

Demas T. Craw & Pierpont Morgan Hamilton

DEMAS T. CRAW AND PIERPONT M. HAMILTON by MSgt (ret.) Joseph P. Bowman Draft Biography for Bravest of the Brave © 2002 All Rights Reserved. Presented here with the permission of the author. Pre-Medal of Honor Biographies: Demas T. Craw: Demas Thurlow "Nick" Craw was born on April 9, 1900, in Long Lake Township, Michigan, to Mark and Clara Craw. His siblings included a twin brother named Theron who was killed in a hunting accident in 1927, and a younger sister named Jane who was a registered nurse and served in the Army Nursing Corps during World War II. Mark Craw, a native of Pennsylvania, was a state game warden and conservation officer. Craw attended Traverse City public schools, but dropped out of Traverse City High School before graduating and enlisted with his brother in the United States Army on April 18, 1918, at Columbus Barracks, Ohio. His first assignment was with the 12th Cavalry at Camp Stanley, Texas, which transferred to Columbus, New Mexico, and served on the Mexican border. On November 1 he was promoted to private first class, and twelve days later entered Machine Gun School at Fort Hancock, Georgia, where he was selected to attend the Central Officer's Training School at Camp Gordon, Georgia. Craw's aspiration to gain a commission ended prematurely due to military downsizing, so he elected to separate from the Army on February 15, 1919. Three months later to the day, however, he re-enlisted in the infantry at Grand Rapids, Michigan, and was placed in charge of the Recruiting Corps. On June 1 he was promoted to corporal, which pleased him, but he never truly abandoned his quest to become a commissioned officer. Due in large part to his persistence, by the end of the year he was attached to the 2nd Field Artillery at Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky, and attended a two-month preparatory course for entry into West Point, which he passed. His dream was nearing reality. Returning to Grand Rapids on April 2, 1920, Craw was discharged on May 14 and entered West Point on July 1. While attending the Military Academy he advanced to captain and manager of the polo team, and was distinguished in horsemanship, but an eye injury sustained while playing polo nearly ended his ambition to fly. Upon graduating on June 12, 1924, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Regular Army and served with the coast artillery at Long Island until his eye injury healed. On March 13, 1926, he applied for aviation training with the Air Service. Craw's application was approved, and shortly thereafter he began Primary Flight Training at Brooks Field, Texas. He completed this course on February 28, 1927, and Advanced Flight Training at Kelly Field on August 12, and then reported for duty at Selfridge Field, Michigan. Craw's official transfer to the Air Corps was approved on March 21, 1928, and he assumed instructor duties at the Air Corps Training mid, Duncan Field, Texas. On January 10, 1929, he was reassigned to instruct Advanced Flight Training at Kelly Field, and on January 3 of the following year he was promoted to first lieutenant. In June 1930, Craw reported to Mitchel Field, New York, to process for a four-year tour to Hawaii where he was assigned to the 19th Pursuit Squadron that November. During his time at Mitchel Field he met Mary Victor Wesson, who was the daughter of Frank Wesson, president of the Smith & Wesson Arms Company. They were married in Barnstable County, Massachusetts, in 1931, and they had one son named Nicholas. Craw returned to Mitchel Field on September 15, 1934, and on April 20 the year following he was promoted to captain. In February 1937, Craw's aerial proficiency was tested when he accidentally overshot a runway during a blizzard while flying a bomber from Mitchel to Wilbur Wright Field in Ohio. The situation worsened when the aircraft became dangerously low on fuel and radio communications failed, but he managed to guide the aircraft onto an emergency landing field. After refueling, he asked directions to the Muncie Airport and then departed without his passengers. Thanks in part to a strong tailwind, he negotiated