

Date of Hearing:

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Laura Friedman, Chair

ACR 208 (Davies) – As Introduced June 15, 2022

SUBJECT: Senior Master Sergeant John James Paoletti Memorial Highway

SUMMARY: Will designate the portion of the 5 south freeway, between Avenida Calafia and San Onofre, at the 73.28 postmile marker at Avenida Calafia in the County of Orange as the Senior Master Sergeant John James Paoletti Memorial Highway.

EXISTING LAW: Assigns the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways. This includes the installation and maintenance of highway signs.

FISCAL EFFECT: Unknown, but the measure requests that Caltrans determine the cost of appropriate signage consistent with requirements for the state highway system, and only erect the appropriate signage upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering the cost.

COMMENTS: Senior Master Sergeant John James Paoletti (John) was born on November 24, 1924, in Alpha, New Jersey. John was the 3rd of 10 children born to Domenico and Rosa Paoletti. Domenico and Rosa immigrated from Foggia, Italy, to the United States in 1919. Domenico went on to serve his adopted country in the United States Army in the 99th Infantry Division during World War I and, during his service, he received many distinctions of honor, including the Purple Heart.

John attended Phillipsburg High School in Phillipsburg, New Jersey. On July 29, 1943, he and many of his fellow classmates were drafted into the United States Army to help fight in World War II (he later went on to receive a general equivalency diploma (GED)). John was sent to Camp Davis in North Carolina for basic infantry training, then traveled on the Queen Elizabeth to Europe, with Germany as the eventual destination.

John was assigned to a radar and searchlight company in the United States Army's 99th Infantry Division, the same Infantry Division his father served in during World War I. As boots on the ground in Germany during the Battle of the Bulge, John and his 99th Infantry Division were the first complete infantry division to cross the Rhine River to capture the Remagen Bridge, which proved pivotal in their mission to collapse the Ruhr Pocket. John was hit with shrapnel in his right eye and knee during the battles while pushing towards the Town of Moosburg, which had several prisoners of war (POW) camps, and once at the camps they fought and liberated over 100,000 Allied POWs, including members of their own 99th Infantry Division who were captured during the Battle of the Bulge. On May 6, 1945, World War II ended, and John was sent to join the United States Army's 2nd Infantry Division for the Invasion of Japan. John was awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge (CIB), Combat Central Europe Rhineland, on May 20, 1945. On February 14, 1946, John was honorably discharged from the United States Army.

On May 10, 1949, John reenlisted into the United States Air Force and was sent to Francis E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming. John's distinguished United States Air Force career included numerous cryptology assignments, many of which were considered classified and top secret. John met and married the love of his life, Gloria, while stationed at Royal Air

Force Lakenheath in England and they stayed married for 59 years. Together, John and Gloria raised four strong and independent daughters, have eight grandchildren, and have four great-grandchildren.

John and Gloria moved to the City of San Clemente in 1996. John so loved his country that he dedicated his retirement years to volunteering to teach young pupils the great history of the United States by sharing his World War II experience. John created an hour-long presentation, complete with detailed maps, war memorabilia, wartime uniforms, and photos to engage pupils on what it was like to be boots on the ground during the Battle of the Bulge, and John regularly closed his presentation with this quote, "If you can read this thank a teacher. If you can read it in English, thank a veteran".

John inspired and made history come alive for many pupils, and one pupil was especially inspired. John learned before his passing in 2020 that a young high school pupil who attended his history talk was so inspired that he now serves as an active United States Navy Seal, and this young man credits John as his inspiration to serve his country. We will never know the future impact of John's inspirational history talk, as he shared his experience and invited young pupils to consider the Armed Forces of the United States as a future career.

John volunteered at the Dorothy Visser Senior Center in the City of San Clemente during his lunch hour and was active in the Italian Catholic Federation. John loved attending local veteran events, highlighted by joining his fellow veterans in Honor Flight. John was an active participant at the South Orange County Veterans Center, where he enjoyed support and fellowship with fellow World War II and Korean War veterans. As a veteran of the United States Army and the United States Air Force, John was heavily involved with local veteran organizations as well as the senior centers in the City of San Clemente.

According to the author, "Retired Senior Master Sergeant John James Paoletti was remarkable – drafted out of high school in 1943 to the US Army to fight WW II, boots on the ground in the Battle of the Bulge. He eventually went back to school and earned his GED. After completing his Army service in 1946, he went back to serve again – this time with the US Air Force. He led a distinguished career there with numerous Cryptology assignments, many of which were classified and top secret. When he finished his 24-year military career in 1967, he eventually settled in Southern California with his wife, Gloria who he met while station in England, and raised four daughters. But he continued to serve by creating a presentation for area schools where he educated students on WWII and the Battle of the Bulge with engaging photos and memorabilia. He even inspired others to serve. With a bronze star and numerous other military awards and medals, Retired Senior Master Sergeant John James Paoletti – as a decorated veteran and a tireless volunteer -should be remembered and commemorated with a Memorial Highway sign on the 5 at marker 73.28 at Avenida Califia."

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

Analysis Prepared by: Jessica Sam / TRANS. / (916) 319-2093