

Narrator: [00:00](#) How do you honor your grandparents? How do you honor the greatest generation with state funeral for World War II veterans is honoring those who received the Medal of honor? Listen, as Medal of Honor recipient, Woody Williams talks about this cause.

Bill McNutt: [00:15](#) We are with our brand and great supporter of our organization, Woody Williams on Eol Jima. What a wonderful I know was just the second time you'd been back to Eog. Mine. Thank you so much for your support of state funeral for World War II veterans and, and why are you supporting our efforts are,

Woody Williams: [00:35](#) Well, we must not ever forget world war two. It changed the world and it starts and it gave America their place in history that we would have never have had the World War II Veteran. They felt we do these kinds of programs for other people.

Bill McNutt: [01:10](#) Thank you so much and we're working hard to petition the president that the last hero receives a state funeral. Thank you sir.

Narrator: [01:18](#) Served in the Marine Corps during World War II Woody Williams was awarded the Medal of Honor on October 5th, 1945 by President Harry Truman, he was awarded the medal of honor after distinguishing himself and actions above and beyond the call of duty attached to first battalion on 24th marines. Then a corporal two days later, the American tanks trying to open a lane for the infantry and countered a network of reinforced concrete. Pillboxes Williams went forward alone with his 70 pound flame thrower to attempt to reduce the devastating machine gun fire from the unyielding positions who's attached to this cause. Now there are others that are continuing to garner support. Those people attach to this cause can petition the president for a state funeral. We talk with Spencer Hardin of university park here in Dallas about why he's attached to the cause.

Spencer Hardin: [02:11](#) My grandfather, he was at Iwo Jima, he was in the navy. Well he works with one of the landing ships. He was the navigator for one of the landing ships. And so he would go there, drop them in off. And then you know, when it got really tough she would go in the little islands and everything. His ship was torpedoed four times and he said it all the way back. They made it safely because he was also the youngest eagle scout and Kentucky's history. I'm still to this day and he used superior outdoors when skills to navigate the ship at night. I'm using the stars because they lost all radio and all like technology on the ship after the torpedo heads. And he was very passionate, um, about

honoring a lot of military veterans. And I lost him back in 2005 and when Mr. McKnight was telling me about this, I just thought, you know what a fantastic way to honor the grant. Additional radiation. Really teach so many people about them. Cause you know, a lot of people know, have thoughts about World War II and the veterans and everything. But I think we really do something like this. It would just, he's such a final salute in sign and shine a great light on them.

Narrator: [03:27](#) So how has it been going? Have you been getting support in DC and in the state legislatures throughout the, throughout the country?

Spencer Hardin: [03:36](#) The recent, you know, month and a half. It's been going really, really well because we've gotten a lot of signatures coming in in a lot of hard work is starting to pay off now. You know, it was just a lot of grunt work for a long time and trying to do this or that and waiting for results. And now we're starting to see those results. And especially with Washington, the last trip there, um, it's really excited a lot of people. And so I would think it kind of reignited the fire under some to show like this isn't just some thing that we're saying, oh, we hope one day that this is actually happening in big people are putting their names on it. And so, you know, everyone else was like, wow, they did that. Maybe I'll do that because that's Kinda how DC works.

Narrator: [04:19](#) People are understanding that you need to petition the president in order to get the attention necessary. So outside of Washington, have you shared it with other people?

Spencer Hardin: [04:28](#) Yes, I have shared it on my social media and talk to my friends about it and family members and they've all signed the petition then they love it. When I was reaching out to a lot of people, you know with the younger generation you don't get as many people being like, oh I'm like really dying to do this and my grandfather did this. Um, but you know, if like a lot of middle aged and older people, they start sharing their stories and telling us like they did this and I'm going to honor either my father or grandfather, you know, depending on how old they are. And then the younger kids, I dunno, it's really more about exciting them about war World War II and what it was and getting them to be interested in it again to share it because they won't share their stories as much. But they'll be like, yeah, I'm down to sign it because it's a good cause. It's Kinda like, you know, more millennials are like, sure I'll sign this or I'll do this because we're supposed to and I'm a good person. And you know, a lot of people have an emotional film. They do it because they really want to do it because of their families.

