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In the Interests of Justice: The Burial of Pondextuer Eugene Williams

by Robert A. Taylor

In the early morning of August 8, 1970, a Viet Cong mortar shell shrieked toward Long Khanh Province near Saigon. The resulting explosion mortally wounded Specialist 4 Pondextuer Eugene Williams of Company D, Second Battalion, Seventh Cavalry, First Air Cavalry Division. An African American barely past his twentieth birthday, Williams died very far from his Florida hometown. However, his service to his country did not cease with death. "Gene" Williams, as he was known to family and friends, became a symbol of the fight for equality and freedom, winning a final battle against the forces of racism and segregation in Florida before finally being laid to rest. 1

Born in the small Atlantic coast town of Fort Pierce in 1950, Williams grew up as one of six children of Mary and Roosevelt Campbell. Mary, a pastry chef at a local cafeteria, and her second husband Roosevelt, a citrus worker, struggled against poverty to

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raise their family. Pondextuer matured into a quiet, athletic youngster with deep roots in the Bethel Baptist Church. He was one of the first blacks to attend Dan McCarty High School, graduating in 1968 having lettered in football and track. Williams dreamed of going to college, but poor high school grades and lack of tuition money ended these hopes. Like so many other young men, he opted for military service to expand his possibilities and enlisted in the Army soon after high school.2

Army basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, made Williams into a combat infantryman, and by November 1969, he was serving in jungles of South Vietnam. His unit, the First Air Cavalry Division, engaged in some of the most intense fighting in Southeast Asia. By June of 1970, he suffered the effects of battle wounds to the leg and eardrum. In one of his last weekly letters home, Williams commented that his tour of duty had only 119 days left and that he “was praying every night and every day that the good Lord keeps me for 119 days.” Regardless of his pleas, Williams died of wounds received in action on August 8, becoming Fort Pierce and Saint Lucie County’s nineteenth Vietnam War death.3

A brief telegram brought the sad news to the Campbells’ modest Fort Pierce home. Despite the numbing grief, arrangements for Pondextuer’s funeral had to be made, and local funeral director Sarah Lee Peek began preparations for burial of the fallen soldier. Mary Campbell asked Peek to inquire as to whether it was possible to take advantage of an offer from Hillcrest Memorial Gardens, which had recently run advertisements in the Fort Pierce News-Tribune offering free plots in its “veterans Garden of Honor” section for honorably discharged soldiers. Although the cemetery was some eight miles north of the Fort Pierce city limits, Campbell had for some time admired the neatly manicured grounds, and the idea of her son laid aside other honored war dead seemed appropriate.4

Peek contacted cemetery director James A. Livesay about a free plot for Pondextuer Williams under the veterans program. But Livesay refused the request, explaining that Williams could not

be buried at Hillcrest Memorial Gardens due to his race. Since its opening in the 1950s, the cemetery had used a deed form for gravesites stating that “no bodies except those of the white or Caucasian race may be interred in said lots.” Although state-chartered, Hillcrest Memorial Gardens was privately owned by the National Heritage Corporation of Pickens, South Carolina. Some five thousand plots had been sold on an all-white contractual basis. If Livesay permitted Pondextuer Williams to be buried at Hillcrest Memorial, in theory he could expose the cemetery to lawsuits from all five thousand grave owners. An offer of a free plot in Hillcrest Memorial then was simply impossible, but Livesay did propose an all expenses-paid funeral in all-black Pine Grove Cemetery.6

Mary Campbell was shocked at Hillcrest Memorial’s refusal to inter her son because of the color of his skin. As she later told a newspaper reporter, “he went to school with them, he ate with them, fought with them, and died with them. But what I don’t understand is why he can’t be buried with them.” She rejected Pine Grove as unworthy of her fallen child and again requested a place in Hillcrest Memorial Gardens. In this renewed effort, Peek enlisted the aid of Fort Pierce Mayor Dennis Summerlin, himself a mortician, to convince Livesay to permit the burial. But despite Summerlin’s intervention, the response remained the same. Livesay claimed that his hands were still legally tied. Although he renewed the offer of a free burial at Pine Grove, the Campbell family refused what they considered second-class treatment and discrimination. Word of the cemetery’s segregationist policy spread quickly through Fort Pierce’s tightly knit black community, generating feelings of disbelief and rising anger.7

5. “Deed to Perpetual Internment Right, Hillcrest Memorial Gardens Inc.,” Plaintiffs’ Exhibit A, Williams et al. v. Livesay et al., United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida, Case No. 70-1238, Record Group 21, Box 123, National Archives, East Point, Ga. (hereinafter cited as Williams v. Livesay). This case does not appear in standard legal reference works like the Federal Supplement.


