

Memorial Day 2023

With Memorial Day coming up at the end of the month, I challenge you to not wait until then to say “Thank You” to a Veteran.

I would suggest you look around your world, neighborhood and such, to find any WWII Veterans. There are less than 200,000 WWII Vets in the USA today. We are losing about 200 a day. Take this opportunity to find and meet a WWII Veteran. Take time to say “Hi” and maybe visit with him/her or take them to lunch. Any of these amazing Veterans will be over 90. What these Veterans gave to us as Americans, is something you may not really know or understand. What they gave for us needs to be acknowledged and respected. I am not taking anything away from all the Veterans since WWII, they have all served and sacrificed much for their country and should be appreciated. But the WWII Veterans committed to do a job that was one of the worst jobs to be done for the USA in the past 100 years. These are amazing men and women.



One such WWII Veteran, was my father. He wrote a book about himself called “From a Sheep Wagon to a Cadillac.” Interesting book about his life and includes some about WWII. He was in the first Division that was taken direct from the USA in September, 1944 to the French coast. And though he did just walk off the boat, he started organizing and preparing to move inland. He basically either walked or had a jeep to move from the French coast thru Belgium and into Germany in the winter of 1944. If you have ever been in Europe, you would know that is not the best time to be living outdoors. He said the thing that meant the most to his platoon was that they were dry, and maybe had clean socks. Dad was in a platoon of about 35 men. From Sept 1944 till end of the war in May 1945, the platoon took over 800 replacements. Dad indicated that was kind of a pattern, if a new replacement managed to last the first two weeks, then they usually did pretty well. But most of them, he never even really got to know their name. Times he would be driving or riding in a jeep and while

running down a road, the soldier next to him would be shot. Another time as they were walking cross country and thru a river, the soldier next to him just disappeared. He said he actually had been hit twice. One time, he guessed because it was from so far away, the bullet went in his cheek and lodged in his tongue. He spit it out. Another time, one bullet was lodged in his web gear that they carried their supplies on.

Dad remembers as they were liberating Berlin, they were there to see a concentration camp liberated. These kind of things that many would rather not remember. So don't be surprised if you meet a WWII Veteran, that he is not too talkative about what he actually did to help win the war.

When Germany surrendered, Dad's Division was brought back to the USA and shipped to San Fransico and re-outfitted to get on ships to go invade Japan! Then we dropped the bombs. Dad was mustered out of the service.

But after just a year or so with the number of men back on the job market and no jobs, Dad decided to re-enlist. Then he was sent to the Korean War and again he did what he was asked to do.

In the 50's Dad happened to be injured and on sick call when his 1st Sgt was asked for 5 soldiers to start a new group. The 1st Sgt took the guys on sick call and gave them away. This made Dad one of the men that started and ran the Army Security Agency. After 22 years of service, he retired in 1963. He retired as the only Chief Warrant Officer to ever receive two “Legend of Merits.” In 1965 he went into the National Security Agency and gave of his talents and helped to secure our lives. He was in Vietnam in places we were not really there. He was around the world to help with listening posts for the agency. After another 20+ years he retired again.

This is just one story of the type of man that was/is a WWII Veteran. Unfortunately, at the age of 99 he passed in 2020. His last goal in life, was to make it to 100 but was 10 months short.

When I moved to Rusk, TX and dad was no longer with us, I looked and found another WWII Veteran. Willard Wayne Stallings of New Summersville and he attended Veterans breakfasts around the area. He was 94 at the time. I enjoyed

chatting with him and I called him every couple weeks to see how he was doing. My father loved to go on cruises, and I wanted to take Willard on a cruise for Veterans Day a year ago, but his health would not allow it. Unfortunately, he passed away the end of April this year at the age of 96.

I am trying to find another WWII Vet that I could meet and hopefully make his life a little brighter. Like I said earlier, we are losing 200 WWII Vets a day.

Again, I challenge you to find and meet a WWII Vet or if there is one in your family, take time out of your schedule every week or so to visit with them. You will find them amazing and I remind you, they responded when our country had our worst crisis and they were needed.

Memorial Day is a day to really show them we care and remember their sacrifice, but it is only 1 day out of 365 days in their life each year. It is up to us to let them know we remember and honor them for their service.

Terry A McPherson