

# News and stories

## Ship honoring Woody Williams to be christened this weekend in San Diego

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Chris Lawrence | [WV Metro News](#)

ONA, W.Va. — Since he was decorated with the Medal of Honor for his action on Iwo Jima in World War II, West Virginia native Hershel Woody Williams has been afforded a number of honors. An armory in Fairmont and a bridge in Cabell County bare his name, but this weekend Williams will be bestowed be an honor few receive and those who do, rarely know about it.

The United States Navy will christen the U.S.N.S. Hershel “Woody” Williams in San Diego. Williams called it the most unlikely of honors he would have ever imagined.

“I wasn’t even sure we had a Navy when I went to the Marine Corps,” laughed Williams. “I never would have dreamed in my whole life that a little ole country boy from West Virginia could ever have a ship sailing the seven seas with his name on it.”

The idea came from fellow Marine Corps veteran Ron Wroblewski who saw a ship in Norfolk in 1997 named for a Medal of Honor recipient. Wroblewski decided it was something which needed to be done for Williams.

“If it hadn’t been for Ron it would have never happened,” Williams

said. "I told him that would be fine, but he was wasting his time because at the time you had to be dead to have a ship named for you and I'm not ready to go yet."

Wroblewski started a letter writing campaign, organized thousands of signatures on numerous petitions, and arranged to have numerous resolutions passed by every body of elected officials he could find over the course of a decade. The effort finally paid off last year. The Navy indicated more than 70,000 signatures had been collected, the largest file of names ever amassed to have a ship named for an individual.

Williams will attend the ceremony in San Diego this weekend. Like most of the honors he receives because of his Medal of Honor status, Williams says it is a duty to those who served with him on the battlefield.

"Anything I do in relation to the Medal of Honor, I do it in their honor and certainly not mine," he said.

Tradition dictates the honoree's wife break the champagne bottle to christen the ship, but since Williams' wife is deceased the honor will fall to his two daughters, Tracie Jean Ross and Travie Jane Ross.

The ship is an Expeditionary Sea Base vessel. The 784-foot-long craft will serve as a flexible platform to support a variety of missions, including mine countermeasures, counter-piracy operations, maritime security and humanitarian missions.

The ship, according to the U.S. Navy, will provide for accommodations for up to 250 personnel, a 52,000-square-foot flight deck, fuel and equipment storage, and will also support MH-53 and MH-60 helicopters with an option to support MV-22 tilt-rotor aircraft.