7. Palm Beach Post, 21 August, 30 August 1970; Miami Herald, 21 August 1970. For more on race relations in Fort Pierce, see Annie K. Jackson et al., Treasure Coast Black Heritage: A Pictorial History (Virginia Beach, Va., 1996), 21-75; Paul Stillwell, ed., The Golden Thirteen: Recollections of the First Black Naval Officers (Annapolis, Md., 1993), 218-21; and Lucille R. Rights, A Portrait of Saint Lucie County (Virginia Beach, Va., 1994), 81, 130-33, 155, 165.
The local media was not long in picking up the story. On August 19, an anonymous female caller informed the *Palm Beach Post* of the Campbells’ ordeal. In short order, the newspaper headlined the news, “Fort Pierce Plots for Dead GIs—But no Blacks.” Residents who were stung that such segregation still existed in 1970s Florida flooded the *Post* with calls and telegrams expressing outrage. In Palm Beach County, a cemetery with the same name was deluged with furious complaints and spent days explaining that another Hillcrest Memorial Gardens was the culprit in this affair. By August 21, the Pondextuer Eugene Williams story had become national and international news.

On the same day, a possible solution to the funeral impasse surfaced courtesy of John and Louise Diehl, elderly white residents of Fort Pierce. Having read of Hillcrest Memorial’s policy, the Diehls decided to take action. Since 1958, they had owned some eight burial plots in Hillcrest, and now decided to give one for Pondextuer Williams’ internment. As Louise Diehl explained, “I think this boy has done a lot for his country and deserves the best.” Livesay remained stern, however, insisting that such a transfer was not possible given the all-white clause of the Diehl’s ownership deed. The cemetery director sympathized with all parties concerned but refused to legally permit Williams or any African American to rest in the graveyard without a court order against retaliatory suits filed by the other owners.

Mary Campbell determined that her son would be buried in Hillcrest Memorial Gardens no matter how long she had to wait. His body remained at the Lee Peek Funeral Home while she consulted with her son’s military escort, Army Sergeant Robert C. Scott, and declined offers from other cemeteries. If legal action to break the color line at Hillcrest Memorial were needed, the poor Campbell family required lawyers to present their case in federal court.

In the heated atmosphere of 1970, as the Vietnam conflict expanded with the invasion of Cambodia and widespread anti-war protests culminated in the shootings at Kent State University, the

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Campbell family found ample assistance for their cause. When newspapers carried the Williams story, it touched a nerve in many people both for and against American involvement in Southeast Asia. The clear injustice catalyzed many, like Willis Edwards of Los Angeles. A recently discharged Vietnam veteran, Edwards studied political science at California State University and served as vice president of the student body. Having read in the Los Angeles Times about the treatment of a fellow “grunt,” he decided to visit the Campbells while on his way to a fraternity convention in the Bahamas.

Ex-Sergeant Edwards stayed in Fort Pierce over a week, acting as a liaison to the growing press corps and explaining legal options available to the family. He put out a call for attorneys to volunteer their services and asked the NAACP to use its resources in the coming court battle. The civil rights organization, through Florida field director Marvin Davies, allied itself to the Campbells’ effort to strike down another remnant of the Jim Crow system.

In his role as family spokesman, Edwards lashed out at the seeming lack of official interest in the Pondextuer Williams case, criticizing Governor Claude Kirk in particular for failing to involve himself. The governor’s office remained silent throughout the incident, with good political reason. A recent Manatee County school desegregation crisis and the upcoming election in November made it politically dangerous for Kirk to enter another racial discrimination affair. While an administrative aide assured the Diehl family that the governor’s office was doing all that could possibly be done, Edwards was far from convinced.