Narrator: [05:26](#) So what is a state funeral? We sit down with bill McNutt to talk to him a little bit more about how this cost started, who he is and some background about state funeral for World War II veterans.

Bill McNutt: [05:39](#) Full name is Lee William McKnight. The third, uh, people know me as Bill McNutt, our daughter Rabel, age 10, had a fabulous godfather, but the name of Walter Ehlers. Mr Ehlers was the oldest holder of the congressional medal of honor at the time of his death a couple of years ago and he held the Congressional Medal of honor from Gallantry Own d in the battle for Normandy in the hedge rows in June of 1944 our daughter had been to a funeral before she had been to my mom's funeral, her grandmother. But military standard rules are, are different and they fold the flag and they fire, uh, cannons or rifles and, uh, it's a different experience. So to prepare our daughter for this experience, we watched state funerals own the Internet. And uh, of course every president is commander in chief, so he hasn't military funeral. Uh, so we watched a Ronald Reagan's funeral, Douglas MacArthur's funeral, and the funeral, uh, John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Bill McNutt: [06:59](#) And as we watched the funerals daughter rebel turned to me and she said, Daddy, aren't they going to do a big funeral in Washington DC for uncle ehlers friends? And I was a little all struck by that idea because uncle wheeler's only has four friends to remaining only for men out of, well, the number is sometimes in dispute, but 473 men awarded aggressional medal of honor in World War II. Of course, about half were awarded it posthumously half to a living heroes. So uncle healers only has four friends left there, only for men who hold the Congressional Medal of honor. There's a Robert Maxwell in bend, Oregon, Charles Coolidge and Chattanooga, Tennessee. And, uh, frank, he says, curry in New York and Woody Williams in West Virginia, several of our medal of honor recipients that are still living from World War Two, uh, were awarded the Silver Star or a service cross, uh, even before their metal of honor action took place in the case of Uncle Eylers.

Bill McNutt: [08:19](#) He was wounded three times in Europe. By the time Walter eAlerts got to Omaha Beach, it was his third invasion. He had already invaded North Africa and he'd already invaded Sicily and he was part of the famous big red one first division from Fort Riley, Kansas. Well, uncle leaders thought his war was over. He went to England to do some additional training, but they had all the time in combat. Uh, and they were due to come home. I read in Omar Bradley's wonderful book, a soldier story. Why they didn't come home. Omar Bradley wrote, if I was going to

be fair to the big red one first division, I would have sent them home after all their time in combat. But my job own June six, 1944 was not to be fair, but to kill Germans and Omaha beach was exceedingly long and I had an army division, uh, that had never seen combat, so I needed to put next to them, the most experienced combat veterans I had.

Bill McNutt:

[09:26](#)

So I put the big red one first and the vision, and thank goodness I did because of all the units in the u s army, they were the only ones that could have gotten off that beach that day. Let's put it into context exactly what that means for folks. What exactly did the greatest generation do? The greatest generation, save the world from fascism, imperialism, and Nazi-ism. The sacrifices of those 16 million men and women who wore the uniform and World War II can never be underestimated and we can never do enough for the World War II veteran. This was taught to me by my friend Woody Williams. He's one of the four remaining medal of honor recipients from World War II. He's the only marine. The other three are in the u s army, or as he calls them, those guys with ugly uniforms. Uh, I went with woody is the honor of my life. Uh, in March, uh, two Iwa Jima, the day they raised the flag on Mount Suribachi, woody saw that, and later that day he took out several Japanese pillboxes using only a flame thrower and o and e. Whoa. Gima I asked him why he supports our mission at state funeral for World War II veterans. And he said, we can never do enough for the World War II veteran. After all, they gave us the world we enjoy today. Without a doubt, every century has a defining day or a moment. And without a doubt, the most important day of the 20th century was June six, 1944. And we're going to celebrate the 70th anniversary of d day, this coming June, uh, on the beaches of Normandy. Uh, it'd be a wonderful thing if our president would announce on that occasion that he's going to designate a state funeral for the final medal of honor recipient from World War Two. Not just to honor that one soldier, but to honor all and recognize all 16 million of our father and grandfathers, aunts and uncles and grandmothers that wore the uniform and World War II.

