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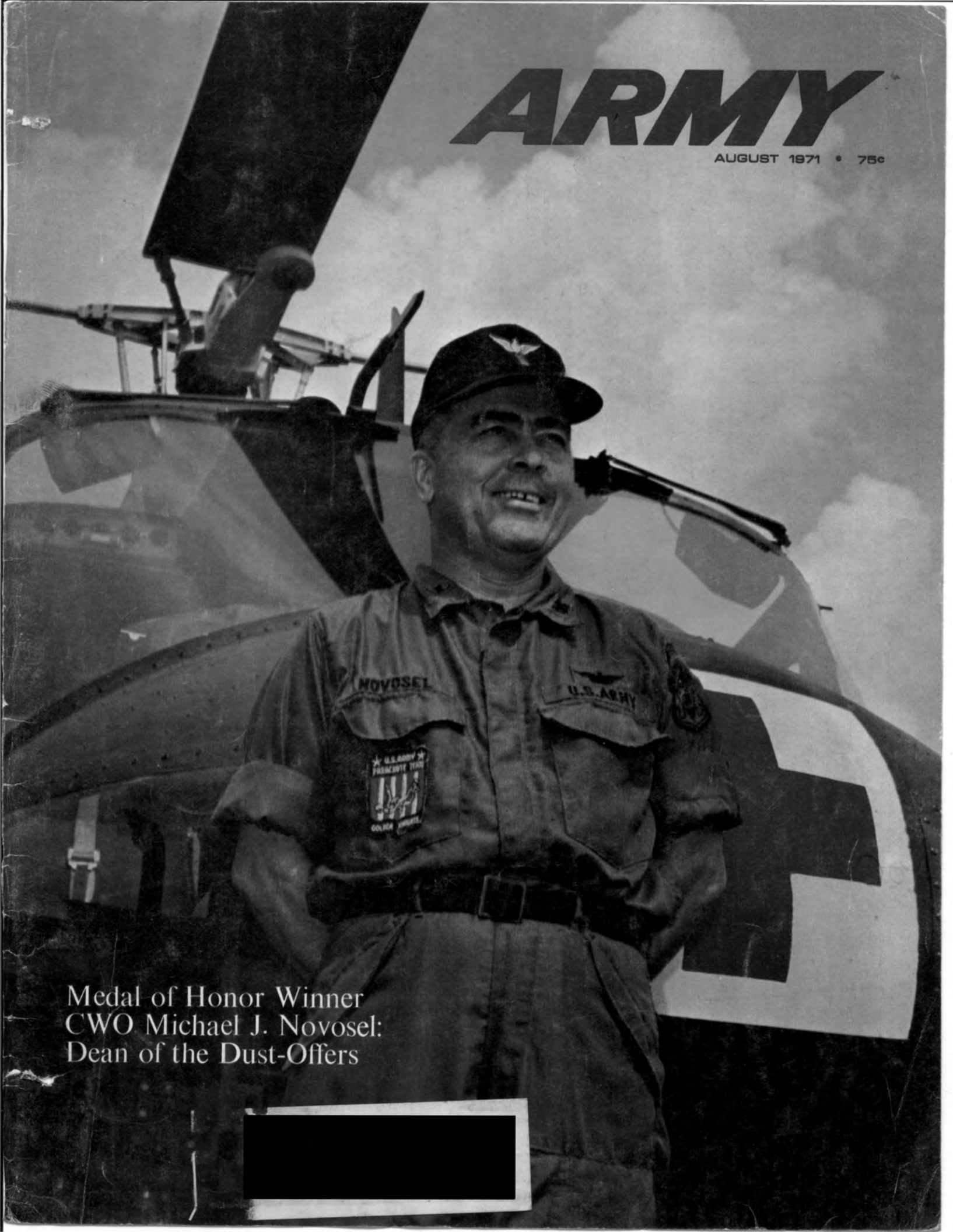


Medal of Honor Winner
CWO Michael J. Novosel:
Dean of the Dust-Offers

At 48, CWO Michael J. Novosel is the oldest member of the Army to win the Medal of Honor for valor in Vietnam. But age and exceptional bravery are not the only qualities which set apart a man who was flying B–29s in raids over Japan before most of his medevac contemporaries were even born.

DEAN OF THE DUST-

Every few years, the government publishes a new volume updating the nation's roster of Medal of Honor winners. There is seldom anything deliberately lyrical or dramatic about the wording of the citations which make up the bulk of these publications, but there is no more fascinating reading anywhere.

As the eye takes in the terse accounts of incredible acts of bravery and sacrifice in battle, the mind instinctively gropes for pictures of the kind of man who singlehandedly fights off wave after wave of enemy attacks in force or who dashes repeatedly into hostile fire to rescue wounded comrades. Being human—and American—we tend to think of such a superman as being 10 feet tall, brawny and young in years, and as fierce as a jungle tiger.

