

News and stories

Williams humbled with VA renaming

June 25 2018

Chris Lawrence | [WVMetro News](#)

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. — Medal of Honor recipient Hershel “Woody” Williams says never in his young life could he have imagined the honors what would come his way later in life.

Williams is about to receive another of those rare honors when the VA Medical Center in Huntington is renamed in his honor.

“It’s one of those unbelievable things I never dreamed would happen,” said Williams. “It’s pretty unusual somebody would receive that honor who is still living.”

Williams at age 94, is the oldest living recipient of the Medal of Honor from the Marine Corps in World War II. He was awarded the nation’s highest decoration for his actions on Iwo Jima. Since he was adorned with the medal by President Harry Truman, Williams considered the medal his new mission—to use his notoriety from the medal to pay tribute those who died in that violent place.

“What I have and why I received it, I wear it in their honor,” he said. “I’m just the caretaker of it, the medal belongs to them.”

The native of Quiet Dell in Marion County has his name on a bridge in Cabell County near his home, the National Guard and Army

Reserve Training Center in Fairmont, and newly commissioned ship in the United States Navy, and now soon on the VA Medical Center located near Spring Valley High School.

“I keep asking that question I’ve asked many, many times in my life,” said Williams. “Why me?”

The decision to rename the VA Center for Williams came with the stroke of a pen by President Donald Trump in recent days. Congress also gave approval to the proposal ahead of the President. It’s a fitting tribute since Williams spent a lot of his time in the VA system and although the veterans healthcare organization has been scrutinized and under fire, he hopes this will bring some positive attention to the agency.

“I worked in VA hospitals a lot,” he said. “We never report the good things. We always latch onto the bad things and never give any credence to all of the wonderful things that take place at the VA.”

Williams, with his name on the building, now has another mission to defend the honor and the good work being done to help the nation’s veterans.

“I owe back more than I can ever possibly return for the honors that have been bestowed upon me,” Williams said.