

"Veterans Day is a rare opportunity to look at the men and women in our communities and think about what they have done for their fellow Americans.

Some of our veterans flew helicopters in Vietnam. Some spent the Korean War aboard ships of war. Some were engineers in Iraq. Others were on constant alert when they were stationed overseas during the Cold War. And still others stormed the beaches at Normandy, trekked across North Africa, fought on the islands of the South Pacific, or convoyed ammunition and supplies to American forces surging across Europe during WWII.

Some served for a few years, and others served for decades. Some veterans saw action, while others stood at the ready. By land, by air and by sea, Americans have protected the national interests of our country.

And whether our veterans have stories to tell or choose to reflect quietly on their service, Veterans Day is a day for every civilian to think about the colossal sacrifice of every American in uniform. They have done so much for our nation, for us, and for our children. Their mere willingness to serve is a strength of our nation that deters our enemies, but they did so much more.

And here is what some of our young men and women in uniform overseas are doing today: courageous and extremely modest, these Americans are on critical missions in Iraq and Afghanistan and around the world. They are away from their homes and families, risking life and limb. They are the veterans of tomorrow.

All Americans who serve can teach us valuable lessons, but the most important one is service. From world wars and peacekeeping missions, our sons and daughters have gone to serve our nation. For America, for our freedoms, and for their neighbors they sacrificed - all gave some and some gave all.

The best way to honor our veterans is to serve the communities they held in their hearts. No matter how far our soldiers get from Southern Missouri, the landscape of their home stays fresh in their minds. Our communities become even more important to the sons and daughters when they leave home to defend our great nation, hoping only to return.

Veterans Day is for every American that looked on that hardship as an opportunity to secure the blessings of freedom for our future: Those that served in the past, those serving today, and the families that supported their missions from home.

What they have done for us exceeds the service any American can render to our nation. And after a day of reflecting on their sacrifices, we ought to ask ourselves what we can do for them. How do we repay them? How do we express our thanks?

A good start is by participating in the parades on Veterans Day, the welcome-home celebrations for troops returning from overseas, and the send-off ceremonies for Missouri troops preparing to

leave home for a year or longer. No one says 'please' to a young American contemplating military service, but there are ample opportunities for us all to say 'thank you.'"