Relatively few of us are ever privileged to meet a Medal of Honor holder, and so it is apt to come as a shock of sorts when this unconsciously held image is found to have been false. There *is* something very special about a man who wears the Medal of Honor but it is not necessarily physical mass, youth or meanness.

No better living proof is CWO Michael J. Novosel, a recent recipient who is old enough to be the grandfather of most of the men who have fought in Vietnam. At 48 (he will be 49 next month), he is the Army's oldest Medal of Honor winner of the war. The soft-spoken Mr. Novosel is no giant: he is 5 feet 4 inches tall and weighs less than 150 pounds. As for meanness, he wasn't even carrying a weapon during those 2½ desperate hours on 2 October 1969, when his repeated bravery in the face of heavy Viet Cong gunfire brought him an award of the Medal in ceremonies at the White House this summer.

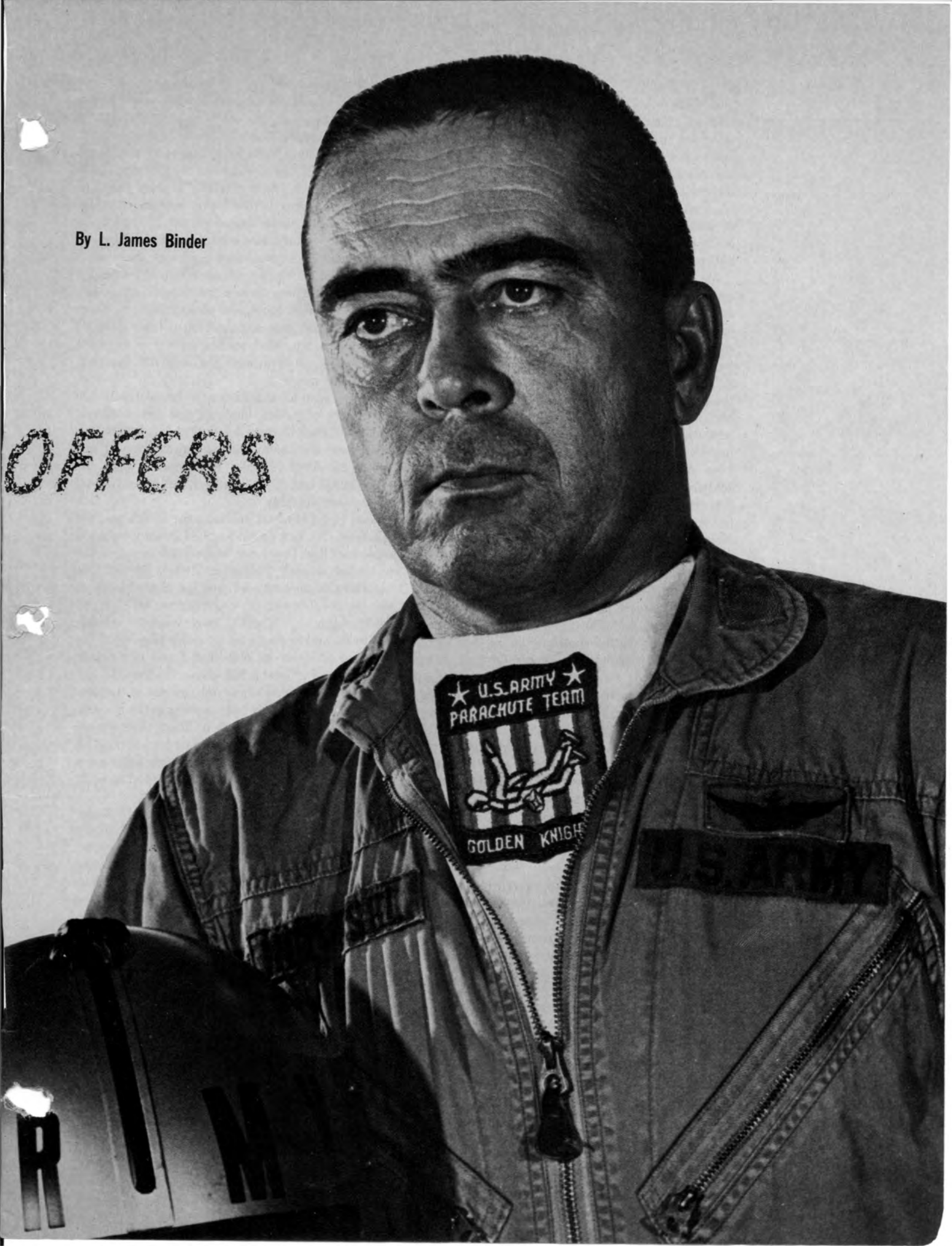
The account of what he did in snatching 29 wounded South Vietnamese soldiers from under the blazing guns of an encircling enemy force is one of the most stirring stories of heroism of the war. But even if there had been no Medal of Honor, Michael Novosel would have been a remarkable man. How else could you describe a person who enlisted in the Army nearly a year before Pearl Harbor, ended World War II flying B–29s over Japan, gave up an airline pilot's job and an Air Force lieutenant colonel's commission to serve in the Vietnam war, and who the year before the action that resulted in the Medal was found to be suffering from glaucoma? These and other highlights of his life bespeak of qualities which make considerations like mere size insignificant in comparison.