Clearly, a lawsuit had to be filed in federal court to force the issue. Father Richard Barry, a Fort Pierce Episcopal minister and leader in the black community, contacted attorney Ralph Flowers about possibly taking the case. Flowers, a Saint Lucie County native and one of the last graduates of the Florida A&M law school,


joined with former federal government lawyer James W. Matthews to prepare the necessary legal briefs for the United States District Court in Miami.¹⁴

Flowers and Matthews soon discovered that they would not labor alone. National interest and indignation over the Pondextuer Williams case caught the attention of the Nixon Administration. President Richard Nixon, Vice President Spiro Agnew, and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird received scores of letters and telegrams demanding federal action. Americans from all walks of life, including active duty military personnel, expressed anger. Protestor Marcella Johnson penned a letter to Nixon, relating in part that “I am one of a thousand angry black people concerned about a black man who can’t be buried because of discrimination. I have a brother fighting for you and I wouldn’t want the same thing to happen to him. When a man who died for his country can’t be laid to rest, this country is going down . . .” In another letter, teenager Mark Shaffer asked the president to correct this pure injustice or “I shall consider you a shallow man.”¹⁵

Constituents complained to members of Congress who raised the issue with the White House and the Department of the Army. Representatives John V. Tunney and Barry M. Goldwater Jr. of California requested further information. Prominent senators Thomas J. Dodd of Connecticut, William B. Saxbe of Ohio, and Californians George Murphy and Alan Cranston also looked into the matter. Yet, even as the country expressed alarm, the Florida congressional delegation remained silent as the controversy grew.¹⁶


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The White House ordered the Justice Department to intervene on behalf of the Campbell family and bring the full weight of the federal government down on those obstructing the interment of a Vietnam veteran. Attorney General John Mitchell, a rather stoic man when dealing with legal cases, grew visibly angry at the details of this particular incident. He directed Jerris Leonard, head of the department’s Civil Rights Division, to fully immerse himself in the matter. A Justice Department press release announced that it would indeed enter the Florida case “in the interests of justice” and declared Mitchell’s intentions to invalidate Hillcrest Memorial Gardens’ corporate charter along with the deeds that racially restricted burial plots. With such interest from the federal government and a friend-of-the-court brief filed in Miami by U.S. Attorney Robert Rust, Flowers and Matthews’s case seemed hopeful.17

The Nixon White House also saw political opportunity in the Williams case. The issues fit nicely within Nixon’s overall strategy on racial desegregation, particularly in southern states like Florida which were essential for his re-election in 1972. Hoping to avoid resentment and anger by white southerners who might retaliate at the polls, Nixon preferred the federal courts take the lead and bear the criticism that their rulings generated. Consequently, the Nixon Administration supported the Campbell family while the President himself never publicly spoke in favor of burying Specialist 4 Williams in Hillcrest Memorial Gardens.18

In the meantime, federal lawyers labored to create a powerful brief to reinforce the efforts of the local attorneys. They appealed to the 1866 Civil Rights Act to argue that African Americans had the same rights as all Americans to “purchase,


lease, sell, hold and convey real and personal property.” Another powerful precedent was Terry v. Elmwood Cemetery (1969) in which the family of a deceased black veteran won the right to inter him in a previously all-white burial ground in Birmingham, Alabama. The federal courts found that the Terry family deserved the same rights to acquire grave plots as whites. Similar cases had arisen in Virginia and Michigan, but Pondextuer Williams’s was the first discrimination case of its type in modern Florida history.  

While lawyers pondered precedents, the Campbells faced the painful decision of when and how to bury their son. Broad interest in the case made a quiet, simple service at Bethel Baptist Church, which Gene Williams had attended since he was nine years old, impossible. The Campbells decided to have a memorial ceremony at the Fort Piece National Guard Amory after which Williams, in his $191.00 government-issue aluminum coffin, would return to the Lee Peak mortuary to await a judge’s ruling. Representatives from the armed forces, veterans groups, local clergy, and family and friends gathered at 1:00 p.m. on August 23 to remember Pondextuer Williams.  

An estimated twelve hundred people crowded into and around the non-air-conditioned armory on that hot August day. Mayor Summerlin was the only politician who attended, greeting mourners at the door. A large media group covered the event, including the major television networks which made certain that film of the memorial reached the nightly news broadcasts. The Reverend Charles Byrd officiated at the service alongside Lieutenant Colonel Weldon Wright, a military chaplain. Wright tried to comfort the Campbells by preaching that no discrimination existed in military cemeteries, and “if it were ours to do, I can assure you, he would have been buried in the cemetery of your choice.” A full military funeral detail from Fort Benning, Georgia, conducted the service. In a twist of military protocol, however, soldiers comprising the firing squad remained on a bus


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since they would not be needed until Williams was actually interred. After two hours of emotional eulogies, the ceremony closed with Willis Edwards's promise that "we will fight on until justice is given Eugene."  