the heavy bomber over the mountains and landed the aircraft safely just after midnight. This ordeal made headlines in his hometown of Traverse City. Later in 1937, Craw attended Air Corps Tactical School at Maxwell Field, from which he graduated on June 20, 1938. Thereafter, he assumed duties as Inspector and Assistant Intelligence Officer at Langley Field, Virginia, where he was promoted to major on March 11, 1940. His duties at Langley afforded him the opportunity to act as a military air observer for the War Department and he was sent to potential trouble spots that included the Philippines, the East Indies, China, Romania and India. While serving in Cairo following the outbreak of war in Europe, Craw assisted the Royal Air Force in their battle against the Germans. During the British Libyan Campaign he was continuously under fire and sustained a slight wound, and after the Italian invasion he was sent to Athens where he served as assistant military attaché. He came under fire 136 times, according to official reports, and he participated in twenty-one major Allied bombing expeditions during this assignment. Captain Paul Thorn, a close friend, recalled Craw's involvement in a fistfight with three Italians shortly after the German occupation of Athens. His car rubbed fenders with another vehicle, occupied by two Italian privates and a Fascist lieutenant. The Italians let their tempers flare, but when the fight was over they "needed a little dental attention." "We always got a kick out of Nick," recalled his West Point classmate William Slater. "He had tremendous fire and pep—a lot of initiative and extremely good humor." Another friend commented on his assignment to the Middle East: "He didn't bother just to observe. He was in there fighting with the rest of them. Sometimes he had trouble getting to the front, but he got there—walk, drive or fly."¹ While visiting ground forces at the front during the battle of Himarah in Albania, Craw was trapped with an isolated Greek contingent. A fight ensued "with bugles and bayonets in regular Civil War style", and during the course of battle he was wounded by a hand grenade blast. The Greeks emerged from this battle triumphant, but the Germans captured Craw when they came crashing through Greece. He was held for six weeks and then exchanged for another prisoner at Sofia. The King of Greece was so impressed with Craw's heroism that he decorated him with the Order of George I, Fourth Class. Thereafter, Craw traveled to Bucharest in time to observe the onset of war with Russia, and then made his way to Turkey, Lower Russia, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Palestine. Finally he returned to Egypt to participate in the Second Libyan Campaign. On November 15, 1941, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel, and on March 1, 1942, after the United States entered the war, he advanced to colonel. By this time he had seen more fighting than most Americans in uniform. In May 1942, Craw returned to Washington to report his observations, and learned that British-American relations were a major concern within military circles. He dispelled rumors of tensions between the two countries and insisted that the British were our

staunchest allies. Another concern was how well American equipment held up under combat, to which Crow replied: "It averages up much better than that of the Axis, and our heavy bombers are the best in the world. The proof of the pudding's simple. I'm not only willing, but anxious to take on the Axis in an American ship anytime they're ready to try." After six days in Washington, Crow returned to the Middle East—just in time to witness the Third Libyan Campaign—but was disappointed when he was ordered back to Washington shortly thereafter. He was assigned a staff post—Deputy Executive Officer of the 2nd Bomber Command at Fort George Wright—but this didn't suit him and he vehemently protested. In October, he parted for duty in the European Theater and was assigned to XII Ground Air Support Command where almost 2,000 men prepared for the invasion of North Africa. It was believed that Crow's prewar experience would prove useful.