Mr. Novosel won his Medal as a "dustoff" pilot, that almost legendary breed of helicopter flier whose record in rescuing wounded men during battle is one of the proudest chapters of this or any other war. When the word went out for him to pick up the injured during intense fighting in the Plain of Reeds, Kien Tuong Province, near Cambodia's enemy-dominated Parrot's Beak, he was on his second tour of Vietnam as a member of the 82nd Medical Detachment, 45th Medical Company, of the 68th Medical Group.

Three companies of crack South Vietnamese Special Forces had attacked a large enemy bunker system hidden in six-foot elephant grass within rifle distance of Cambodia. The site of a huge training center, complete with a full-size model of a triangular South Vietnamese fire base, the bunker was occupied by a large Viet Cong force armed with mortars, rockets, heavy automatic weapons and small arms. In the heavy combat

By L. James Binder

OFFERS



Binder

DEAN DUST-OFFER

that followed, the well-entrenched VC inflicted severe casualties on the South Vietnamese attackers, pinning down two companies for six hours and damaging several helicopter gunships and Air Force fighters which were sent in to cover their withdrawal. Many wounded men were still scattered throughout the three-kilometer area, and at 4:00 p.m. Capt. Harry L. Purdy, who was circling above in his command and control (C&C) helicopter, radioed for a dustoff ship.

Mr. Novosel had already been in the air for seven hours on other missions that day when he and his three-man crew were dispatched to evacuate the wounded. Flying through heavy thunderstorms and rain, he reached the battle area in clear weather and began looking for injured soldiers.

The most cogent account of what happened in the next 2½ hours is in the citation accompanying Mr. Novosel's Medal. It reads in part: "He unhesitatingly maneuvered his helicopter into a heavily fortified and defended enemy training area where a group of wounded Vietnamese soldiers were pinned down by a large enemy force. Flying without gunship or other cover and exposed to intense machine gun fire, Warrant Officer Novosel was able to locate and rescue a wounded soldier. Since all communications with the beleaguered troops had been lost, he repeatedly circled the battle area, flying at low level under continuous heavy fire to attract the attention of the scattered friendly troops. This display of courage visibly raised their morale, as they recognized this as a signal to assemble for evacuation. On six occasions, he and his crew were forced out of the battle area by the intense enemy fire, only to circle and return from another direction to land and extract additional troops. Near the end of the mission, a wounded soldier was spotted close to an enemy bunker. Fully realizing that he would attract a hail of enemy fire, Warrant Officer Novosel nevertheless attempted the extraction by hovering the helicopter backward. As the man was pulled on board, enemy automatic weapons opened fire at close range, damaged the aircraft and wounded Warrant Officer Novosel. He momentarily lost control of the aircraft, but quickly recovered and departed under withering enemy fire. In all, 15 extremely hazardous extractions were performed in order to remove wounded personnel. As a direct result of his selfless conduct, the lives of 29 soldiers were saved."

CWO Novosel as a young flier early in World War II.

But citations cannot tell the whole story, any more than can any of the men who took part in the action on 2 October 1969. All can agree on a chronological set of highlights, but few after-action reports describe how it feels to dive time and again into the very muzzles of blazing hostile weapons, or what is on the mind of a crew member as his helicopter sits on the ground in a hail of bullets while a soldier with his intestines hanging out drags himself slowly toward you through the grass.

Sp. 4 Joseph Horvath, crew chief on Mr. Novosel's Huey, recalls receiving heavy automatic weapons fire "from all sides" as the ship first made its way along the fiery gantlet. "I never heard so much enemy fire before," the veteran dustoffer recalled. "We made several passes . . . and I see many gun flashes from bunkers which are all around us. These bunkers are all over the place." The rest of Horvath's account tells of repeated landings, of being driven away only to return again by another route, and of such feats as hanging out of the hovering craft on a litter strap to scoop up a wounded soldier from the elephant grass below. And around the ship the shooting, always the shooting.