The attention that television and newspaper journalists accorded the service and the whole Williams incident did little for Fort Pierce's public image. Mayor Summerlin's office received hundreds of letters and telegrams denouncing racial segregation in any form. Frustrated and embarrassed, Summerlin tried to explain that Hillcrest Memorial Gardens was a considerable distance outside the city limits, and that he had no real authority in the matter. He could only offer sympathy and moral support to the family, which he did in the Palm Beach Post by proclaiming that "the majority of citizens of Fort Pierce, black and white, would prefer the funeral be held at Hillcrest."  

Unfortunately, the statement was too little and too late. Perceptions of Fort Pierce as a town that moved slowly and cared little about one of its own spread across Florida and the nation via the news media. Soon other organizations joined in the chorus of protest. The national headquarters of the American Legion issued a press release relating its shock "at the apparent denial of equal rights" and "the denial of a final resting place to one who served his country in time of war, because of the color of his skin." The Italian-American War Veterans agreed, as did the Jewish War Veterans of America and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. From the other end of the political spectrum, anti-war activists joined the chorale of condemnation. The New York City headquarters of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War dispatched recently discharged Army lawyer Jason Gettinger to Fort Pierce to help organize a vigil of Vietnam veterans who, along with family friends, stood watch over


22. Palm Beach Post, 22 August, 24 August, 30 August 1970; News-Tribune, 24 August, 28 August 1970; Jay Barbree, telephone interview by author, 6 October 2000. Barbree, an NBC reporter assigned to Cape Kennedy, was ordered to Fort Pierce to cover the Williams story.
Williams’s casket until the justice system decided where his final funeral would take place.23

Late on August 24, attorneys Flowers and Matthews filed in Miami’s federal district court, asking for a temporary injunction against Hillcrest Memorial Gardens that would permit Williams’s interment there. Plaintiffs included Mary Campbell, the Diehls, the NAACP, and Rufus Alexander Jr., another Fort Pierce military veteran who had tried to claim a free plot from Hillcrest Memorial based on his honorable military service several months earlier but had also been rebuffed on account of his race. Defendants in the suit were James Livesay, Hillcrest Memorial Gardens, its parent company National Heritage, and four private individuals who contested the right to breach the original deed’s racial clause.24

The plaintiffs’ five-page request, citing the Fourteenth Amendment and the 1964 Civil Rights Act, pleaded for a speedy decision for the sake of the Campbell family. After only thirty minutes of consideration, Judge William O. Mehrtenz granted a special hearing in his Miami courtroom to be held three days later. At 10:00 a.m. on August 27, Mary Campbell and Louise Diehl sat together in the courtroom. Campbell grew a bit tired of the legal wrangling, however, commenting that “all these proceedings and papers and hearings—they don’t need any of them to send him over there to die.”25

In closed conference, Mehrtenz quickly rejected the defendant’s position on potential punitive damages and attorneys’ fees, ruling that those issues were secondary and could wait for a future date to be settled. Mehrtenz in the end granted an immediate injunction to block Hillcrest Memorial Gardens from denying Williams a burial plot and ordered that he be interred there with-


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out delay. He went on to make it very clear that any obstruction of the ruling would result in federal judicial intervention. The obstacle to Pondextuer Williams’s funeral had been struck down.26

Mary Campbell gladly accepted the federal court decision, exclaiming that “God has heard my prayers.” She told reporters that she hoped neither of her remaining sons would serve in the military, but her primary emotion was relief that her painful wait was over and that the funeral could at last take place. In Fort Pierce, those standing watch over Williams’s coffin heard the news of the decision from a radio broadcast and reacted in silence.27

James Livesay gladly acknowledged the federal court decree, announcing that he “frankly welcomed it to get the unkind publicity that it has given us off my back.” Although the court order did not specifically require it, Livesay donated a plot and waved the usual $75.00 grave-opening fee. Pondextuer Williams would be entombed next to a recently buried white Vietnam casualty, and within sight of a small memorial to President John F. Kennedy, whose words “ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country” framed the slight rise used as the veterans section of the cemetery. The family scheduled funeral services for Saturday afternoon, August 29, 1970.28