Pierpont M. Hamilton: Pierpont Morgan Hamilton was born in Tuxedo Park, New York, on August 3, 1898, to William Pierson and Juliet Pierpont (Morgan) Hamilton, both members of prominent American families. William was the great-grandson of Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury, and Juliet was the daughter of John Pierpont Morgan, the founder of the financial empire and House of Morgan. Hamilton's brothers and sisters included Helen Morgan Hamilton, born on June 12, 1896; Laurens Morgan Hamilton, born on June 18, 1900; Alexander Hamilton, born on January 25, 1903; and Elizabeth Hamilton, born December 19, 1907. Hamilton's childhood was quite lavish compared to that of most Medal of Honor recipients, as his maternal grandfather was one of America's most powerful men. J.P. Morgan was considered the supreme symbol of financial power and used his wealth to curb many abuses of cutthroat competition, and to reduce economic instability. At one point he even bailed the United States out of debt. After graduating high school, Hamilton entered Harvard University where he attained Bachelors and Masters degrees, but his educational aspirations were interrupted by America's entry into the war in Europe during World War I. He entered military service in August 1917 and pursued his interest in aviation by attending the Aviation Ordnance School at Cornell University, and flying schools at Hazelhurst Field, New York, and Ellington Field, Texas. Upon completion of flight training on May 8, 1918, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Officer's Reserve Corps. Hamilton served out the war as an instructor pilot at Ellington Field and was relieved from active duty in December 1918. He returned to Harvard and between the wars he was engaged in international investment banking, first in Paris and then in New York. He also operated his own commercial development business of patents and processes in sound and color photography, which thoroughly intrigued him. Meanwhile, Hamilton entered into the first of three marriages with Marie Louise Blair on September 11, 1919, in New York. They had three children before their divorce: Philip, David and Ian. His second marriage to Rebecca Stickney also ended in divorce, but they had no children. His third and final marriage was to Norah Soutter, who had been married to a fellow named Goldsmith and had a son named Harold. Hamilton adopted the boy sometime thereafter. In March 1942, Hamilton returned to active duty with the rank of major and was initially assigned to the Intelligence Section in Washington, DC. The following June he was transferred to London to serve as an intelligence and operations officer on Lord Louis Mountbatten's staff. Mountbatten was in charge of the British Commandos, and during this assignment Hamilton planned assaults on continental Europe, one of which was the Dieppe Raid. Dieppe is a small French port on the English Channel where it was decided an Allied amphibious assault would take place on the morning of August 19, 1942. Involved in the raid would be 5,100 Canadians, and 1,000 British Commandos and American Rangers. Two hundred and fifty-two ships and sixty-nine squadrons of aircraft supported them. Tactical intelligence and poor planning, however, proved devastating to the men involved in this operation. The Canadians suffered the most, as they lost three-quarters of their forces within six hours. Despite the failure of the Dieppe Raid, Hamilton proved himself a remarkable Intelligence officer and was recalled to Washington to discuss plans for Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa. The Americans first supported an Allied landing in France, across the English Channel, but the British insisted that this was impossible at this stage of the war. The disaster at Dieppe supported their opposition. Brushing off earlier plans outlining an African invasion, and after much dissension by operational planners, on July 22 Operation Torch was approved. Under the revised plan, three simultaneous landings were directed at Casablanca, Oran and Algiers. Hamilton worked side-by-side with the commanding general of this operation, Major General Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., as final touches to the Casablanca operation was made.

Medal of Honor Background: To execute the three major landings on the North African continent three task forces were formed, only one of which was under American command and control—the Western Task Force. The Western Task Force was made up entirely of American troops, most without any combat experience, but American planners felt they had an ace up their sleeve with the task force commander, General George S. Patton, Jr. Their objective was to take French Morocco by launching a three-pronged assault at Port Lyautey to the north, Casablanca to the south, and Fedala, just north of Casablanca. The combined American fleet, under the command of Rear Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, parted from varied locations on October 23, 1942, and rendezvoused in the Atlantic several days later. Training continued throughout the voyage and tensions were understandably high. French forces in North Africa, which were under command of the Vichy government, broke off relations with the British but maintained relations with the Americans. Although the Americans anticipated French support for the Allied cause, their reaction was impossible to predict. Certainly an unusual political-diplomatic problem presented itself because the French, whose territory was being invaded, were not the enemy. Not only did the British and Americans not want to destroy French lives or property, but they wanted the French as active allies in the war against the Axis. They looked on Operation Torch as liberation not conquest, and for this reason it was suggested during the planning phase that immediate contact be made with the local French commanders. The Americans hoped that hostilities could be suspended without bloodshed. The effort to seize Port Lyautey, in which both Crow and Hamilton would participate, became known as Operation Goalpost, and their primary objective was to gain possession of an airfield outside the city. It was important that this airfield be available by nightfall on D-day to support of the main American attack on Casablanca, which promised to be a tough target to conquer. Hamilton volunteered to consult with the French commander at Port Lyautey, Colonel Charles Petit, and while en route to Africa plans were

modified to include Craw in the negotiation process. Hamilton, who spent ten years in France before the war, was fluent in French, and so was Craw. The 9,000-plus men who made up the force for Operation Goalpost were transported to the vicinity of Mehdia aboard eight transports. Included on these transports were sixty-five light tanks and 881 vehicles. To protect the landing force, one battleship, one light cruiser, one escort carrier and nine destroyers were used—the battleship being the USS Texas. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 60th Regimental Combat Team, 9th Infantry Division, were shipped to Africa on the transports Henry T. Allen, George Clymer and Susan B. Anthony, respectively.

