



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

TO

**MATTHEW P. FITHIAN
AVIATION SURVIVALMAN SECOND CLASS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer FITHIAN is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight while serving as a rescue swimmer aboard Coast Guard HH-3F helicopter 1433 engaged in the perilous rescue of 43 people from flood waters in Roanoke, Virginia on the evening of 4 November 1985. Petty Officer FITHIAN was vital to the rescue operation as he was, time and again, the first person in contact with the survivors as he was lowered to a rooftop or building. Petty Officer FITHIAN organized the people, assuaged their fears, and led them to safe areas from which they could be hoisted to refuge. During one evolution, Petty Officer FITHIAN was forced to wade through swift, chest-deep flood waters and dislodge a telephone pole in order to clear an exit through which he led 13 stranded women to safety. Petty Officer FITHIAN's poise during the operation was admired by the crew and contagious to the survivors. On his last hoist of the night, Petty Officer FITHIAN was hoisted aboard the helicopter while clutching the survivor's pet dog in his arms. His courage, judgment, and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.