

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**“FATHER” OF THE NATIONAL WWII MEMORIAL
AND FOUNDER OF FRIENDS OF THE NATIONAL WWII MEMORIAL,
AMBASSADOR FRANKLIN HAYDN WILLIAMS DIES AT 96**

A WWII Veteran, Ambassador Williams served as chairman of the American Battle Monuments Commission’s WWII Memorial Committee responsible for the WWII Memorial’s site and design.

WASHINGTON, D.C. – It is with great sadness that the Friends of the National World War II Memorial (Friends) announces today that its founder and chairman emeritus, F. Haydn Williams, has died at the age of 96 in San Francisco, California.

“Ambassador Williams’ lasting contributions to this country – and to our World War II generation – over nearly 75 years cannot be overstated,” said Friends chairman Josiah Bunting II. “His work will live on in the magnificent World War II Memorial and through the ongoing efforts of Friends.”

In 1994, President Bill Clinton appointed Ambassador Williams to serve on the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC). He was subsequently named chairman of the ABMC’s National WWII Memorial Committee with the primary responsibility for the site and the design of the National WWII Memorial. During the complicated approval process established by law, Ambassador Williams presented and defended ABMC’s recommendations in 22 public hearings over a period of five years.

As a major private donor to the Memorial’s capital campaign, Ambassador Williams was also successful in helping raise significant other contributions from corporations, foundations, and personal friends. For his service, Ambassador Williams was awarded the ABMC’s Distinguished Service Medal in 2001. The WWII Memorial was formally dedicated in 2004.

“Without the leadership of Haydn Williams, the WWII Memorial would not be located where it is nor would it have become the iconic centerpiece on the National Mall that it is today,” said Friends board members and former ABMC WWII Memorial Site and Design Committee members Brigadier General Pat Foote, USA (Ret.) and Rolland Kidder. “Despite continual opposition, he shepherded the Memorial’s approval through many contentious hearings. From a site and design aspect, he became the ‘Father’ of the WWII Memorial.”

In 2007, Ambassador Williams led the effort to establish the Friends of the National WWII Memorial and became its first chairman. Following his 2009 retirement, he was elected chairman emeritus and remained actively engaged in the organization and its ongoing mission to honor and preserve the national memory of WWII until his death.

From 1941-42, Ambassador Williams served on Midway Island with Pacific Naval Air Base Contractors building runways, seaplane, and a submarine base. On December 7, 1941, he was engaged in a touch football game with friends when the First Bombardment of Midway occurred, shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Soon after the bombing, Ambassador Williams was commissioned U.S. Naval Reserve and served on staff of Commander Naval Air Transport Pacific and as an air operations officer in the Central Pacific, the Marianas, and the Occupation of Japan, with the primary mission of air evacuating our prisoners of war. He was discharged from active duty in 1946 as a Lieutenant j.g.

Following the war, he worked as a young assistant professor at the University of Washington followed by six years at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy as an Associate Dean and Associate Professor. While at Fletcher, Ambassador Williams was an advisor to the U.S. Navy and to Naval officers sent to Fletcher for advanced study and degrees. He also participated, as an associate, in Harvard’s Defense Studies Program.

During the Eisenhower Administration, he was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and was invited by the Kennedy Administration to continue to serve as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense. He also was a lecturer at the Naval War College Newport and at the National War College Ft. McNair.

From 1971-1976, he served as the President's Personal Representative for the Micronesia and Mariana Future Political Status Negotiations with the rank of Ambassador. These Negotiations ended the US Strategic Trusteeship over the islands taken from Japan during WWII.

Ambassador Williams also served 25 years as the President of The Asia Foundation, the longest tenure of any Foundation President.

After retiring from The Asia Foundation, Ambassador Williams spent the next few years promoting the development of the American Memorial Park Saipan, the scene of ferocious combat in 1944 as American ground and naval forces broke through Imperial Japan's inner defense rim. Ambassador Williams has been called the father of both the Memorial Park and the American Memorial on Saipan, America's most western tribute to our war dead in the far Pacific.

Ambassador Williams was born Spokane Washington on August 21, 1919, the youngest of five children of Welsh immigrants Rev. Robert Owen Williams and Kathryn Williams. He earned an A.B. from the University of California, Berkeley and an M.A. and Ph.D. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

Ambassador Williams was pre-deceased by his beloved wife Margaret French Williams; his mother and father; brothers, Kernyw and Willard Williams; and sister, Margaret Butler. He is survived by his stepson, Thomas Gregory of Novato, CA; his sister, Kathryn Williams of Menlo Park, CA; nephews, Byron Williams of Saguache, CO and Michael Garl of San Carlos, CA; niece, Roberta Stevens Allee of Menlo Park, CA; and one grandniece, six grandnephews, and eleven great-grandnieces and nephews.

About Friends of the National World War II Memorial (www.wwiimemorialfriends.org):

Founded in 2007, the Friends of the National World War II Memorial (Friends) is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to honoring and preserving the national memory of World War II. To meet this mission, Friends sponsors an annual public lecture series featuring prominent historians; provides teachers with curriculum materials; and collects and archives video interviews of World War II veterans and other members of the Greatest Generation. Additionally, Friends has the lead responsibility in planning and staging five or more major national commemorative events annually and each summer sponsors a dozen free public performances of military bands at the Memorial. Friends relies on private support to breathe new life into the Memorial and to ensure that it continues to serve as a living lesson for all Americans.

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