

Welcome to the Web site of the Vietnam Veterans Of America Michael J Novosel Capital Area Chapter 542. VVA Chapter 542's mission is to promote and support veterans and work with the Central Pennsylvania community for the betterment of all. Our chapter has grown by over 100% in the last year and consists of a dedicated group of individuals from all professions.

### **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 Congressional 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.

Over the last two years our chapter has sponsored the arrival and ceremony honoring 091, the Vietnam era UH-1 helicopter which now resides in the Smithsonian's American History Museum in Washington D.C. A ceremony hosted by the Mayor Of Harrisburg Stephen Reed, and attended by the Governor and both Pennsylvania U.S. Senators, as well as many members of the Pennsylvania State Senate and House.

We also hosted the Pennsylvania premier of the critically acclaimed made for TV documentary "In The Shadow Of The Blade" at the beautiful Whitaker Center in Harrisburg Pa. The event, which placed a UH-1 Huey helicopter in front of the theater thanks to the help of the Adjutant

General of the Pennsylvania National Guard, Maj General Jessica Wright, drew hundreds that night.

It was our honor to provide the Grand Marshals for the largest Memorial Day Parade in Pennsylvania, the Annville Parade. Again this year our chapter participated in the parade. And will continue to work with this fine group.

We are proud to host the yearly Christmas Gala at the Lebanon Pennsylvania Veterans Hospital. With the help of Kathleen Torchia and her company Capital Opera Harrisburg, we are able to provide entertainment to our inpatient veterans. We provide gifts to all the patients. We also provide free tickets to veterans and their children for any production of Capitol Opera Harrisburg.

This past November VVA 542 was chosen by Mayor Stephen R. Reed to organize the first Active Duty and Veterans division of the Harrisburg Holiday Parade . The start of the parade was signaled by a flyover of 4 UH 60 BlackHawk helicopters. With the help of the Pennsylvania National Guard we provided 2000 Christmas / Holiday cards which were sent to Pennsylvania guardsmen serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. We will work with the Mayor each year to put together the veterans division.

VVA 542 is the chapter which initiated the now country wide movement to have the United States Army finally recognize the heroism of the brave men and women who fly medical evacuation helicopters in combat known as "Dustoff" by creating the new "Combat Aeromedic Badge". Due to our efforts a bill has passed the U.S. House of Representatives and is currently awaiting action in The United States Senate. On May 3rd 2005 we held a ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Wall in Washington D.C. where we placed the "Combat Aeromedic Badge", a badge designed by a Vietnam medic and funded by our chapter, at the base of each panel containing a name of a fallen member of Dustoff. We will continue this fight until our mission is complete. We invite you to visit our link to Dustoff Heroes to learn more on this effort.

We host dinners and nights out on the town for US Marine and PA Army National Guard units getting ready to deploy.

We are also proud of our vibrant and growing Associates Of The Vietnam Veterans Of America headed by Cathy Keister. The associates include the Lt. Governor of Pennsylvania, the Mayor of Harrisburg, members of the media, members in the show business world, and others from all walks of life who work with us in staging events for the Central Pennsylvania region. The purpose of which is to honor veterans and better the community.

We especially invite the American Vietnamese community who were our gallant allies to join both our organizations! We were proud to fight by your side for a noble cause. You better than any have earned the right to be called Veterans Of The Vietnam War.

**To Join . . .**

It is easy to join us! We have two groups of members: those who qualify to join VVA because of the dates of their service during the Vietnam era (see the membership application for specific dates) and those who do not qualify for VVA. Those who do not are eligible to join the Auxiliary of VVA, and we are proud of the active part that these members play in our activities; we consider the Auxiliary a partner, one that we are quite proud of.

If you think you would like to join us, simply fill out the application located on this website under applications and send it in to us. If you are asking for regular membership in VVA, we will need a DD-214, of course.

**John M.Travers**

President

Vietnam Veterans Of America

Michael J. Novosel

Capital Chapter 542