



## **CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE AIR MEDAL**

**TO**

### **LIEUTENANT COMMANDER ROBERT L. ASHWORTH UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Lieutenant Commander ASHWORTH is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight during the night and early morning hours of 16 to 17 April 1975 while serving as pilot and aircraft commander of Coast Guard HH-3F 1496 helicopter engaged in the perilous rescue of five crew members of the fishing vessel MANZANITA which had run aground and was breaking up in high winds and heavy surf 20 miles east of Cape Suckling on the Alaska mainland. Advised of the emergency, Lieutenant Commander ASHWORTH and his crew departed the Coast Guard Air Station, Kodiak, Alaska, to assist. Although hampered by low ceilings and visibilities reduced to less than one mile in rain and darkness, with precipitous terrain enroute and on scene, he skillfully piloted the aircraft to the scene, approximately 300 miles distant, and located the vessel rolling violently 100 yards from the beach in the menacing breaking seas. While positioning the helicopter with the rescue basket down near the MANZANITA, he observed an overanxious crewman jump overboard and be swept away in the frigid sea. At that moment, a large wave struck the vessel and spray completely engulfed the helicopter. Through excellent flight crew coordination, Lieutenant Commander ASHWORTH expertly maneuvered the aircraft to enable his hoist operator to deliver the rescue basket to the man in the water. Immediately, and to the dismay of the helicopter crew, the other four men on the vessel leaped off the boat and grasped the basket. Faced with a potentially disastrous situation of being unable to retrieve the overloaded basket, Lieutenant Commander ASHWORTH promptly instructed his crew and then carefully began a side taxi / tow toward shore, effectively dragging the rescue basket and its occupants thru the turbulent surf. After landing on the beach, the five survivors were explained and flown to Cordova, Alaska for medical treatment. Lieutenant Commander ASHWORTH's exceptional initiative, fortitude and aeronautical skill throughout the mission contributed to saving the lives of the five seamen. His courage, sound judgment, and unwavering devotion of duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.