CW2 Tyron Chamberlain, the co-pilot, tells the same story of passes, landings and near-landings, and adds that during the entire 2½ hours "we could hear the enemy machine guns firing at us." When the crew returned to base that night, he notes at the end of his report, it had flown "a total of 11 hours this day."

Said Sp. 4 Herbert Heinold, the craft's medical aid man: "As soon as we touched down we started receiving fire [but] we stayed till we got the wounded aboard. Numerous times, we tried to get down to pick up survivors but the intensity of the fire is too great; it's coming from all sides, so we try again. . . . The VC know what we are trying to do and open up on us every time we come close for pickups. At one time, I saw gun flashes coming from at least a half-dozen bunkers. . . ."

Capt. Purdy adds a note not covered in the citation: Mr. Novosel was instrumental in the successful withdrawal of the main South Vietnamese force because, between runs to pick up wounded, he guided the troops around the high-water areas which dot the marshy Plain of Reeds and to waiting U.S. Navy boats.

One of the things that stands out in Mr. Novosel's recollection of the rescues was of his first attempts to find a wounded soldier that the C&C ship had seen from high above. "Then we spotted him and all of a sudden we started seeing others all over. It happens that way all the time, but then you don't know if they're friendly troops or VC."

Another time, he recalls, he was taking especially heavy fire during one of his passes and he radioed up to Capt. Purdy that "They're most unfriendly down here." Capt. Purdy replied that he had strayed across the border into Cambodia, at that time forbidden to U.S. or South Vietnamese incursion despite the enemy's huge concentrations of troops and weapons there.

He even picked up two unwounded South Vietnamese soldiers who apparently had thrown their weapons away during the action and, despite their protests, flew them back to their units.

The part of the action he remembers most vividly was the last rescue, made just as im-

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pending darkness was forcing a return to base. The bullet-scarred ship was filled with wounded soldiers when crew chief Horvath saw a South Vietnamese soldier lying near one of the bunkers from where enemy soldiers had been firing at them. Mr. Novosel warned the crew to stay low because he expected heavy fire, brought the helicopter around and low, and began backing it toward the wounded man. Backing is a ticklish maneuver which is supposed to protect the crew from gunfire from the rear. Horvath seized the injured soldier by the hand and was pulling him aboard when a VC opened up from pointblank range with an AK–47, spraying the plexiglas windows in front and below Mr. Novosel, and hitting the door and the rotor.

Plexiglas and copper-bullet fragments tore into his right calf and thigh (they are still there), something struck the control stick, injuring his hand, and another bullet hit the bottom of his shoe. Shock and the impact of the bullets made him lose control of the helicopter.

"I can remember saying 'Aw, hell, I'm hit.' I was disgusted, but I think the main reason was to warn the co-pilot, because you can be hit one second and unconscious the next," he said.

He recovered instantly, however, and climbed the ship quickly out of the elephant grass. Meanwhile, the wounded man had slipped from the ship but was seized by the hand by Horvath as he fell and finally was pulled inside about 60 feet in the air.

Mr. Novosel, who was back flying the next day, thinks often about the VC soldier who wounded him. "He must have been scared out of his wits, coming that close to take on something like a helicopter. I can just imagine his leader in that bunker telling him to 'get outside and get that bastard; he's been around long enough'."

But mixed with the wonder about the pluckiness of the man who tried to kill him is anger at himself "because I was outmaneuvered by the enemy. I try to outwit him when I go in and most times I think I'm smarter than he is, but he outfoxed me that afternoon."

What was he thinking as he dove repeatedly into the gunfire? What kept him going as the odds kept falling?

"The simple fact is that I was absolutely sure that I was not going to be hit. I felt that I was invulnerable. I know that it was a false sense of security but it kept me going."

Conversely, "I knew when I headed into that bunker backwards that I was going to be hit. Don't ask me how, but I knew it."

(The rest of the crew also escaped injury from enemy action, but Horvath suffered cuts when he fell while pulling a wounded man aboard. The helicopter, which was struck repeatedly by gunfire, had its VHF radio and air-speed indicator knocked out.)

"People ask me questions like, was I thinking of my family when I went in there and, if I was, how could I risk my life that way," Mr. Novosel said. "I suppose if I was thinking hard about them I probably wouldn't have done it but if everyone who ever went to war kept worrying about his family there wouldn't be anybody left to fight—kind of like the saying, 'suppose they had a war and nobody showed up'."

White House

President Nixon confers the Medal of Honor on CWO Michael J. Novosel in ceremonies at the White House. Watching, in the front row, left to right, are his wife, Ethel; son, John; daughters Patricia and Jean; son Michael Jr.; and his mother, Mrs. Katherine Novosel, of Etna, Pa. Five other Vietnam veterans were also honored. To the left of Mr. Novosel is Sen. Hugh Scott, Senate minority leader from the medal winner's native state of Pennsylvania.

