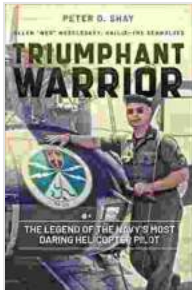


# The Legend of the Navy's Most Daring Helicopter Pilot



## Triumphant Warrior: The Legend of the Navy's Most Daring Helicopter Pilot by Peter D. Shay

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 6880 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 279 pages  
Lending : Enabled

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Lieutenant Commander Thomas J. Hudner Jr. was a true American hero. As a Navy helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War, he risked his life countless times to save others, earning him the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest military award for valor. Hudner's daring rescues and unwavering dedication to his fellow servicemen made him a legend in the Navy and an inspiration to all who knew him.

## **Early Life and Career**

Thomas Hudner was born on July 3, 1931, in Madison, Wisconsin. He was a gifted athlete and a natural leader, and he excelled in both academics and sports. After graduating from high school, Hudner attended the U.S. Naval Academy, where he graduated in 1953 with a degree in engineering. Upon graduation, Hudner was commissioned as an ensign in the Navy and began his flight training.

Hudner quickly proved to be an exceptional pilot, and he soon earned a reputation for his skill and his courage. In 1957, he was assigned to Helicopter Squadron 4 (HS-4), which was based in the Pacific. HS-4 was a combat squadron, and Hudner saw action in the Vietnam War shortly after his arrival.

## **Vietnam War Service**

The Vietnam War was a bloody and difficult conflict, and Hudner's skills as a helicopter pilot were put to the test. He flew countless missions into enemy territory, rescuing downed pilots, evacuating wounded soldiers, and providing support for ground troops. Hudner's bravery and determination were legendary, and he quickly became one of the most respected pilots in the Navy.

One of Hudner's most famous rescues occurred on January 11, 1968. On that day, Hudner and his crew were flying a rescue mission into a heavily fortified enemy area. As they approached their target, they came under heavy fire from enemy anti-aircraft guns. Hudner's helicopter was hit multiple times, and he was seriously wounded. Despite his injuries, Hudner refused to abandon his mission. He continued to fly until he had rescued all

of the downed pilots, and then he flew his damaged helicopter back to safety.

For his actions on January 11, 1968, Hudner was awarded the Medal of Honor. He was the only Navy helicopter pilot to receive the Medal of Honor during the Vietnam War.

## **Post-War Career**

After the Vietnam War, Hudner continued to serve in the Navy. He commanded Helicopter Squadron 4 and later served as the executive officer of the aircraft carrier USS Midway. In 1973, Hudner retired from the Navy with the rank of lieutenant commander.

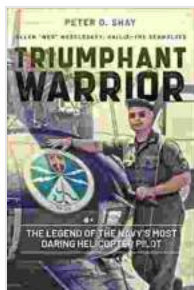
After retiring from the Navy, Hudner worked as a commercial airline pilot. He also became a motivational speaker, sharing his story of courage and determination with audiences around the world.

## **Legacy**

Lieutenant Commander Thomas J. Hudner Jr. was a true American hero. He risked his life countless times to save others, and he always put the needs of his fellow servicemen before his own. Hudner's bravery and dedication to duty are an inspiration to all who knew him, and his legacy will continue to inspire generations to come.

In addition to the Medal of Honor, Hudner received numerous other awards and decorations during his career, including the Navy Cross, the Silver Star, and the Distinguished Flying Cross. He was also inducted into the National Aviation Hall of Fame in 1987.

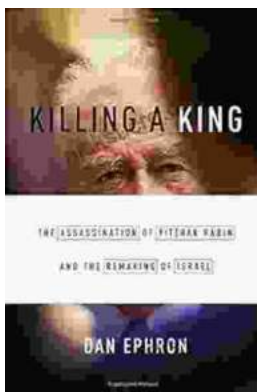
Thomas Hudner died on March 13, 2017, at the age of 85. He is survived by his wife, Mary, and his three children.



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