

News and stories

WWII Medal of Honor recipient speaks at NAS Meridian

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Andrea Williams | [WTOK](#)

MERIDIAN, Miss. (WTOK) - Activities are taking place in different parts of Mississippi this week to honor Gold Star military families. These are the families whose loved ones have given their lives while serving our country. In fact, on Wednesday a Gold Star Monument was dedicated at Camp Shelby outside Hattiesburg. Naval Air Station Meridian also welcomed a very prestigious guest Thursday.

At 94-years-old retired U.S. Marine Corps Warrant Officer and Veterans Affairs Service Representative Hershel "Woody" Williams started the presentation offering words of wisdom to his comrades.

"As I heard him talk it was really inspiring and motivating as a young Marine," said Private First Class Vazquezrivera.

She was one of hundreds of Marine students, pilots and instructors who learned from the decorated retiree's military experiences.

"He's an inspiration to all of us, and an inspiration to America," said Randy Reeves, who is the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. "I think from seeing the Marines, and seeing the applause and noise that they have made while he was here, he inspired them also."

Having fought during WWII, Williams is the only living recipient of our country's highest and most prestigious personal military decoration, which is the Medal of Honor, for efforts during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

"We sort of take things for granted," said Williams. "We get up in the morning and everything is fine, and everything is going fine and we really don't think of, 'how did we get here?'"

That's why Williams says it's important to recognize all of the men and women who make freedom possible.

"Appreciation of who they are, where they are and privileges that we have as an Americans," said Williams.

"It just gives me motivation to be a better leader for our Marines here," said Private First Class Mascone.

To honor veterans, the Trail of Honor will open this weekend at the Harley Davidson shop in Jackson. It's a walking trail that teaches people about our country's military, and previous conflicts. A traveling replica of the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Washington will also be open for the public to view there.

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