Bill McNutt:

[11:55](#)

So that's what we're all about. Once a great way to honor that generation. Has anybody ever given you push back or disagreed with you? Not that they would admit. Well, I can imagine that potentially somebody said, we don't support this. Yes, these are the few. The little pushback we've add or from people who get hung up in the process. Um, and that as well. You know, we haven't had a state funeral and more than 55 years, you know, why should we do a non-presidential state funeral now? The generals who had state funerals in the past, well, they deserve

these. They were the masterminds of the success, the McArthurs and the Eisenhowers. And of course, our response at state funeral is simply this. I mean, if you're going to do a state funeral for the supreme allied commander in the Pacific, Douglas MacArthur Supreme Allied Commander in the Atlantic, Eisenhower, shouldn't we find some way to also recognize the soldiers that fought underneath them?

Bill McNutt:

[13:10](#)

Of course, MacArthur, like many people believed in freedom and it wasn't worth fighting for in his final address to the cadets at West Point talked about the old, the old gray line that has never failed us. And, uh, you know, it really is a continuum and freedom has got to be one and renewed, uh, at every generation. I mean, to think that, um, the GI in World War Two was only 80 years removed from Billy Yank and Johnny Reb, uh, that the GI and World War Two, uh, you know, they were the sons of the doughboys, uh, that fought in Europe, in World War One. Uh, and then you had men who served in Vietnam, of course, were the sons of those who had served in World War Two. So it really is a long gray line. But I think of all the soldiers and all the American wars, uh, the American GI is unique because of the, how close we came to defeat and how they conducted themselves once, once the war was over.

Bill McNutt:

[14:38](#)

You know, to these men words like duty, honor, cause, country, they were important to the GIs as they were important to their four or five. But you know, they didn't talk about it. They didn't talk about country or flag or what happened overseas with much patriotic bombast. Some of them as they got up in years, would, would oftentimes talk to their grandchildren about it in a way they never talked to their children about it. And of course, America is full of stories from people of my generation, uh, graduated from high school and 73 of, uh, learning about the exploits of the Greatest Generation after they're gone, you know, from finding letters and an attic or people showing up at a funeral that had served with these men from 1941 to 1945. So it's truly a special generation and they deserve, uh, a final salute. And we're going to continue to persuade and petition of the president.

Bill McNutt:

[15:48](#)

He has the sole authority to designate the state funeral. We don't need legislation. We don't need money. We just need for the present to say yes. And here's an interesting reason why we think he might say yes. America has had many state funerals for generals, but never one for an enlisted man. And all four of Uncle [inaudible] friends that remain, uh, Mr. Coolidge, Mr. Maxwell, Mr. Curry and Mr. Williams were all enlisted. Man. I mean, to think that 34 Americans have allied in state

underneath the Rotunda of our capital and never wants an enlisted man has been in repose there. This is historic and yet there is precedent, uh, every 40 or 50 years, America has a non presidential state funeral. That is Steven's a congressman. In 1868 had the first 1921, orangy Harding designated a state funeral for the unknown soldier from World War One. 1948 Truman designated gave a state funeral to General Black Jack Pershing, who ran the American military in World War One 1964 John Fitzgerald Kennedy took care of his boss up the chain of command and the Pacific, the Supreme Allied Commander Douglas Macarthur.

Bill McNutt:

[17:07](#)

Macarthur there outlived president Kennedy by a year. But this is important to us in our cause. Lyndon Johnson, President Kennedy success or continued the designation. Our mission is timely and critical. These gentlemen are 94 to 98 years of age. If we can get the president to designate the state funeral, we're very confident. If this takes place beyond the Trump presidency, whoever the president successor might be, we'll continue the designation just as Johnson continued the designation made by President Kennedy. So we heard from Spencer a little bit earlier. We heard from Wendy Williams and now we're hearing from you, bill, if I wanted to support the cause, what do I do? Two ways to help us the most. First please go to our website, which is [www.world war number two, salute.org world war number two, slow.org](http://www.worldwar2.org) and sign our petition. And then secondly, we're organized in 26 states. So there are a lot of states and which were not organized.

Bill McNutt:

[18:08](#)

And maybe someone who's listening to this podcast would like to serve on our state board in a Vermont or New Hampshire where we do not have leadership, can nominate a chairman for us in Montana or Washington state. So those are the two ways people can help the most. Please sign our petition and please nominate a, you're patriotic friends across the country so we can expand to all 50 states. And of course, you know, just a small financial contribution on the website is always welcome. How long have you been working on this project? We're in our 19th month of existence. Uh, we launched this effort in a Labor Day of 2017 and uh, we've been hitting it hard ever since. We are in a game without rules, you know, we could get 100,000 petitions in. The president might say, no, we could get a thousand more petitions in. The president might say, yes, I had the honor of working in the Reagan White House in 1988 and I think one of the problems we have is that everyone who works in a White House has their own pet project that has nothing to do with their job, by the way, so that when something like this, it's new and original comes along.

Bill McNutt: [19:24](#) Some people will say, gosh, this is great. And they'll put it forward up the chain of command in the White House. But others might read it and say, Gee, this is a great idea, but if the president does this, then he may not do that. That I want him to do over here. So we're in a game without rules. But every American plays an important part. Whenever you signed that petition, Bill, I'd like to know what kind of support you've received on Capitol Hill and throughout the state legislatures that exist throughout the country. Great question. In the state houses across the country. Uh, several states such as Missouri and Tennessee have passed resolutions from both houses of the State House, from the state Senate and from the State House of Representatives. We continue to get more and more state legislatures to pass this. Uh, one of the most important things that happened was the American Legion at their 100 convention in Minneapolis in the summer of 2018 they passed our resolution.

Bill McNutt: [20:27](#) They passed our resolution and on Capitol Hill, one of the most powerful things that can be created as a delegation letter. That is a letter to the president signed by both US senators from a given state and by every congressman. We have those delegation letters already at the White House from Missouri where Senator Kit Kit Bond, uh, carried the water for our initiative from Utah where Senator Orrin Hatch made this happen prior to his retirement in January of 2019 we have a, this letter from West Virginia and, uh, we're not going to stop until we have a delegation letter on the president's desk from all 50 states and we'd like to get a resolution through the state houses, have at least 25 states in the next year or so. In closing, I just want to say that, uh, everybody gets a motivation from different places, most of them personal. My father being a World War II sergeant.

Bill McNutt: [21:36](#) But you know, I always think back to Uncle Ehlers, farm boy from Kansas and you know, think when his life was like in those hours before dawn, uh, as he said in that Higgins boat, uh, off of Omaha Beach, and he was with his brother on, by the way, they had always fought side by side through the invasion of north Africa and the invasion of Sicily. But after the famous Sullivan incident, the American military, uh, separated brothers in combat. And so Roland was also in the big red one first division. Roland, uh, never made it to shore. He was on a much larger craft than a Higgins boat that took a direct hit. And UNC leaders didn't know his brother was dead for several days. But you know, I often think about those who had made these immense personal sacrifices. Gold Star families, Gold Star mothers as well portrayed in the movie saving private Ryan.

Bill McNutt:

[22:36](#)

So as we go about our daily lives, uh, with abundance, with the great abundance and liberty and freedom we have in America. But I think back about uncle healers and those, uh, hours before dawn on June six, 1944 and you know, the greatest our motto the world had ever seen. And ever, we'll see over 5,000 ships carrying a 200,000 soldiers. And those people, that generation, they deserve a final salute. And we're going to work our hardest and our smartest to give it to them in the form of the first state funeral burn, an enlisted man in American history. Where can people stay up to date with the most recent information? Please follow us on social media, on Facebook, on Twitter and Instagram. We are simply state funeral for World War II veterans and then our website is [www.worldwarnumber two, salute.org](http://www.worldwarnumbertwo.salute.org) bill, thank you for sharing your passion with us. Appreciate you taking the time. Listen, thank you for your time today. What's one last thing you want to leave these people with? State funeral for World War II veterans is a uniquely American story. It came from,

Bill McNutt:

[23:46](#)

and your old school girl in Texas who wanted to honor her godfather, who happened to be the recipient of the Congressional Medal of honor in World War II. This is America. Sometimes the most powerful ideas come from the most basic among us and we want to push through to make sure that the greatest generation has a wonderful final slate.