

# Remembering three who gave lives for their country: Haine sponsors highway designation for beloved trio

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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WOOD RIVER - Three friends who fought together in the Vietnam War were honored with the naming of sections of Route 143 in Wood River for their honor.

Illinois Senator William Haine (D-Alton) sponsored the renaming through the Illinois General Assembly. The section of 143 from the Phoebe Goldberg Overpass to Sixth Street was named for Lance Corporal Chris Totoria Memorial Highway. From Sixth Street to East Edwardsville Road was named for Lance Corporal Richard Bennett

The memorial was organized by Totoria's sister, Mary Roberts.

The dedication of the new signs was held at the Wood River VFW, which was packed with family members of the young men and people wanting to honor their sacrifices. Sen. Haine gave signs to family members of each of the young men.

"It has been said there will be a reminder of the sacrifices of these men and their families, and undoubtedly, will bring to mind other sacrifices of anyone who has ever defended the freedom of our country. Again, it has been said, Lest we forget. Thank you Mary Roberts and Senator Bill Haine, who worked together to bring this highly deserved and overdue honor to these courageous Marines."

Sen. Haine said Saturday was indeed special for him, especially since he also served in Vietnam like the three men he honored.

“The three were all classmates from Wood River High School and they died within a few months of each other,” he said. “Mary Roberts, the sister of one of them, was who brought this into me and it became very special for me. I was in training myself when these three young men were killed and I had a younger brother, John, in the De Nang area in Vietnam where they all served in 1967, which was 50 years ago.

“The VFW in Wood River has been extremely helpful for this to happen. Mary put this together and is a tremendous organizer. I must say these three are heroes who died for their country at a young age and gave selflessly. This is a small way and a small token of appreciation for their sacrifice and the sacrifice of their families. It is good to remember our heroic dead. The Vietnam conflict evokes many mixed emotions, but we can never forget the heroic deed these three men did. They took the oath and served and died for their country. It was a tremendous loss 50 years ago at this time to their community and their families.”









[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)