

Biography of hershel "woody" williams



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Hershel “ Woody” Williams the greatest Medal of Honor recipient of all time

Who is the greatest Medal of Honor recipient of all time? People have asked this question a lot throughout history. There have been many members of the armed forces that have earned the Medal of Honor since it was first established. There have even been a small handful of people who have earned the Medal of Honor more than once, but only one can be considered the greatest and most deserving of the Medal of Honor and that is Hershel W. Williams. Hershel W. Williams’s actions in World War II on the Island of Iwo Jima set him apart from many others. He also dedicated his life after he got out of the marines to helping his fellow veterans, their families, and his community.

Hershel “ Woody” Williams may have done a lot in the 17 year he spent in the Marines, but the most memorable is the actions that took place on the island of Iwo Jima on the 23rd of February in 1945 (Pyles, 2016). That was the day in history that the then CPL Williams went above and beyond the call of duty and fought courageously to give his fellow Marines a path to advance. This would later lead to the American military taking control and seizing the island of Iwo Jima. The island of Iwo Jima was important because it had multiple airfields that could be used as a tactical advantage for the American military. Even though the island of Iwo Jima was really small, there were over 26, 000 American casualties that took place in the little over 5 week battle (Nimitz, n. d.). According to Nimitz (n. d.) over 6, 000 of those casualties that took place on Iwo Jima wear soldiers killed in action.

Williams landed on the island of Iwo Jima on the 21st of February (Pyles, 2016). Two days later CPL Williams Commanding officer called a meeting of all the remaining NCO's and Officers due to the heavy casualties they were taking. CPL Williams met with his Commanding officer even though he was not technically and NCO at the time. He did this due to the fact that so many people from his company had been killed or injured already. His commanding officer talked to him and he volunteered to take a flamethrower and try to do something about the Japanese pillboxes that were causing heavy casualties. The Japanese pillboxes where reinforced concrete bunkers with sand all around and on top of it. The pillboxes would withstand mortars, rockets, and grenades while putting down heavy machine gun fire that would take out anyone that got near. In an interview for the History Channel, Hershel Williams stated (Greenspan, 2017) " As we attacked, they would just mow us down, and we would have to back off." Even the tanks that were on the island had failed to make any forward progress, or to take out the pillboxes.

CPL Williams armed with his flamethrower and covered by only four marine riflemen proceeded to take out the Japanese pillboxes one by one. He maneuvered through the heavy machinegun fire the Japanese were putting down to get close enough to the pillboxes to use his flamethrower. He didn't stop or turn back even when bullets would ricochet and bounce off the tanks of his flamethrower. During the battle, the only time he would leave is when he would run out of fuel for his flamethrower. He would drop the flamethrower which was then useless the return to the American lines to get another flamethrower. CPL Williams would then leave and go out again to

continue fighting. The battle he fought lasted for four hours. In that time he used multiple flamethrowers, took out seven pillboxes, and helped create a way for his fellow marines to advance.

After the battle, Williams remained on Iwo Jima, continuing to fight even after being wounded in combat by shrapnel. He refused to get sent away because of the wound he suffered. After the battle of Iwo Jima Williams was sent to Guam. he would stay there until he was sent back to the United States where he would receive the Medal of Honor. CPL Williams went to the white house on October 5, 1945, and was presented the Medal of Honor by President Harry Truman (Medal of Honor Speak Out, n. d.). President Truman told him that he would rather have this medal than be president (Pyles, 2016).

After Retiring from the Marines as A CW4, Williams continued to make a difference in the lives of soldiers, veterans, and their family members in many ways. Williams would go to serve as the Chaplain of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society and was a VA Counselor for over 30 Years. Williams also started the Hershel Woody Williams Medal of Honor Foundation which is dedicated to Gold Star Family Members. His foundation was created to bring recognition to the gold star family members in many ways. The not for profit foundation does many things. It recognizes gold star family members by erecting memorial monuments, providing scholarships to gold star children, provides outreach programs and many other things. To this date his foundation has erected over 40 Gold Star family memorial monuments all over the country with over 50 more monuments in progress. Williams has

attended the dedication of each of the monuments, and plans on going to all the dedications all over the country.

In conclusion, Hershel “ Woody” Williams is the greatest Medal of Honor recipient of all time. His actions on the 23rd February 1945 where he volunteered to go out into battle with a flamethrower covered by only four marine riflemen stands out above all other Medal of Honor recipients. He helped his fellow marines that had been taking heavy casualties for days advance and take the Island of Iwo Jima. He continued to fight and refused to leave even after getting wounded by shrapnel. He then continued to serve in the military until he retired. After retiring he continued to help serve his fellow veterans, gold star family member, and his community. He is still serving them to this day.

References

- Greenspan, J. (2017, November 10). This Flamethrower Operator is the Last Living Medal of Honor Recipient from the Pacific Theater. Retrieved from [https://www. history. com/news/this-flamethrower-operator-is-the-last-living-medal-of-honor-recipient-from-the-pacific-theater](https://www.history.com/news/this-flamethrower-operator-is-the-last-living-medal-of-honor-recipient-from-the-pacific-theater)
- Hershel W. Williams | [www. medalofhonorspeakout. org](http://www.medalofhonorspeakout.org/bio/herchel-williams). (n. d.). Retrieved from [http://www. medalofhonorspeakout. org/bio/herchel-williams](http://www.medalofhonorspeakout.org/bio/herchel-williams)
- Pyles, K. (2016). HQ&A: Hershel “ Woody” Williams | Articles | Issue 92 | Huntington Quarterly. Retrieved from [https://www. huntingtonquarterly. com/articles/issue92/woody-williams. php](https://www.huntingtonquarterly.com/articles/issue92/woody-williams.php)

- Woody Williams Oral History Interview [Video file]. (n. d.). Retrieved from <https://www.c-span.org/video/?293167-1/woody-williams-oral-history-interview>