

By Jan Schultz, The Imperial Republican News Editor

Every year when Veteran's Day rolls around, I pull out my dad's obituary and a feature story written about him in the Omaha World-Herald a few days after he died in early 2008.

An important part of his life, the one that probably shaped him the most, was his service in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. He served in the Pacific Theater as a forward observer, a job I've been told was one of the most dangerous ones in the military. He earned a Purple Heart for his service after being honorably discharged in 1945.

I remember as a child that he often was asked to speak at Veteran's Day services when Nov. 11 arrived each year. As a 30-year employee of the Veterans Administration Hospital in Omaha, he was a good speaker, one who could talk about actual military service and also relate to the issues veterans of the day were facing.

While I don't remember his speeches exactly, I know he often talked about service. I vaguely remember him poring over the hand-written speeches that he labored to compose, making sure his words were the right ones. He knew there would be other veterans in the audience.

So, when I attended Monday's Veteran's Day program at Chase County Schools, coordinated by the FBLA chapter, I again thought of my dad. As I watched the video featuring veterans of all ages, including men the age my dad would have been, again I found tears in my eyes. I thought—what a difference those soldiers made for so many people, not only here in the U.S., but in many of the countries in which my dad and others fought.

When Monday's program speaker, Michal Swanson, related his experiences as a member of the Nebraska Army National Guard, he encouraged the students to be of service, if not in the military then in their communities—be it through their church, organizations or other ways. Those were ways, he suggested, they could say thank-you to our veterans.

Looking at the group of veterans in the audience, I couldn't help but think they agreed with those words. After all, they should know....they lived it as a soldier and the vast majority of them continue to be of service now in our community of Imperial. As they stood to be recognized, I looked at them and thought about all the ways they continue to serve their community through work at the community center, with the local VFW Post, the Imperial Lions Club, fire department, the Imperial EMS and so much more.

So, as another Veteran's Day passes and Thanksgiving nears, it's a good time to assess our own lives to see if we are being of service to our neighbors and community. We all likely have someone who is a veteran in our lives. Michal Swanson is right—what a great way to tell our veterans thanks, by showing it with our own service.

After all, they provided us with one of the greatest displays of service ever, as they fought for our country and helped secure the freedoms we enjoy. I think taking volunteerism seriously would make them proud—I know my dad would be proud, too.