



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE AIR MEDAL

TO

THOMAS W. WYNN AVIATION ELECTRICIAN'S MATE SECOND CLASS UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Petty Officer WYNN is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight during the early morning of 1 November 1979 while serving as SAR aircrewman and hoist operator of Coast Guard HH-52A 1426 engaged in the perilous rescue of two seaman from the M/T BURMAH AGATE and twenty seamen from the M/V MIMOSA, both of which were burning out of control following a collision five miles southeast of Galveston, Texas. Dispatched from Coast Guard Air Station Houston, the helicopter arrived at BURMAH AGATE moments after an explosion lit up the sky. The entire ship was engulfed in towering flames except for a small portion of the port side where two men were located on the aircastle railing. Realizing that the tanker could explode again at any moment, the aircraft was quickly maneuvered to a precise position over the men, despite towering flames, billowing smoke and turbulence created by intense heat. Petty Officer WYNN then hoisted the two men to safety. Proceeding to MIMOSA, which was still underway with fires raging on the upper deck, forward hold, and superstructure, the pilot positioned the aircraft over an extremely narrow port bridge wing while Petty Officer WYNN executed 3 hoists to rescue 10 persons. Disembarking the twelve survivors on a nearby oil platform, the helicopter was again returned to MIMOSA where Petty Officer WYNN hoisted 8 more crewmen to safety. With only a firefighting team remaining on board MIMOSA, the helicopter was flown back to BURMAH AGATE to search for survivors. When the fires aboard MIMOSA again raged out of control, the six survivors were discharged on the oil platform and the aircraft returned to the now erratically turning vessel. Petty Officer WYNN then hoisted four more persons to safety. These survivors were also flown to the oil platform. Because of a critically low fuel state, the helicopter was then forced to depart the scene. Petty Officer WYNN's innovative actions and expert aeronautical skills throughout this mission resulted in the rescue of twenty-two men. His courage, sound judgment and unwavering devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.