While the court had deliberated, the Campbell family had received hundreds of letters, telegrams, and telephone calls of support and encouragement from around the nation. Notes from veterans and mothers with sons serving in Southeast Asia boosted the family’s morale. One letter was a simple “God bless you” on a long sheet of paper. A letter from Portland, Oregon, expressed hope that the court’s ruling might deal a deathblow to this form of segregation. The author added “Fort Pierce is not the only city to have something such as this happen, but this sort of thing has got to stop somewhere . . . . I hope it stops in Fort Pierce.”29

Not all of the mail and phone calls were supportive, however. At least two letters charged Mary Campbell with using the circumstances to secure a free plot and garner publicity for herself. The grieving mother took the time to respond to a similar complaint from Fort Lauderdale: “my son gave his life for his country and all I wanted was a decent burial for him.” After the court ruling, the family received a series of anonymous telephone calls threatening Mary Campbell and the desecration of her son’s grave. Family friends took such threats seriously, and the round-the-clock vigil in the August heat continued at the Lee Peck Funeral Home.30

Many complaints came to James Livesay. One elderly white man burst into the cemetery offices and demanded to know why Hillcrest had not appealed Judge Mehrten’s decision. He then ordered the markers on the graves of his deceased wife and brother be removed until he could make arrangements to relocate their coffins. Regardless, Livesay remained steadfast in his decision to meet the court’s order and proceed with the Williams burial.31

Throughout Florida, the criticisms of Livesay and Fort Pierce that had prefaced the court case sparked communities to inspect their own cemeteries for similar Jim Crow regulations. Columnist Charles Whited charged in the Miami Herald that discrimination existed in Miami Memorial Park and other Dade County burial grounds. Lake Worth chose to drop its 1923 ordinance calling for racial segregation in government-owned graveyards. “The case opens the door,” applauded the NAACP’s Marvin Davies, who witnessed the Williams decision. He believed that it “would be a weapon of the future that the whole civil rights movement can utilize,” enabling the threat of punitive damages for cemeteries that engaged in racial discrimination.32

On August 29, Pondextuer Williams’s last journey began. His body was transported to Bethel Baptist Church for a private family service before being taken to Indian River Memorial Park for another public gathering. It seemed fitting to those in attendance to bring Gene Williams one final time to the place where he swam

and fished as a youngster. Local clergy officiated, and Ronald A. Beattie, national commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, presented Mary Campbell with an ornate Bible due her as a new Gold Star mother. Willis Edwards, the California veteran who fought so hard for the rights of a fellow soldier whom he never met, spoke on the death threats that the Campbells had endured. He warned that Williams’s body was not safe, even in the grave: “I say to who threatened we are ready, we are not afraid of your threats.”

Hillcrest Memorial’s Livesay took such warnings seriously. He ordered cemetery employees to search the newly excavated grave for bombs or booby traps. Also, on his instructions, special security guards stood watch over the veterans section of the graveyard to insure no disruptions at the final service.

From the river park, the funeral procession drove northward on U.S. Highway 1 to Hillcrest Memorial Gardens. A predominately black crowd of over three hundred gathered for a graveside remembrance, and many more watched from the adjacent highway. An Army detachment, commanded by Major Ludwig Bezemek, performed a military funeral complete with twenty-one rifle shots. An Army bugler, shaded by two palm trees, blew “Taps” for a fallen fellow soldier while the honor guard neatly folded the coffin flag and presented it to Mary Campbell. Additional color guards from both the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars completed the martial scene. Chaplain Herbert Turner preached of Williams that “when he heard his name called by his country he said ‘here I am, ready to serve.’”

