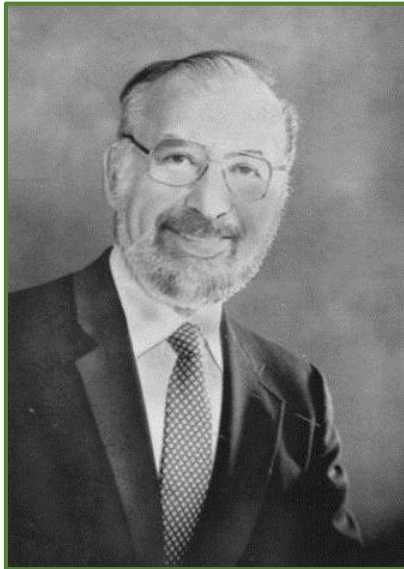


Passing the Lifeline

On Jan. 13, 1982, Air Florida Flight 90 took off from Washington National Airport during an extraordinary period of freezing weather. With ice on the wings, the plane failed to gain altitude and crashed into the 14th Street Bridge, striking six cars and a truck and killing four motorists.

The plane then plunged into the freezing Potomac River. The tail section had broken away and was the only part of the plane that remained afloat. Almost all of the 74 passengers and five crew members perished. The few that survived struggled in the icy river as rescuers tried to reach them.

Five times a helicopter dropped a rope to save Arland Dean Williams Jr., one of the passengers, and five times he passed the rope to other passengers who were in worse shape than he was. When the rope was extended to Williams the sixth time, he was too weak to take hold and succumbed to the frigid waters.



A minister, David A. Slagle, said of Williams: “His heroism was not rash. Aware that his own strength was fading, he deliberately handed hope to someone else over the space of several minutes. On that cold and tragic day, Arland D. Williams Jr. exemplified one of the best attributes of human nature, specifically that some people are capable of doing ‘anything’ for total strangers.”

Williams, a bank examiner, grew up in Illinois and attended The Citadel in South Carolina. In a twist of irony, his high-school girlfriend said he was nervous about The Citadel’s swimming requirement because he had always had a fear of water.

On June 6, 1983, President Ronald Reagan posthumously awarded Williams with the United States Coast Guard’s Lifesaving Medal in a White House Oval

Office presentation to the family. That same year, the city government of the District of Columbia renamed the 14th Street Bridge (which had been officially called the Rochambeau Bridge) the Arland D. Williams Jr. Memorial Bridge in his honor.

His bravery in that ice-choked river was a dramatic story, to be sure, and the honors that came his way after his death were well deserved.

(more)

Other people, too, give their lives to helping others, doing – as the minister said – anything to meet their needs, whether strangers or not. These are the men and women who are called to the mission of Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home. Their commitment may not generate newspaper headlines, but it is very real, nonetheless.

And in the spiritual realm, Jesus Christ gave His life on a cross to throw a lifeline that saves folks from death who grasp it with faith in Him.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter