



**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE COAST GUARD MEDAL**

TO

**GARY W. WOOD
AVIATION MACHINIST'S MATE THIRD CLASS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer WOOD is cited for extraordinary heroism on the morning of 11 May 1981. During this period, Petty Officer WOOD was serving as search and rescue aircrewman aboard Coast Guard HH-52A 1424 engaged in the perilous rescue of two persons from the burning wreckage of their twin engine aircraft. While practicing touch and go landings at North Perry Airport in Pembroke Pines, Florida, the pilots observed a light, twin engine aircraft losing altitude, striking its right wing tip on the ground, cartwheeling and immediately bursting into flames. After a quick turn around the wreckage, the helicopter was moved into a position to utilize its rotor wash as a fire suppressor. One occupant had emerged from the flames with his clothing on fire and was pointing back to the wreckage and flames. This was correctly interpreted to mean that there was yet another victim trapped in flames. The second person was not visible because of the enormous fire ball surrounding the aircraft. As the helicopter moved into the fire ball, with its rotor wash blowing the fire and smoke back and away, the pilots noticed a woman trying to crawl out from the wreckage. Without hesitation or regard for his own personal safety, Petty Officer WOOD leaped from the hovering helicopter and ran into an area of intense heat, dense billowing smoke and flames in an attempt to rescue the woman. Although parts of her hair, skin and clothing were still on fire, Petty Officer WOOD patted out the flames and tried to drag her away from the fire. Unable to do so, he immediately solicited help from a man standing nearby and together they pulled the woman away from the wreckage. Petty Officer WOOD then assisted the paramedic from the crash fire rescue crew who had arrived on scene, and he coordinated the loading of both patients aboard the helicopter. During the brief flight to the hospital he helped the paramedic administer first aid and did everything possible to render aid and comfort to the two victims. Petty Officer WOOD demonstrated remarkable initiative, exceptional fortitude and daring in spite of imminent personal danger in this rescue. His unselfish actions, courage and unwavering devotion to duty reflect the highest credit upon himself and the United States Coast Guard.