"You keep going because that is what you are supposed to do and because there are people down there who need you. I knew that those Vietnamese soldiers were in a bad way and I felt that I could at least *try* to get them out. Actually, I had a few things going for me—like the elephant grass. I just did not pose a very good target.

"You always tell yourself, too, that the enemy might actually *let* you come right in and pick up the wounded without firing a shot. That has happened to me before. I'd know they were there and could have blasted me if they wanted. But this time they opened up."

Because the enemy rarely respects the large red crosses on the sides and front of dustoff ships, at least enough to hold his fire, some of the rescue craft carry door guns. But not Mr. Novosel's chopper, nor does he carry any sidearms himself. "Guns are a hindrance on a mission like ours," he said. "They take up weight and space that could be used for patients."

One of the techniques Mr. Novosel used that day brings whistles of wonder from his oldest son, Michael Jr., a husky 21-year-old who is also a dustoff pilot with one full tour of Vietnam already on his record. It is called a "running landing" and consists of bringing the helicopter down and then

Medal of Honor winner Novosel and his CW2 son, Michael Jr., stand beside a dustoff helicopter at Fort Bragg. Young Michael says that some of his father's fame has rubbed off on him: "Whenever I go off base, people are always spotting the name tag and coming up to tell me to congratulate my father for them." Between them, the Novosels have evacuated over 8,000 patients during their tours in Vietnam.

skidding it along the ground to present a more difficult target to the enemy while crewmen reach out and scoop up the wounded. It is a tricky maneuver at best, even when the pilot does not have to contend with high elephant grass and soft, marshy ground. It is also supposed to be against regulations—but then so is flying a dustoff ship into heavy gunfire.

The veteran flier admits that he broke several rules that day but asserts that regulations sometimes have to be ignored when there are wounded who need prompt attention. Both Novosels, for example, say they have carried as many as 26 Vietnamese or 18 Americans at one time. Dustoff ships are supposed to hold seven Americans and a few more of the smaller Vietnamese.

Mr. Novosel has "extracted" more than 5,500 wounded soldiers and Vietnamese civilians during his two tours, more often than not from areas where the enemy was still shooting. "Sure, we take a lot of fire," he said, "because usually when we are called it means that people are in a bind."

One indication of how busy a dustoffer's life is was Mr. Novosel's log for the last year he was in Vietnam. He accumulated 1,407 hours in the air which averages out to about four hours of flying time, seven days a week. Another gauge is the 60 Oak Leaf Clusters he has for his Air Medal; basically, to be eligible for one medal it takes 25 combat assault hours on at least 25 missions, or 50 support missions for at least 50 hours.

(He also has three awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, the latter for the action in Kien Tuong Province.)

In conversation with him about his war record, he talks easily and modestly about his own exploits but reserves his superlatives for all of those who man Vietnam's medical evacuation ships.

"I don't know of any dustoff pilot who wouldn't have done the same thing if he had been in my shoes," he said.

A dustoff (or medevac) crewman is a proud and clannish kind of soldier whose performance in the war is given a large share of the credit for the high survival rate among the wounded. Flight in and out of dangerous places under heavy fire is routine, and the system has been so highly developed that medical care facilities are seldom more than an hour away by air.

"The kids I worked with are the most dedicated people in the world," said the Medal of Honor winner. "They keep going out into all kinds of tough situations, in all kinds of weather, day and night. The country owes a lot to the corps, much more than it has been given. On top of that, they have to fly into some of the most difficult and hardest places to find imaginable—and under life or death deadlines—with less navigational equipment than Lindbergh had."

Mr. Novosel's son, a chief warrant officer second class, served in his father's unit in Vietnam after graduating from flight training and was, in fact, qualified under the elder Novosel's supervision. He is crediting with evacuating more than 2,200 wounded persons during his tour. Both he and his father are stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C., where the son flies helicopters and his father a C–47 as a member of the U.S. Army's parachute team, the "Golden Knights". Mr. Novosel and his wife, Ethel, are the parents of three other children: Patricia, a student at Georgia Southwestern College; Jean, 17; and John, 8.

A native of Etna, Pa., Mr. Novosel began his 16 years of active and 14 years of reserve service on 7 February 1941, when he enlisted in the Regular Army. In those pre-Pearl Harbor days, he recalls, the chief impetus was his desire to become an aircraft mechanic, a skill he could make into a career when he became a civilian again. "We were just out of the Depression and the Army seemed like a good place to get an education," he said. "Besides, I'd wanted to fly all of my life."