Personnel aboard the three transports made up the majority of personnel assigned to Goalpost's contingent, which would be placed ashore at strategic landing points along the African coast. These landing points were designated as Red Beach, north of the Sebou River, and Green Beach, Blue Beach and Yellow Beach in descending order, to the south of the Sebou. The ships arrived off Mehdia just before midnight on 7-8 November, with General Truscott and his staff divided between the Allen and Clymer. Nick Craw, serving as Air Officer for the general, was aboard the Allen, while Pierpont Hamilton, the general's Intelligence Officer, was aboard the Clymer. In the foreground they could see the well-lit shoreline, which would prove beneficial when ship-to-shore operations commenced, but then a critical error was made when the flagship Texas ordered a last minute change in course. This confused the other vessels involved in the operation and formation integrity was permanently compromised. Communications were also a problem, and Truscott was forced to ferry from transport to transport to advise commanders to postpone H-hour from 0400 to 0430. They were more than an hour past their scheduled arrival time when the convoy anchored along the coast, and several French steamers passed through the American vessels shortly thereafter. One steamer, the Lorraine, signaled to shore: "Be warned. Alert on shore for 5 A.M." As if the navigational error of the Texas and forewarning of the Lorraine wasn't enough, the situation worsened. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and General Dwight D. Eisenhower prerecorded messages to announce the invasion, and their voices filled the airwaves as scheduled. The Central and Eastern task forces made their landings on time, so they were unaffected by the announcement, but for Truscott and his men the element of surprise was lost. Despite the current odds against success, to delay the invasion any further would prove disastrous, and Truscott knew it. Medal of Honor Action: The 2nd Battalion advanced on Green Beach, which was lightly defended, and Craw and Hamilton, who carried with them a letter similar in purport to the President's recently released broadcast, were included in this first wave. Two waves followed the first and all of these men initially advanced unopposed, but the enemy was prepared for their landing. When the first wave hit the shoreline just before 0600, a searchlight illuminated the scouting boat and a red rocket soared from the southern jetty. Suddenly coastal batteries laid down a heavy concentration of shellfire that prevented the landing boats from docking along the Sebou River. Reacting swiftly to the enemy barrage, the American destroyer Eberle fired a few shells that darkened the searchlight, and the cruiser Savannah temporarily silenced their guns. Before the landings were far advanced however, two French Dewoitine fighters passed up and down the beach, strafing boats and personnel. Harassing low-level strafing continued as Craw and Hamilton landed safely on the beach at Mehdia at dawn, by which time a network of mass confusion ruled the shoreline. Craw and Hamilton commandeered a bantam truck to take them to French headquarters, but Admiral Hewitt ordered a general naval attack by the entire task force and the emissaries were stopped dead in their tracks. Forced to return to their point of origin, Craw radioed Truscott and explained their predicament. "At mouth of river," his message stated. "Being shelled by enemy and our own Navy...On Green Beach...Troops landed and moving inland. Proceeding on mission." Shortly thereafter the naval attack subsided and Truscott was having second thoughts about allowing Craw and Hamilton to continue. Craw was persuasive, and convinced Truscott that the mission should proceed as planned. He and Hamilton located a nearby jeep, recruited Private Orris Correy to drive them to their destination, and affixed an American, French and white flag of truce to the vehicle before beginning their journey through the fusillade of gunfire. Prior to departing they decided to travel the heavily fortified river mouth that passed through Casbah in the hope of meeting the French commander forthwith. This was no easy undertaking. To illustrate what Craw, Hamilton and Correy were up against in passing through Casbah, the 2nd Battalion, which was now divided into two companies, met fierce resistance as they tried to take the coastal battery along the Sebou River. The Casbah fortress was defended by a myriad of guns, including six 138.6mms. It was also surrounded by a trench and possessed other barriers that made progression difficult for the Americans. Indeed, the 2nd Battalion became engaged in hand-to-hand fighting as the day progressed. Craw, Hamilton and Correy reached the jetty at dawn while