

OBITUARY
Michael Joseph Faas
1944 - 2016



POLSON — “In spite of the unprecedented volume of hostile ground fire that was directed at his aircraft, Captain Faas continued to direct the rescue operation until his aircraft sustained major battle damage, forcing him to bailout a short distance away,” reads the citation on the Silver Star Medal awarded to Mike for a particularly dangerous mission; his second wartime bailout.

Michael J. Faas, fighter pilot, now looking toward peaceful skies, filled with bright sun and fair winds, departed this troubled earth on his 72nd birthday, Oct. 3, 2016.

After graduation from the University of Florida in 1966, the New York native, completed Air Force Officer Training School and Undergraduate Pilot Training; earning the silver wings of an Air Force pilot in 1968. Possessing the idealism of a young warrior, he immediately elected to fly and go to war in the A-1 Sky Raider, the Air Force’s last propeller driven fighter plane. Even though obsolete, it was one of the most highly respected combat airplanes in the Southeast Asian War. He was assigned to Nakom Phenom Air (NKP) Base, Thailand, flying air support and interdiction missions over the perilous Ho Chi Minh Trail.

On one first tour mission, his A-1 was hit and downed by anti-aircraft guns. After his battle experience under fire, Mike volunteered to join the storied Combat Rescue team—their motto: ‘That others may live.’ Protecting and saving the lives of downed airman became Mike’s mission. Completing special training, he returned to NKP for a second tour of duty, eager to put his new skills to use. Now, flying his Sky Raider as a ‘Sandy,’ the legendary call sign of Search and Rescue mission fighters, he consistently put his own life in harm’s way to protect airmen downed deep in enemy held territory.

In addition to his Silver Star medal for Gallantry, he wears four Distinguished Flying Crosses and a Purple Heart. Mike, unassuming throughout his life, was the epitome of an ‘Aw shucks, I didn’t do anything special’ American hero—shunning accolades and special recognition.

Infected with a love of flying, he continued in aviation for the next three decades. Initially, still looking for adventure, Mike left active duty to fly as a civilian pilot for Continental Air Service, a contract airline supporting the US State Department and other ‘Intelligence Agencies’, performing relief and resupply missions into remote, sometimes covert, sites in Laos and Cambodia.

Living in Vientiane with his wife Bobbie, they survived a revolution fought in the streets near their home. When the war in Southeast Asia ended, Mike returned to the US to fly for several airlines before donning the uniform of an American Airlines Captain; retiring in 2004.

With a restless character, he was not satisfied with a leisurely retirement. Mike enrolled in Denver University law school, graduating with a Juris Doctorate in 2005; practicing law in Colorado and Montana for the next decade. For a period, Mike served as Deputy Lake County Attorney in Polson. Doggedly fighting an 'Agent Orange' related cancer, Mike spent his final days fishing and boating on the shores of beautiful Flathead Lake.

Surviving him are Barbara (Bobbie), his wife of 45 years; his daughter, Debbie; and son, Matthew. He provided them all a lifetime of steady guidance, support and love. Matthew's daughter, Emmalee, who loves her 'Papa', brought Mike a special joy. Also surviving are his sister, Susan Jackson, living in Middletown, New York; and his brother, Peter, with wife Anita, residing in Melbourne, Florida.

Mike received a legacy of love from his parents, Fredrick and Margaret Faas, to whom he was intensely devoted throughout their lives. Younger brother, Stephen, predeceased Mike.

A Memorial Service will be given at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church in Polson where Mike is a parishioner.

-<http://www.valleyjournal.net/Article/16208/Michael-Joseph-Faas-1944--2016>