If the Army had been scrupulous about using a measuring tape and scales, Mr. Novosel might never have got out of the repair hangars. At 5 feet 4 and about 125 pounds, he was considerably under the 5 feet 8 and 160 pounds which were the minimum for acceptance to flight training. Nevertheless, 13 months after enlisting he traded his staff sergeant's stripes for a flying cadet's uniform. He had simply told the Army he was considerably bigger than he was and in those times of rapid military build-up it chose to believe him.

After receiving his wings in December 1942, at the Army Air Field at Lake Charles, La., he became an instructor and later a test pilot at Laredo, Tex.

"I flew every kind of bomber we had and three kinds of fighter planes besides," he says of those days.

But the urge to see action was great and he finally was assigned to the Pacific Theater where he piloted B–29s in a "few raids" over Japan be-

fore the war ended. He stayed in the Air Force after the war, and as a captain commanded the 99th Bombardment Squadron on Tinian, in the Marianas. In 1949, he left active duty and bought a restaurant in Fort Walton Beach, Fla.

He left his successful business to volunteer for service in the Korean War and, as a major, was in just long enough to complete a course at the Air Command and Staff School. Back off active duty, he spent several years managing a private club and a post exchange at Fort Walton Beach before going to work in 1959 for Southern Airways as an airliner pilot.

When the Vietnam conflict began to broaden in the early 1960s, Mr. Novosel was a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force Reserve. Feeling that he could be of help to the effort, he "made inquiries" about going back on active duty but soon learned that the Air Force was overstrength in its senior officer grades. So he obtained four years of military leave from Southern Airways and rejoined the Army on 29 June 1964, as a warrant officer.

There is nothing complicated or especially high-sounding about Mr. Novosel's reply today when asked why he interrupted a good civilian career, took a sharp reduction in rank and volunteered to go back to war at an age when many military men are thinking about retirement. He answers, "Because I thought I could be of help." If pressed for a more easily understood explanation, he adds: "I felt that because of my military background I could do something to help the country [South Vietnam] out of its predicament."

His first medevac experience in an emergency situation was as a member of the Special Forces in 1965 when he carried wounded civilians to hospitals when the United States intervened in the Dominican Republic civil crisis. The next three years included a year's tour of dustoff duty in Vietnam where he evacuated his first 2,000 patients. Then in 1968, his leave from Southern Airways was up and he applied for discharge.

But his hopes of going back into a healthier branch of aviation were dashed during his discharge physical. Army physicians found that he had glaucoma, a serious eye disease which can result in progressive loss of vision. Doctors were able to check the affliction, but Southern physical requirements prevented him from resuming his job as a commercial pilot.

The Army let him go on flying on a waiver, however, and in 1969 Mr. Novosel—who is proud of the fact that he has never been grounded because of illness—was back in Vietnam. He still is required to apply medication to his eyes four times a day, although he has 20/20 vision and apparently has suffered no ill effects from the disease.

When the officer to whom he reported back in Vietnam saw his record, he assumed that Mr. Novosel would want a relatively safe assignment to fixed-wing duty. "I knew, though, that they needed dustoff pilots and I asked to go back to the helicopter," he recalls.

As a member of the Golden Knights, he flies on jumps and plays golf as often as he can. He has made three jumps since joining the team but gave it up after the third one "because I'm getting too old." His plans for the future are to retire in four years, probably back to Fort Walton Beach where he still owns a house.

He has been asked the inevitable question about his views of the war: "I have no quarrel with our being there" is as close as he will come to commenting on our commitment. Other remarks, though, indicate that he considers the question immaterial to a soldier with a duty to perform.

But he is more voluble about the quality of the American fighting man and the effect opposition to the war has had on him.

The subject came up when he was asked his reaction to the claim made by the most publicized of the five men who received the Medal of Honor with him in late June. The soldier, Sgt. Peter C. Lemon, boasted afterward that he had been smoking marijuana when he stood off the enemy attack that won him the Medal.

"I do wish he hadn't said that," Mr. Novosel said evenly. Then, asked if he thought the claim would cheapen the award, he added softly: "No; nothing could do that."

But he does not belong to that breed of old campaigner who feels that the Army is going to hell in a handbasket because it is letting soldiers wear their hair longer and making other compromises to accommodate youthful life styles:

"I don't care how long a man's hair is or whether he goes strictly by the book or not. What I want to know is, can he do his job. I look for little things, like a cook or a clerk going to the trouble of moving an oil drum out of the way because a helicopter might have to land where it's standing. That's the kind of man I want in my outfit."

He is an easy-going man but his eyes glint in anger when he talks about the public's attitude toward those fighting in Vietnam:

"Our soldiers keep going and have been doing a tremendous job in spite of all kinds of opposition at home. A soldier feels like he's hated and there isn't anything he can do about it—it isn't his fault he's in Vietnam. Afterward he goes back to an environment which at best merely tolerates him. It's a tribute to his toughness that he holds up."

