I have had the honor and privilege of interviewing several World War II, Korea and Vietnam veterans from Yazoo County.

All of them have welcomed me into their homes with a hearty greeting and a pat on the back. Usually gathered around a kitchen table, I am treated to a glimpse of their lives with photographs and letters from their time in the service. Listening to their stories, I often leave the interview with a sense of pride of being in the presence of a hero.

I am most always reminded of my own grandfather who served in the Europe theater with the Army during World War II.

My Paw Paw was involved in a brutal battle deep in the woods of Germany. As if fighting the Nazis wasn't hard enough, he had to also deal with bitter German winter.

He had bullets buzzing by his head. He dodged approaching tanks through the dense forest. He held friends as they died in his arms. He even personally wrote of a few families of the men he saw killed in front of him.

I have several photographs of Paw Paw during his time in the service scattered around our home. I caught myself gazing at a few of them as my husband Jason and I watched a World War II documentary earlier this week.

With his hat tilted slightly, he has a youthful grin on his face. He is as handsome as ever in his Army uniform. He looks tough and proud.

Thinking back to the stories I heard over the years about his time in the war, I know he was a strong person, both mentally and physically. He had to be in order to survive.

But something came to my mind as I typed the D-Day story for this edition of The Herald.

The Paw Paw who I knew was confined to a wheelchair. The soldier who once stood proud and tall had to get around by pushing two wheels.

With the assistance of a walker, he could do a few physical therapy exercises for his legs. But at night, he would still need help getting into his bed.

The same man who braved the icy winds of that German winter had to now wear a jacket during a slight breeze because of his thin blood.

The same man who could outrun a bullet now couldn't even stand up on his own without a crutch.

The same man who drove Jeeps through European towns as villagers praised his group's arrival had to use a board to slide into a car now.

It was a sharp contrast of the strong soldier who was part of the Greatest Generation.

Like so many of our World War II, Korea and now Vietnam veterans, Father Time has waged a battle against them. We are losing them every day.

Many are being pushed around in wheelchairs. Many must have canes to walk. Many are confined to a bed. And many sit in nursing homes, unable to remember the names of their children.
Please take a moment to thank these men and women for their service. Record their stories. Listen to an account of their heroic actions. Spend time with them.
They deserve it. After all, they are heroes.