

Donald Williams and the 109th Field Artillery

Korean War

WHEN?
1951--1952

WHERE?
Wilkes-Barre, Pa.



EVENT
Korean War

VOCABULARY
gallantry
Purple Heart Silver Star

In 1949, Donald Williams from Fulton Street, Wilkes-Barre, joined the Pennsylvania National Guard (967th Armored Field Artillery) as an Army medic. By 1951, he found himself in Korea where he served until 1952. Roughly 1,438 Luzerne County residents took part in what has been call “The Forgotten War.”

From the *Salute to Wesley Village Veterans*, we learn why Donald Williams was awarded a Silver Star for gallantry in action, nominated for a Medal of Honor, and how he earned a Purple Heart. The information below, written by Christine Fanning, is sourced from *Happenings Magazine* (November 2021) and used by permission.



On May 16, 1952, Williams received a message from Army headquarters that he was awarded the Silver Star. This was the message: “Corporal Williams, acting as a medical aid man of a 155 mm self-propelled gun of an artillery battery, distinguished himself by gallantry in action against an armed enemy in the vicinity of Hill 882, Korea. On April 9, 1952, while firing on enemy positions, the gun and crew were subjected to an intense army artillery and mortar barrage. An enemy mortar shell scored a direct hit on the self-propelled gun, killing one man and wounding eight others. The impact of the burst knocked Corporal Williams to the ground, and although suffering excruciating pain from shell fragments received in the hands and thigh, he immediately regained his feet and commenced administering aid to the wounded men. While he was in this exposed position, the enemy continued their intense barrage. However, at great risk to his life, he refused to leave his post until he had completed treatment of the wounded and was assured they had been evacuated to safety.” The article also states that he had received a Purple Heart on April 17 for wounds received in action (ISSUU). He was 19 years old at the time. After active duty he then continued with the 109th Field Artillery for 6 more years.

He was honored with a certificate and the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara for his selfless service including guarding the thirty-three bodies of the 109th Field Artillery servicemen killed in the tragic train wreck in Coshocton, Ohio. According to the Times Leader article, the military medal is given to individuals “who have demonstrated the highest standards of integrity and



Honorable Oder of
Saint Barbara medal

moral character; displayed an outstanding degree of professional competence” (Times Leader).

Following his time in the service, he worked for Air Products and Chemicals in Hanover Township for over 40 years. He has been married for 65 years to his wife Elizabeth. They have six children, 18 grandchildren, and 16 great-grandchildren (issuu). He also volunteered as a boy scout leader for 60 years.

In September 2025 he was honored by the city of Wilkes-Barre “in recognition of his heroism and commitment to his fellow soldiers during the Korean War and his lifelong dedication to his family, community and country” (Times Leader). Mayor George Brown awarded him the key to the city at that time.

His life’s motto “To Be of Service” is certainly reflected by his selflessness.
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