

A Pilot's Legacy is a dual biography of father and son army pilots fighting in two wars. One surviving a mid-air collision with a Japanese Zero. The other flying in the largest aviation assault since the World War II D-day invasion.

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By Glenn Williams

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A PILOT'S LEGACY

**A DUAL BIOGRAPHY OF
FATHER AND SON ARMY PILOTS IN TWO WARS**

GLENN WILLIAMS

Foreword by Lieutenant General Randolph W. House

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Print ISBN: 978-1-958891-60-5

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88531-639-2

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2024

First Edition

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data
Williams, Glenn

A Pilot's Legacy by Glenn Williams

Library of Congress Control Number: 2024906108

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Preface

“These are the times that try men's souls.” So wrote Thomas Paine, known as the Father of the American Revolution. His 1776 publication *Common Sense* helped incite the Thirteen Colonies to seek their independence from Great Britain. His words helped General George Washington inspire his men at a dismal time during the Revolutionary War. The Continental Army had suffered defeats, the most recent losing the city of New York. Frustrated volunteers were leaving to return to their families. Drafted soldiers' obligations were set to expire at the end of the year. Washington realized he needed a rallying call to turn the tide of troop despair.

Then in mid-December, another Paine publication was printed in the *Pennsylvania Journal*. After reading the pages of Paine's *American Crisis*, Washington commanded the words be read aloud to his troops. A most inspiring portion of Paine's work reads:

“These are the times that try men's souls; the summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this

consolation with us, that the harder the conflict,
the more glorious the triumph.”

The inspirational words and reading produced the effect Washington hoped for. He rallied his newly inspired army, defeating British General Earl Cornwallis in the Battle of Princeton. The victory gave new life to Washington's Continental Army marking a turning point in the Revolutionary War.

As was true in 1776, there have been other times throughout American history that have tried men's souls on a national scale – most notably, wars.

When wars are declared, men and women are drawn out of the fabric of each nation to sacrifice a portion of their lives to fight the battles, endangering personal life and limb. Some volunteer while others are enlisted.

Hal Miller Scrugham of Kentucky – father, and Richard (Rick) Throop Scrugham of Tennessee – son, each volunteered their service to their country during World War II and the Vietnam War. Two wars that would try men's souls both home and in faraway countries. One war that rallied support throughout the country; and the other that created division throughout the country. One war fought to secure freedom for America and its allies; one war to prevent the perceived spread of communism in Southeast Asia.

Hal joined the Army Air Corps in October 1941, two months before the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. He returned to civilian life after the war in July 1945.

In 1947, by government legislation, the Army Air Corps was restructured to establish the United States Air Force. Captain Scrugham would later join the Air Force Reserves and serve until 1978 while achieving the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Like his father before him, Rick joined the Army in January 1969. Completing his tour as a helicopter pilot in Vietnam, he joined the Tennessee Army National Guard and served 26 years. He would eventually retire as a corporate civilian pilot with a combined 9300 hours flying the helicopter over a 30-year career.

Wars try the souls of men and women whether serving in foreign lands or remaining and contributing to the war effort at home. But everyone makes sacrifices. Yet everyone, as is characteristic of the human spirit, endeavors to make the best of difficult situations. Hal in his war and Rick in his war, each endured every situation and conflict they were thrust in.

Thousands of surviving veterans can share their experiences after fulfilling their duties to their country. But most go untold or undocumented. Following generations are deprived of learning of the travails of those warriors' exploits and survival. Their war adventures fall through the cracks of recorded history.

Captain Hal Miller Scrugham, while transporting a plane load of Sikh soldiers over the Japanese-besieged Imphal Valley of Burma, was suddenly attacked by a Japanese Zero. After a mid-air collision downing the aggressive Zero, Hal and copilot Al Jost were able to maneuver their severely damaged C-47 over the next hour for a safe landing at a British Royal Air Force field in Sylhet, India. Hal would be the only C-47 transport pilot to be credited with a Japanese Zero kill during World War II.

During the North African campaign, while transporting General Jimmy Doolittle and most of the general staff, Hal had to make a challenging landing on a short runway into a narrow canyon in Constantine, Algeria.

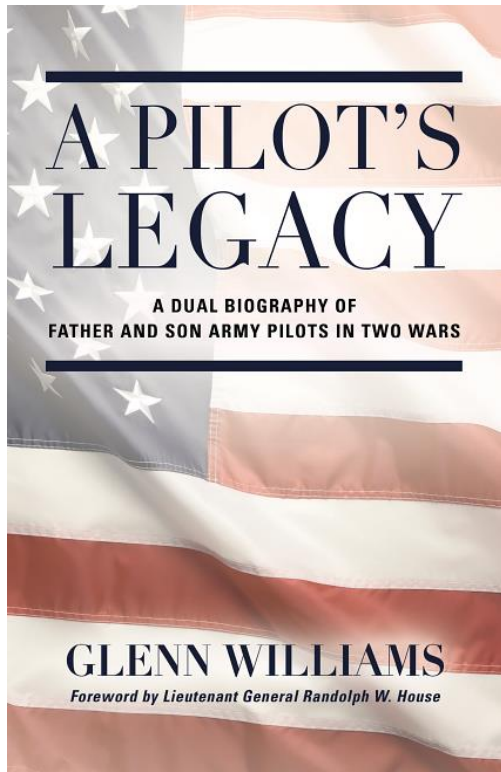
Chief Warrant Officer Richard Throop Scrugham, flew in the largest airborne assault since June 6, 1944 – D day. A force of over 120 helicopters and 40 gunships transporting three infantry battalions of South Vietnamese forces attacking the enemy along the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos.

During covert missions “across the fence” into North Vietnam and Laos, Rick would hover 1500 feet above tree canopy, and drop retrieval ropes down to special operations spy units being pursued by the enemy.

These are just some of the adventures this father and his legacy son have chosen to tell -- some funny and some tragic.

Unlike some of General George Washington's revolutionary forces in 1776, Hal, Rick, and their comrades in arms didn't require a rallying call to inspire them to stand and fight. Washington's men subsequently set the courageous example of overcoming despair and winning battles and wars. Their heroism gave birth to the great nation of freedom that following generations of American soldiers would continue to successfully defend.

Although better equipped than the first Continental Army, the fight is nevertheless the same – kill or be killed. Trust your training. Do your job. And survive – by the grace of God.



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