

News and stories

Medal of Honor Recipient, WWII Veteran Plants Tree in Honor of 2 Unidentified Marines Killed on Iwo Jima

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Jaspreet Kaur | [NBC San Diego](#)

"It's not often that any of us reach a point in life where somebody else makes a sacrifice of their own life to protect you," Hershel "Woody" Williams said.

The last surviving recipient of the Medal of Honor from the Battle of Iwo Jima, who is also one of the remaining World War II veterans, attended a special remembrance ceremony Thursday.

At the ceremony, he planted a tree in honor of two unidentified Marines killed in Iwo Jima.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 (Ret.) Hershel "Woody" Williams, 94, used a flamethrower to clear a path for Marines during the battle. Thursday, he honored the two Marines who died protecting him during the battle.

"It's not often that any of us reach a point in life where somebody else makes a sacrifice of their own life to protect you," Williams said.

He also spoke to Gold Star families at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot and thanked them and fallen servicemembers for their service to the country.

"It's not about me. It's about them. It's about those who sacrificed their loved ones so we can be free," he said while addressing the families.

Williams told NBC 7, even after all these years, he does not know who those Marines are and that thought is "almost overwhelming." But he added that his thoughts are still with them.

"This tree can certainly serve as a symbol for people to look at and remember 'I know somebody who gave their life for America and for me,'" he said.

Williams is also the last surviving Marine to receive the Medal of Honor for heroism in World War II. A ship named after him will be christened this weekend.