with emblematic significance.”¹ In our nation’s capitol, the Washington Monument honors our first President with a 555 foot tall obelisk.²

¹ See, e.g., <https://heald.nga.gov/mediawiki/index.php/Obelisk>.

² See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Monument

2. The obelisk would display a plaque describing “valor,” and its criteria, according to the military standards for the Medal of Honor and military service cross medals. The obelisk, base, and plaques would be paid for by community pledges.

3. The outer area of the pad shall be utilized for benches under the existing criteria. Two existing benches would be moved from the monument’s main plaza to the valor plaza. Those are the benches recognizing SSgt Sky Mote (Navy Cross, posthumously), and the regional members of the Legion of Valor.

4. One additional bench would be installed on the valor plaza for a future honoree. That bench would be paid for by community pledges.

5. Two new benches would be made available as new honoraria on the main plaza. Those benches would be paid for by community pledges.

6. The criteria for military honoraria would be updated to recognize the valor plaza, and changes that would apply to the existing plaza wall. (See section IV, Military Honoraria Changes.)

7. The valor plaza would be marked with an individual section marker to distinguish its location and purpose on the monument’s directory.

III.

CHANGES TO THE MAIN PLAZA WALL

The main plaza wall has multiple plaques whose installation dates and purpose were unclear. This resulted in an unintended competition for the finite space to install bronze plaques on the existing granite panels. Most of the plaques were paid for by the monument’s benefactors, and placed during the monument’s 2006 construction and dedication. A small number of plaques were added prior to the 2007 establishment of the military honoraria criteria. The last plaque to be placed was in 2018, without knowledge of the existing honoraria criteria.

The original intent of the main plaza wall was to recognize those persons who were awarded either the Medal of Honor or a military service cross medal. In other words, the main plaza wall was intended to be a valor wall. The proposed Jacobs plaque installation highlighted those unintended conflicts. This resolution addresses those issues for the benefit of all future honorees.

The existing honoraria criteria allow for the installation of bronze plaques “honoring events [or] units...” Those plaques have no other criteria and are not limited by intended location.

Elements:

1. The parties agree that Captain Paul Jacobs was not awarded either the Medal of Honor or a military service cross medal. The parties further agree that Captain Paul Jacobs’ actions while serving as Commanding Officer of the USS Kirk are commendable and constituted one of the U.S. military’s greatest humanitarian acts. Those acts are worthy of recognition at the El Dorado County Veterans Monument and by resolution of the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors.

2. The Jacobs plaque would be installed on the main plaza wall without further objection.

3. The remaining open space on the main plaza wall granite slabs would be utilized for the installation of bronze plaques “honoring events or units.”

4. No bronze plaques honoring individuals shall be placed at the monument unless that individual is a recipient of the Medal of Honor or a military service cross medal. The installation of individual bronze plaques would be limited to the valor plaza.

5. Each granite section of the main plaza wall would be marked with an individual section marker to distinguish its location, purpose, and history on the monument’s directory.

**IV.
MILITARY HONORARIA CHANGES**

The 2007 “El Dorado County Veterans Monument Criteria for Military Honoraria and Civilian Recognition” were instrumental in the resolution of the Jacobs plaque matter. The criteria allowed for public objection to “any issues that arise regarding inclusion, inscription, or location of honoraria in the monument,” specified the process of hearing that objection, and the process of an appeal from the hearing to the Board of Supervisors.

Those criteria allowed the parties to publicly discuss those disputed issues, and provided time to consider steps to amicably resolve those issues amongst the parties. This proposal emerged as a result of those processes.

The proposed installation of the Jacobs plaque highlighted the need to refine certain portions of the criteria. Those will be submitted to the Veteran Services Officer for his review and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.