Allegations that our troops are less than first-rate fighting men also get short shrift:

"In all my time in Vietnam, I never saw an American soldier do anything even approaching cowardice."

No accolade to courage ever came from a higher authority.

Other Medal Of Honor Winners on Next 2 Pages

MEDAL OF HONOR

Sgt. John P. Baca

Maj. Kern W. Dunagan

Six soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor during the ceremony at which Mr. Novosel was honored. The others included Sp. 4 John P. Baca, Maj. Kern W. Dunagan, Sgt. Peter C. Lemon, Sgt. Richard A. Penry and S. Sgt. Franklin D. Miller.

All were cited by President Nixon "for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty."

Specialist Baca was decorated for "extraordinary courage and selflessness" on 10 February 1970, when he took part in a night ambush in Phuoc Long Province as a recoilless-rifle team member of Company D, 1st Battalion, 12th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division. In the words of his citation: "A platoon from his company was sent to investigate the detonation of an automatic ambush device forward of his unit's main position and soon came under intense enemy fire from concealed positions along the trail. Hearing the heavy firing from the platoon position and realizing that his recoilless rifle team could assist the members of the besieged patrol, Specialist Baca led his team through the hail of enemy fire to a firing position within the patrol's defensive perimeter. As they prepared to engage the enemy, a fragmentation grenade was thrown into the midst of the patrol. Fully aware of the danger to his comrades, Specialist Baca unhesitatingly, and with complete disregard for his own safety, covered the grenade with his steel helmet and fell on it as the grenade exploded, thereby absorbing the lethal fragments and concussion with his body. His gallant action and total disregard for his own personal well-being directly saved eight men from certain serious injury or death."

The 22-year-old Baca is a native of Providence, R.I., and the son of Navy CWO C. L. Baca. He is presently on the temporary disability retired list.

Major Dunagan, 37, was cited for extraordinary heroism on 13-14 May 1969, when he commanded Company A, 1st Battalion, 46th Infantry, Americal Division, during an engagement in Quang Tin Province. According to the citation:

"On 13 May, Major Dunagan was leading an attack to relieve pressure on the battalion's forward support base when his company came under intense fire from a well-entrenched enemy battalion. Despite continuous hostile fire from a numerically superior force, Major Dunagan repeatedly and fearlessly exposed himself in order to locate enemy positions, direct friendly supporting artillery, and position the men of his company. In the early evening, while directing an element of his unit into perimeter guard, he was seriously wounded during an enemy mortar attack, but he refused to leave the battlefield and continued to supervise the evacuation of dead and wounded and to lead his command in the difficult task of disengaging from an aggressive enemy. In spite of painful wounds and extreme fatigue, Major Dunagan risked heavy enemy fire on two occasions to rescue critically wounded men. He was again seriously wounded. Undaunted, he continued to display outstanding courage, professional competence, and leadership and successfully extricated his command from its untenable position on the evening of 14 May. Having maneuvered his command into contact with an adjacent friendly unit, he learned that a six-man party from his company was under fire and had not reached the new perimeter. Major Dunagan unhesitatingly went back and searched for his men. Finding one soldier critically wounded, Major Dunagan, ignoring his own wounds, lifted the man to his shoulders and carried him to the comparative safety of the friendly perimeter. Before permitting himself to be evacuated, he insured all of his wounded received emergency treatment and were removed from the area. Throughout the engagement, Major Dunagan's actions gave great inspiration to his men and were directly responsible for saving the lives of many of his fellow soldiers."

The father of five children, Maj. Dunagan is currently assigned to the U.S. Forces Support District in Europe.

Sergeant Lemon, 21, now a civilian living in Michigan, was an assistant machine gunner on 1 April 1970, when E Co., 2d Bn., 8th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division became engaged in the defense of Fire Support Base Illingworth in Tay Ninh Province. His citation read:

"When the base came under heavy enemy attack, Sergeant Lemon engaged a numerically superior enemy with machine gun and rifle fire from his defensive position until both weapons malfunctioned. He then used hand grenades to fend off the intensified enemy attack launched in his direction. After eliminating all but one of the enemy soldiers in the immediate vicinity, he pursued and disposed of the remaining soldier in hand-to-hand combat. Despite fragment wounds from an exploding grenade, Sergeant Lemon regained his position, carried a more seriously wounded comrade to an aid station, and, as he returned, was wounded a second time by enemy fire. Disregarding his personal injuries, he moved to his position through a hail of small arms and grenade fire. Sergeant Lemon immediately realized that the defensive sector was in danger of being overrun by the enemy and unhesitatingly assaulted the enemy soldiers by throwing hand grenades and engaging in hand-to-hand combat. He was wounded yet a third time, but his determined efforts successfully drove the enemy from the position. Securing

Sgt. Peter C. Lemon

Sgt. Richard A. Penry

S.Sgt. Franklin D. Miller

an operable machine gun, Sergeant Lemon stood atop an embankment fully exposed to enemy fire, and placed effective fire upon the enemy until he collapsed from his multiple wounds and exhaustion. After regaining consciousness at the aid station, he refused medical evacuation until his more seriously wounded comrades had been evacuated."

