

Norwest thinks of others before himself

NORWEST continued
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sister, Tribal Elder Marilee Norwest-Davis, said. He knew how to give help to others and how to ask for it himself when he was low.

A seemingly endless number of Tribal and community members came to the microphone at the head table and talked about what Norwest has meant to them, taught them and shown them by example.

Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy said that Norwest taught her "to speak from the heart."

Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. said that his cousin "had spent a lifetime honoring others."

"He spent a lifetime showing us all how not to back down," Bobb said. "He has staying power, never giving up. He always thinks of others before himself. Never afraid of hard work. Or to share his opinions."

"You brought honor to all vets," wrote Tribal Council member June Sell-Sherer, who had previously committed to caring for her grandchildren. "I hope that those who follow will learn from your example."

Tribal Council Vice Chair Reyn Leno sent his regards to Norwest from a previously scheduled appointment in Redmond.

Although back in the day a lot of the younger generation said they were afraid of Norwest (though that fear turned to respect as they grew older), Jim Willis, director of the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs, said that the first time he met him was at a Veterans' Powwow where "the children flocked to him."

"I have known Marce all my life," said Joe Kirk, chair of the Klamath Tribe. "He has given me that lift. When I was younger, he did not hesitate to correct some of my behaviors. Marce and his family have been tremendously important to me and my family. I thank Marce for having been a part of my life."

"I've had nothing but the utmost feelings for you," said fellow veteran and chaplain Bud Abbott, who led the invocation and benediction at the beginning and end of the ceremony, and then the prayer before the potluck held at the Community Center. "You are a man of extreme dignity."

And like many veterans, Abbott expressed the pride he felt from serving with Norwest on the Veterans Memorial Ad Hoc Committee. Norwest was the driving force for the West Valley Veterans Memorial.

Kevin Scott, commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Willamina, said that he had been to many veterans' events during his time, "and always one face that's smiling back at me wherever I go is Marce."

Northwest Indian Veterans Association chair and Tribal Elder Gene LaBonte thanked Norwest for handing out \$100 bills to families in need.

Gene's wife, Billie, reminded Nor-



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Above, Mark Weippert, post commander for the AMVETS Post 2000 in Willamina, shows the audience a plaque that is being presented to Tribal Elder Marce Norwest for his outstanding dedication, support and service to all veterans, the Tribe and the community, during a tribute to him on Saturday, Jan. 10 in the Tribal gymnasium. At left, Tribal Elder Marce Norwest speaks. In the background, from left, Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy and Tribal Council members Wink Soderberg and Steve Bobb Sr. listen.



west "what a good time we had" with Diane Cilente, Yamhill County Veterans Service Officer (now passed on), in getting all the names ready for the Veterans Memorial.

Tribal Council member Chris Mercier remembered when he wrote for *Smoke Signals* and interviewed Norwest for a story about the memorial.

"Until that time, my understanding about what it meant to be a veteran was pretty much nil," Mercier said. "The conversation with Marce was like turning the key to open my mind."

Tribal Elder CeCe Kneeland said, "The pride that Marce and Sharon (Marce's wife) had in the community — that's the warrior spirit." And she thanked Norwest for his work on the Veterans' Powwow because it "opened new opportunities for girls and women to participate. It gets whole families involved in teaching and learning by example to show respect. Marce has shown by example."

Then she did as well. Kneeland and her daughter, Nakoosa, Junior Veterans' Queen 2008-09, who danced representing Royalty for the posting and retiring of the colors, together sang an Indian prayer for Norwest.

Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg recalled marveling at Norwest's garden and asking him

how he did it. "I come out here and pray to the Creator," he told Soderberg, and Soderberg said that he has followed that example ever since.

"Marce has created more than a family in Grand Ronde. He's created a dynasty, and who better to lead a dynasty?" Soderberg said.

Norwest was born in the Klamath Agency, in a tiny town in southern Oregon just northwest of Chiloquin, Weippert told the group. He lived on a 1,500-acre ranch with his parents until moving to Grand Ronde, where he has spent all his life.

"Marce was drafted into the United States Army in the early 1950s, not long after completing high school," Weippert said. "While in the Army, he served in the Korean War as a machine gunner with the 532nd Combat Engineers, firing 50-caliber cannons. He also served as a heavy equipment operator in other locations such as Ft. Lewis, Washington, Camp San Luis Obispo and Fort Ord, both in California. Additionally, he served in Germany as a military policeman and earned eight medals and ribbons during his service."

"Returning to Grand Ronde, Marce worked for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde for a total of 18 years, part of that as a Forest Patrol officer for the Natural Resources Division."

"We really miss him since he re-

tired," said Betty Lambert, who just last week also retired as receptionist for the division.

"In his veteran service, it would be difficult to find a veteran who has made more contributions and has given more of himself to the welfare of veterans and the Tribal community than Marce," Weippert said.

Norwest was one of the founding members of the Grand Ronde chapter of NIVA, and, more recently, Norwest became a member of the newly formed West Valley Veterans Honor Guard in the capacity of presenting the burial flag to the families of the fallen, Weippert said.

The Grand Ronde Honor Guard, Drum, Royalty and Canoe Family all performed to honor Norwest. Tribal member Dietz Peters danced to honor him.

Norwest thanked them all, but said, "I never did it by myself. I had Sharon, the Tribe, the vet's groups. I take nothing for myself."

The veterans remembered Sharon's contributions, too, presenting her with a Pendleton blanket, purchased by Tribal Council, for her years of support.

"I still have things to do," Norwest told the group, and added, "From the bottom of my heart, this is a day that I will remember forever." ■