



World War II Vet and family battle Tampa VA



By [Steve Andrews](#)

TAMPA, FL (WFLA) – 90 year old James Coles Jr. is a veteran who went to war for his country. His family hopes his country won't let him down now that he needs it.

James joined the marines when America entered World War II. He was a member of the Montford Point Marines, the first African American unit in what was then an all white Marine Corps. James and others trained at Montford Point, at Camp Jejunee.

James Coles Jr. traveled the world with his wife after his tour in the Marines

He really didn't talk much about that," his son James Coles III said. James Coles was with the Marines when they paid blood for every inch in retaking Guam during the Pacific campaign. He was a radar technician and tracked enemy aircraft.



In 2012 he and other Montford Point Marines received the highest honor Congress can bestow on a civilian. They were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal "For outstanding perseverance and courage that inspired social change in the Marines."

At age 90 he is one of 3 surviving members of his outfit. But at age 90 his son James points out his dad needs assistance from the V.A. "We are out of options right now, we had no benefits left," James III added. James was a patient for 2 years at James A. Haley's nursing center in Tampa. His family moved him home earlier this year but his health declined and he is in the Bayonet Point hospital.

His family claims James exhausted his insurance benefits. He served his country in World War II and it's time for the V.A. to, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, "Care for him who shall have borne the battle."



But the Coles family is running into V.A. bureaucracy. "He was in the system, now they're saying he's not in the system. Then they said, we don't have any rooms," his son James added.

James Coles III holds his father's Marine Corps 52nd Composite Defense Battalion patch.

8 On Your Side reached out to the V.A., a veterans advocate, a V.A. social worker and Congressman Gus Bilirakis' office. The communications director for Florida's Department of Veterans Affairs contacted us. Steve Murray said that Congressman Bilirakis' office had forwarded an email that 8 On Your Side sent earlier in the day.

"We have a nursing facility in the Land o' Lakes area and the director will reach out to them today or this evening," Murray said. A source within the V.A. also contacted 8 On Your Side and relayed that Bilirakis' office had also alerted them to our email and that it was actively working this case.

[Full Story:](#)