Sergeant Penry, 22, a native of Petaluma, Calif., and now a member of the Army Reserve, was awarded the Medal for valor as a rifleman during a night ambush on 31 January 1970, in Binh Tuy Province. He belonged to Company C, 4th Battalion, 12th Infantry, 199th Infantry Brigade. His feat was described thus:

"As [his] platoon was preparing the ambush position, it suddenly came under an intense enemy attack from mortar, rocket, and automatic weapons fire which seriously wounded the company commander and most of the platoon members, leaving small isolated groups of wounded men throughout the area. Sergeant Penry, seeing the extreme seriousness of the situation, worked his way through the deadly enemy fire to the company command post where he administered first aid to the wounded company commander and other personnel. He then moved the command post to a position which provided greater protection and visual communication and control of other platoon elements. Realizing the company radio was damaged and recognizing the urgent necessity to reestablish communications with the battalion headquarters, he ran outside the defensive perimeter through a fusillade of hostile fire to retrieve a radio. Finding it inoperable, Sergeant Penry returned through heavy fire to retrieve two more radios. Turning his attention to the defense of the area, he crawled to the edge of the perimeter, retrieved needed ammunition and weapons and resupplied the wounded men. During a determined assault by over thirty enemy soldiers, Sergeant Penry occupied the most vulnerable forward position placing heavy, accurate fire on the attacking enemy and exposing himself several times to throw hand grenades into the advancing enemy troops. He succeeded virtually single-handedly in stopping the attack. Learning that none of the radios were operable, Sergeant Penry again crawled outside the defensive perimeter, retrieved a fourth radio and established communications with higher headquarters. Sergeant Penry then continued to administer first aid to the wounded and repositioned them to better repel further enemy attacks. Despite continuous and deadly sniper fire, he again left the defensive perimeter, moved to within a few feet of enemy positions, located five isolated wounded soldiers, and led them to safety. When evacuation helicopters approached, Sergeant Penry voluntarily left the perimeter, set up a guiding beacon, established the priorities for evacuation and successively carried eighteen wounded men to the extraction site.

"After all wounded personnel had been evacuated, Sergeant Penry joined another platoon and assisted in the pursuit of the enemy."

Staff Sgt. Miller, 26, was a member of the 5th Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces, on 5 January 1970, when the long-range reconnaissance patrol of which he was a team leader made contact with enemy forces deep inside enemy-controlled territory in Kontum Province. The patrol had just left the helicopter insertion point when:

"Suddenly one of the team members tripped a hostile booby trap which wounded four soldiers. Sergeant Miller, knowing that the explosion would alert the enemy, quickly administered first aid to the wounded and directed the team into positions across a small stream bed at the base of a steep hill. Within a few minutes, Sergeant Miller saw the lead element of what he estimated to be a platoon size enemy force moving toward his location. Concerned for the safety of his men, he directed the small team to move up the hill to a more secure position. He remained alone, separated from the patrol, to meet the attack. Sergeant Miller single-handedly repulsed two determined attacks by the numerically superior enemy force and caused them to withdraw in disorder. He rejoined his team, established contact with a forward air controller and arranged the evacuation of his patrol. However, the only suitable extraction location in the heavy jungle was a bomb crater some 150 meters from the team location.

"Sergeant Miller reconnoitered the route to the crater and led his men through the enemy controlled jungle to the extraction site. As the evacuation helicopter hovered over the crater to pick up the patrol, the enemy launched a savage automatic weapon and rocket-propelled grenade attack against the beleaguered team, driving off the rescue helicopter. Sergeant Miller led the team in a valiant defense which drove back the enemy in its attempt to overrun the small patrol. Although seriously wounded and with every man in his patrol a casualty, Sergeant Miller moved the patrol to a more protected position. He then moved forward to again single-handedly meet the hostile attackers. From his forward exposed position, Sergeant Miller gallantly repelled two attacks by the enemy before a friendly relief force reached the patrol location."

A native of Elizabeth City, N. C., Sgt. Miller was serving with U.S. Army Training Support, U.S. Army Pacific–Vietnam, when he was awarded the Medal of Honor.