



World War II Medal of Honor Recipient Hershel “Woody” Williams was born in October 1923 in Quiet Dell, WV. After Pearl Harbor was attacked, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps to protect our freedom. With the 21st Marines, 3rd Marine Division, he served in the Battle of Iwo Jima and witnessed the United States flag being raised on Iwo Jima. On October 5th, 1945, Mr. Williams received the Congressional Medal of Honor from President Harry Truman. He is the only surviving Marine from WWII to wear the Medal of Honor. Woody has been back to Iwo Jima twice and Mr. Chad L. Graham, the President and CEO of the Woody Williams Foundation, had the honor of accompanying him. Woody was unable to pinpoint exactly where he was because it is grown over with vegetation, instead of the bombed/scorched earth-scape from 1945.

They were able to walk near where he came ashore and were also able to visit where the flag raising took place on Mt Suribachi. Hershel "Woody" Williams passed away on June 29, 2022 at the age of 98. To learn more information about Woody Williams, go to <https://woodywilliams.org/index.html>.

I was born on October 2, 1923 in Quiet Dell, West Virginia and was raised on the hills of WV. I was the baby of the family and had multiple siblings. Unfortunately, not all of them survived adulthood and the others died relatively young; I am the last of my family living. I worked on our family dairy farm. I went to a one room schoolhouse near my home and I walked to school every day. I was engaged to be married but did not marry my bride until I returned from the war.

I joined the United States Marine Corps to protect our freedom. When Pearl Harbor was attacked, it had a great impact on me that motivated me to join the military. Training was appropriately challenging and it prepared me well. At the time of the action which resulted in my Medal of Honor, I was a Corporal; I would later achieve the rank of Chief Warrant Officer 4. I was placed in the 21st Marines, 3d Marine Division and received additional specialized training in demolitions. I attended Boot Camp at Marine Corps Recruiting Depot, San Diego. After Boot Camp, and some additional training, we were shipped to the South Pacific. We received training on Guadalcanal and New Caledonia prior to me seeing combat on Guam and Iwo Jima.

I served in the Battle of Iwo Jima with the 21st Marines, 3d Marine Division and displayed fearless devotion to my duty and service above self as I made it possible for my company to reach its objective. I fought for 4 hours under enemy fire and returned to my own lines to prepare demolition charges and collect flamethrowers. During the battle, I mounted a pillbox to insert the nozzle of my flamethrower through the air vent, which killed many occupants; at another point, I charged at enemy riflemen who attempted to stop me with bayonets and, with a burst of flame from my weapon, they were destroyed. I did not witness the American Flag raising itself, but I saw it just after it was up as it was in the distance waving atop Mt. Suribachi. There was a great deal of shouting and celebrating from Marines around him who noticed the flag going up. I remarked that it really gave them motivation and reminded them what they were fighting for, America.

At the end of the war, I went home and got married to my bride, Ruby Meredith. The impact of war never leaves but my faith has helped me be able to live a fruitful and meaningful life. On October 5th, 1945, President Harry Truman awarded me the Congressional Medal of Honor in recognition of my actions, commitment and heroism on Iwo Jima. I wear my Medal of Honor in honor of my friends, who laid down their lives protecting mine.