enemy gunfire continued with disquieting frequency. When the shelling and strafing diminished, which it occasionally did, Correy drove through the French lines, literally under the guns of the Casbah fortress. At the battery a French officer warmly received Craw and Hamilton, who requested a guide to lead them to the French commander. But no men could be spared, so they continued their journey eastward along the river. The situation was still tense. For the next several miles the jeep followed a gradual downward slope toward Port Lyautey, and then they came upon an intersecting road that led to a high ridge about 1,000 yards northeast of a native village. Craw, Hamilton and Correy continued eastward another three miles and reached the outskirts of Port Lyautey, but as they neared the town a sustained burst of machine gun fire from 30-yards away erupted from a concealed position near the road. A nervous machine gun crew, who was caught by surprise as the Americans rounded the corner, manned the gun. Bullets tore into Craw's body at point-blank range, killing him instantly, and the vehicle crashed into a nearby tree. His lifeless body fell to the ground upon impact. Hamilton was enraged and leaped out of the vehicle to retrieve his partner's remains, and then directed his attention to the French soldiers. He demanded to be taken to their commander and was turned over to several French officers that were intimidated by his anger. They quickly obeyed his request, and at some point it must have dawned on Hamilton that he was their prisoner. Hamilton was taken to Colonel Petit, who was apologetic when he learned that Craw had been killed, but he stated he could not direct cessation of hostilities because he was "under orders from above." Hamilton suggested that he make contact with his superiors and introduce the Allied proposal, which he did. Meanwhile, the battle continued and the Americans made steady advancements toward their objective—Port Lyautey Airport. Progression was not made

without opposition however, and Hamilton spent the next couple of days wondering what was happening. By daybreak on November 10, Operation Goalpost was coming to a decisive end. Petit was captured and ordered that the entire 1st Regiment of Moroccan Tirailleurs lay down their arms, and then he and his staff were turned over to Hamilton's custody. This was an unusual situation indeed, considering they were his captors before that time! Later that morning the airport was seized, but fighting continued throughout the day. By nightfall only infrequent enemy sniper fire existed and Port Lyautey was declared an open city. Finally, General Maurice Mathenet telephoned Army headquarters in Port Lyautey and asked Hamilton to arrange a meeting with General Truscott so they could bring about an end to hostilities. Marshal Henri Philippe Petain had authorized the cease-fire. Private Correy drove Hamilton and Mathenet's deputy commander, Colonel Leon LeBeau, to the airport while a French bugler blew "cease fire." The order was repeated up and down the scattered roads until they reached the airfield where troops and tanks of Company C, 70th Tank Battalion, had assembled. At the airport Hamilton radioed Lieutenant Colonel Harry H. Semmes, commander of the 3rd Armored Landing Team who was at the southern edge of the beachhead, and informed him of the French surrender. Semmes drove his tank along the beach to Truscott's command post to relay the news, and then they contacted Hamilton to arrange a meeting near the gates of Casbah. This meeting was set for 0800 on November 11, and once this was agreed upon Hamilton contacted the Dallas, which was docked nearby. There was no reason to continue the fighting, he asserted, and hostilities officially ceased at 0400 that morning. The French surrender that Craw and Hamilton so gallantly sought to obtain was achieved with minimal loss of life on both sides, thanks in large part to their heroic efforts. Only seventy-nine American lives were lost during Operation Goalpost, the airdrome was seized, a seaplane base was captured, and a focal point of transportation routes were established through northeastern Morocco to Algeria and Tunisia. The operation that began ominously, proved to be a marked success. Upon learning of Craw's untimely demise his Washington associates paid tribute to him with kind remarks. "He was the type that came bounding into the room, trailing clouds of electricity," stated one friend. "A real soldier—it's tough he had to go so soon," said another. But perhaps the best phrase that summed up "Fighting Nick's" character and premature death was: "He was always free with his dukes—yet, he died on a peace mission.