

Our Name . . .

On April 2, 2006, the nation lost one of its true heroes when CWO4 (Ret.) Michael J. Novosel passed away at age 83. Mike served in the Army and Air Force for a total of 43 years before being forced to retire on his 62nd birthday. He flew bombers as a Lt.Col. in World War II, and helicopters as a CWO in Vietnam. The main street at Ft. Rucker, AL, is named after him.

Born and raised in Etna, PA, he caddied for Art Rooney Sr. as a boy, and was at Forbes Field when Babe Ruth hit his last homerun. Enlisting just before Pearl Harbor, he was technically too short to be an aviator, but a thoughtful medical officer “gave” him an eighth of an inch – to make him 5’4” – allowing him to go to flight school.

In Vietnam, where he flew “DUSTOFF” (medevac) he was awarded the Medal of Honor for a mission where he made 15 separate passes into heavy fire to save 29 trapped soldiers and was wounded in the action. In Vietnam he flew 2,543 missions rescuing 5,589 wounded. He logged 2,038 hours of combat flight time. At one point he served with his son, Mike Jr., who was also a pilot, and they ironically got to rescue one another within the same week after each was shot down. Both served in the 82nd Med Det with our chapter President, John Travers, and through that friendship, Mike became very friendly with our chapter, often visiting and supporting our efforts. He loved central PA and Harrisburg in particular. After his passing, and with the assent of his family, our Chapter adopted his name as part of our own. We carry it with the utmost pride. By doing so his inspirational leadership, unflinching bravery, devotion to family and country, as well as his quiet determination become constant reminders of what we hope to emulate in our activities.

We thank the Novosel family for the trust they have placed in us, and we resolve to never discredit the name and memory of Mike Novosel.