

## South Dakota Medal of Honor Recipients

# Elmer Royce Williams

### *Rank and organization:*

Lieutenant, U.S. Navy, Fighter Squadron 781,  
Task Force 77, U.S.S. Oriskany (CVS-34)

### *Place and date:*

Northeastern Coastal Waters, Korea  
18 November 1952

### *Entered service at:*

Wilmot, South Dakota

### *Born:*

Wilmot, South Dakota  
4 April 1925

### *Date of Issue:*

24 February 2026



### *Citation:*

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty on 18 November 1952 while leading a division of three jet fighters attached to Fighter Squadron SEVEN HUNDRED EIGHTY-ONE (VF-781) and embarked on the USS ORISKANY. While flying a combat patrol mission over the northeastern coastal waters of enemy-held North Korea, Lieutenant Williams demonstrated extraordinary heroism by intercepting a superior force of attacking enemy MiG-15 fighters in order to protect the ships of Task Force 77. After thwarting the enemy's initial attack, he maneuvered his aircraft to make two firing passes on one MiG, which then spiraled into the sea. He inflicted heavy damage to a second MiG-15, which started smoking badly and retired from the fight. When his own aircraft was severely damaged by a direct hit from one of the remaining enemy MiG-15s, Lieutenant Williams evaded further enemy attack while continuing to direct the dogfight. He eventually found cover in a cloud bank, broke off the engagement, and miraculously landed his nearly uncontrollable aircraft on the USS ORISKANY. His exceptional airman-ship, coupled with his complete disregard for his own personal safety, resulted in the destruction of three enemy MiG-15s and severe damage to a fourth, and undoubtedly saved the lives of hundreds of Task Force 77 sailors. By his undaunted courage, bold initiative, and total devotion to duty, Lieutenant Williams reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