⁶" That is indeed ironic. Craw's body was initially interred in the American Cemetery near the Casbah fortress, but on June 24, 1949, his remains were cremated and scattered over Wiesbaden, Germany. President Roosevelt presented Craw's Medal of Honor to his widow and son in March 1943 at a special White House ceremony. Hamilton received his Medal of Honor from Roosevelt at the White House on February 19. It must be noted that these were the only two Air Force Medals of Honor presented for ground operations during World War II, and it is a travesty of justice that Orris Correy did not receive similar recognition. Post-Medal of Honor Biography: Pierpont M. Hamilton: In December 1942, Hamilton was selected as Intelligence and Air Officer, Headquarters Allied Forces, based at Constantine, Algiers, and later that month he was promoted to lieutenant colonel. Shortly thereafter he was reassigned to Headquarters, North African Tactical Air Force, where he served as Operations and Intelligence Staff Officer until March 1943, and then he returned to Washington and assumed duties as Assistant Chief of Air Staff for Plans. He fulfilled these duties until being promoted to colonel on October 27, 1943, after which time he was Acting Chief, Postwar Division. In January 1944, Hamilton was appointed Air Force Member, Joint Postwar Committee, under the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and served in that capacity until November of the following year when he was reassigned to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of War for Air. In December 1945, he elected to resume his civilian business interests and was released from active duty, but he was never content with his return to civilian life. Becoming restless after his discharge, he often expressed a desire to reenter the military, and in February 1947 he was back in uniform and serving with the Plans and Operations Division, War Department General Staff. That November, Hamilton was appointed Chief, World Survey Branch, a subordinate component assigned to the Policy Division that was headed by the Directorate of Plans and Operations for the Air Force. It was evident to those around him that he was a remarkable administrator, and that led to his selection to head the Policy Division in August 1948. This also secured for him promotion to brigadier general four months later. While heading the Policy Division he served as a member of the sub-committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and helped form the United Nations. Hamilton, representing the Department of Defense, assisted in drafting the country's position on atomic weapons and regulation of conventional armament. In March 1951, he was selected as Special Assistant to the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, and two months later he became Special Assistant for Foreign Military Affairs at Wiesbaden, Germany. In this capacity he worked directly for the commander of the United States Air Forces in Europe. His office was moved to Paris sometime thereafter, and in December 1951 he was named Senior United States Air Force Representative with the Military Facilities Negotiating Group. Upon leaving Paris in early 1952 and returning to Washington, DC, Hamilton was assigned duties under the Secretary of the Air Force until being relieved from active duty on March 31. Following his discharge he resided in Montecito, a suburb of Santa Barbara, California, but continued to involve himself with activities directly relating to the Air Force and resumed his duties with the Policy Division while serving in the Reserves. He proved so effective that he was promoted to major general on June 20, 1955—a rare achievement for a Reserve officer. Two years later he attended Reserve and National Guard General Officer Orientation courses at the Air War College. Following his retirement from the Reserves in 1959, Hamilton continued to pursue his business interests and other concerns, such as his association with Electronic Products Corporation in Santa Barbara. He was also an executive with the Bank & Trust in this city, a position he held for twenty years. As his health declined he moved into his grandson's home, and then was admitted to the Wadsworth Veterans Administration Medical mid in Los Angeles. He passed away on March 4, 1982, and is buried in the Santa Barbara Cemetery. Footnotes: 1 Logan, Walter. "Fighting Nick Craw' Hero." *Traverse City Record-Eagle*. November 21, 1942, pp. 1&5. 2 "A Traverse City Hero." *Traverse City Record-Eagle*. July 31, 1942, pp. 1&6. 3 Parish, Thomas D. and BGen. Samuel L.A. Marshall. *The Simon and Schuster Encyclopedia of World War II*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1978. 4 Comtois, Pierre. "First Fire of Operation Torch." *World War II Magazine*. Nov. 1996, Vol. II, No. 4, pp. 54-60 & 82. 5 *Ibid*. 6 Cavanaugh,

Mary. "Fighting Nick Crow'-Hero." Washington Bureau of the Traverse City Record-Eagle. Nov. 21, 1942, pp. 1&5.