As the ceremony concluded, Mary Campbell asked one more favor on behalf of her son: she requested that his casket be unsealed for a final time to have a family friend place Campbell’s old Bible on her son’s uniformed chest. Observers, including Hugh Maloney, a World War I veteran who braved the hot August day because in his words “it was the very least I could do,” could not help but be moved. Hillcrest director Livesay, who stood

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35. Ibid.; Palm Beach Post, 30 August 1970; Miami Herald, 30 August 1970; Ludwig Bezemek, e-mail to author, 11 October 2000. Major Bezemek also served as the survivor assistance officer for the Campbell family for over two months.
silently during the observance and refused to comment when it ended, supervised the entire affair.36

The notoriety of the Williams case insured a large media contingent at the funeral. Reporters from the three television networks filed stories for their evening programs, and print journalists wrote articles for papers in West Palm Beach, Miami, and other major cities. As the crowd—family, friends, mourners, veterans, media, and even just the curious—pressed around the gravesite, order and decorum began breaking down. One newsman had to be ordered out of the way as the military honor guard bore the casket to the grave. Fort Pierce Mayor Summerlin sadly commented on the scene, “the presence of all those cameras takes away the gravity of the situation.”37

Among the observers was a documentary film crew sent by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War to tape the burial for a video study on Vietnam veterans. New York City filmmaker Arthur Littman and his camera crew filmed the burial service and recorded the moment when Mary Campbell broke down in tears. The footage acquired that day, however, never appeared in an anti-war motion picture.38

As the near chaotic scene concluded and the crowd dispersed, only cemetery workers remained to lower Pondextuer Williams into the ground and fill his grave. One of the men commented to a newspaper reporter that it “was a hell of a thing when you have to go through all of this to bury your dead.” Others participants also felt the need to explain what the August 1970 events meant to them. Father Richard Barry, the minister who worked with Ralph Flowers and Marvin Davies to secure justice for the Campbell family, warned that “black soldiers are not going to go to Vietnam to fight and come back to this kind of injustice.” He thought the incident, coming as it did only days before federally-ordered desegregation of Saint Lucie County schools, marked “a new day and people are not going to buy this nonsense.” Finally, Sergeant

Scott, the veteran soldier who escorted Williams's body, home spoke for many: "I hope there is never another soldier who dies in Vietnam who has to go through this."39

Newspaper reporters covering the Williams case echoed Scott's sentiments, expressing hope on front and editorial pages. The Palm Beach Post lamented that such events could occur in 1970 and wished it to be the last in Florida. Williams, a man "with orders to defend a country thousands of miles from home . . . a man who did his job," deserved far better from his own people. Fred P. Graham of the New York Times chagrined how "cemetery segregation has been around for a long time, but people have only tended to get worked up about it in wartime." With twin federal court victories in Alabama and now in Florida, Graham believed that the end might be near for what in his view was "the most bizarre example" of racial discrimination in the United States.40

As editorial writers searched for meaning and consequence in the Williams story, the legal contest continued. Assorted motions were filed throughout the fall of 1970. Some called for clarification of the legal status of the burial deeds; others argued for compensatory and punitive damages for the Campbell family and Rufus Alexander. Early in December, Judge Mehrten ordered monetary damages for the plaintiffs and payment of their attorneys' fees. The defendants were enjoined from "interfering with the interment of the mortal remains of any deceased non-Caucasian in the cemetery property owned and operated by the defendants because of the race or color of the decedent." Also, the court nullified five thousand restrictive grave deeds issued by Hillcrest Memorial Garden. Segregated burial grounds could no longer seek protection under contract law.41

Federal officials placed a bronze plaque on Williams's grave and awarded him the Bronze Star and the Air Medal to accompany his two Purple Hearts. The Air Medal citation read, "his determination to accomplish his mission in spite of the hazards . . . brought credit upon himself, his organization, and the military

39. Palm Beach Post, 28 August, 30 August 1970; News-Tribune, 30 August 1970. Saint Lucie County schools were under a federal court order to desegregate beginning on 31 August 1970.
Ironically, it described the mission that Williams unwittingly continued after his war-battered body returned to Florida. Pondextuer Eugene Williams had the unique opportunity to be twice a hero: once for his nation on the fields of South Vietnam, and once for equality and justice in his Florida hometown. The Williams case was an ugly reminder to Floridians and the rest of the county that by 1970 racial discrimination and segregation persisted. Mary Campbell’s triumph in the federal courts, however, ensured that Jim Crow no longer dictated where a person could be buried, and the Civil Rights movement acquired another victory in its long war against racism.

42. Bronze Star Citation, Pondextuer E. Williams, in Military Personnel Record, National Personnel Center, St. Louis, Mo. Major Bezemek presented Williams’s medal to his mother on 18 November 1970.