

Craw was born in [Long Lake Township](#), Michigan, to Mark Craw, a game warden, and his wife Clara. He was twin brother to Theron Craw, who died in a hunting accident in 1927. A younger sister, Jane, became a [registered nurse](#) and served in the [Army Nurse Corps](#) during World War II. The twins attended Traverse City public schools, but dropped out of [Traverse City Central High School](#) during [World War I](#) to enlist in the [United States Army](#) on April 18, 1918, at [Columbus Barracks, Ohio](#). Craw was sent to [Camp Stanley, Texas](#), for training with the [12th Cavalry](#), then transferred to [Columbus, New Mexico](#), on the border with [Mexico](#). He was promoted to private first class in November 1918 and sent to Machine Gun School at [Camp Hancock, Georgia](#). There he applied for and was selected to attend the [Central Officer's Training School](#) at [Camp Gordon, Georgia](#).^[2]

In the demobilization of the Army following the Armistice, Craw was discharged on February 15, 1919, but re-enlisted three months later in the infantry at [Grand Rapids, Michigan](#). Assigned as a recruiter, he was promoted to corporal, but continued to pursue a commission. At [Camp Zachary Taylor, Kentucky](#), where he was attached to the [2nd Field Artillery Regiment](#), Craw undertook a two-month preparatory course in February 1920 for entry into the [United States Military Academy](#). Returning to Grand Rapids afterward, Craw was discharged on May 14 and entered West Point on July 1, 1920.

While attending the Military Academy he received his lifelong nickname of "Nick", shortened from "Nicodemus" (a [word play](#) on his given name), and developed an ambition to fly. However an eye injury incurred while playing [polo](#) nearly ended his aviation career. Craw graduated on June 12, 1924, ranked 371 in general order of merit in his class of 405 members, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant, [Coast Artillery Corps](#).

After his eye injury healed, he applied for pilot training with the [Air Service](#) on March 13, 1926. In August, he began Primary and Basic flight training at [Brooks Field, Texas](#), went on to Advanced at [Kelly Field](#) on February 28, 1927, where he received a [rating](#) of Airplane Pilot on August 12, 1927. Craw joined the [1st Pursuit Group](#) at [Selfridge Field](#), Michigan, transferred his commission to the [Air Corps](#) on March 21, 1928, and was promoted to first lieutenant on January 3, 1930. Craw returned to the Air Corps Training Center at [San Antonio, Texas](#), as an instructor of Basic Flight training at Duncan Field, and was reassigned in January 1929, to instruct Advanced Flight Training.

In June 1930, Craw was briefly assigned to [Mitchel Field](#), New York, to await a four-year tour with the [19th Pursuit Squadron](#) at [Wheeler Field, Territory of Hawaii](#). There he met Mary Victoria ("Vicki") Wesson, daughter of the president of the [Smith & Wesson Firearms Company](#). They married in 1931, and had one son, Nicholas.^[3] Craw commanded the 19th PS from August 4, 1932, to the end of his tour and returned to Mitchel Field on September 15, 1934. He was promoted to captain on April 20, 1935.

In September 1937, Craw was assigned as a student to the [Air Corps Tactical School](#) at [Maxwell Field, Alabama](#), graduating June 20, 1938. His next billet was as Inspector General and Assistant Intelligence Officer, General Headquarters Air Force, at [Langley Field, Virginia](#). On March 11, 1940,

Craw was promoted to major. His tour at Langley included temporary duty as an air observer for the War Department in the [Netherlands East Indies](#), [China](#), [Romania](#), and [India](#).

In October 1940, Craw traveled to [Cairo](#), [Egypt](#), as an observer to the [Royal Air Force](#). During combat against [Italy](#) in [Libya](#), he was slightly wounded, and with the onset of the [Greco-Italian War](#), went to Athens as assistant [military attaché](#). He reportedly came under fire 136 times and participated in twenty-one RAF bombing sorties during the assignments. When the [German army invaded Greece](#) in April 1941, Craw was captured and interned for six weeks, until exchanged at [Sofia](#), [Bulgaria](#), and was awarded the [Order of George I](#) (Officer class) by the [King of Greece](#). He returned to Egypt and observed the campaign against the [Afrika Korps](#) in June 1941, then was assigned as deputy executive officer of the II Bomber Command at [Fort George Wright](#), [Washington](#). On November 15, 1941, he was promoted to lieutenant colonel, and on March 1, 1942, after the United States entered the war, to colonel.

In October, Craw was named air officer for Maj. General [Lucian K. Truscott](#), commanding one of the sub-task forces, *Force Goalpost*, of [Operation Torch](#), an amphibious invasion of [North Africa](#). He sailed with the invasion force from Virginia and while en route, volunteered to assist another Army Air Forces officer, Maj. [Pierpont M. Hamilton](#), Truscott's intelligence officer, in delivering a message to the local French commander near [Port Lyautey](#), [French Morocco](#), to broker a cease fire, should French forces resist.

Medal of Honor action^[edit]

On November 8, 1942, French forces resisted Allied landing operations and Craw undertook the mission with Hamilton. The officers intended to land at a jetty on the Sebou River near French headquarters, but the alerted French defenders began shelling the landing force, and they instead came ashore with the first wave of *Goalpost* landing craft carrying troops of the 2nd Battalion, [60th Regimental Combat Team](#).

After disembarking on Green Beach before dawn, and still under hostile fire from shore batteries, the officers commandeered a small truck. They were strafed by French aircraft when it became stuck in a muddy marsh. After the truck was extricated by a detachment of combat engineers, they attempted to continue their mission but were forced to return to the beach when caught in the exchanges of French artillery and naval gunfire from Task Group 34.8 of the [United States Navy](#). When Truscott expressed misgivings about the mission, Craw convinced him to allow them to continue. They located a [jeep](#) and enlisted its driver, Pfc. Orris V. Correy, to cross through the French lines. Craw carried unfurled American and French flags, and Hamilton a white flag, in an attempt to safeguard their passage.

At dawn the officers reached the jetty that was to have been their original starting point. After several contacts with French troops to obtain directions, and requesting a guide (which was refused), the jeep proceeded cautiously approximately six miles into Port Lyautey. As they came over a rise on the outskirts near the French headquarters, a hidden [machine gun](#) position took them under

sustained fire and killed Crow instantly with a burst to the chest. Hamilton and Correy were both captured, but Hamilton eventually completed the mission and arranged the surrender of French forces.^[4]

Crow was awarded the Medal of Honor four months later, on March 4, 1943, for his part in the mission. Hamilton was also awarded the Medal of Honor in January, 1943.^[5]