



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

TO

**WILLIAM N. CAVANAUGH
AVIATION MACHINIST'S MATE SECOND CLASS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer CAVANAUGH is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight during the afternoon of 16 September 1975 while serving as flight mechanic and hoist operator of Coast Guard HH-3F 1491 helicopter engaged in the perilous rescue of sixty persons from the ravages of floods caused by the passage of Hurricane ELOISE in the Mayaguez, Puerto Rico area. Advised of the emergency, Petty Officer CAVANAUGH immediately responded and, when the helicopter was readied, departed Coast Guard Air Station, Puerto Rico. Upon arrival on scene, hundreds of people were observed stranded in treetops and on the roofs of structures about to collapse. Although hampered by low visibility, moderate turbulence, heavy rains and high winds, Petty Officer CAVANAUGH effected many difficult hoists of flood survivors for transportation to the safety of a nearby shopping center which was on high ground. Many of the hoists were performed in close proximity to high power lines which were out of the pilots view due to the heading the helicopter had to hold to withstand the velocity of the wind. Petty Officer CAVANAUGH gave extremely accurate advisories and directions to the pilots as to the locations of the high power lines while performing the precision hoists. Petty Officer CAVANAUGH's exceptional initiative, fortitude and aeronautical skill in this rescue mission contributed to saving the lives of sixty persons. His courage, sound judgment and unwavering devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.