



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

**TO**

**JOHN L. CAWLEY  
AVIATION ELECTRICIAN'S MATE SECOND CLASS  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Petty Officer CAWLEY is cited for heroism on the afternoon of 16 December 1976 while serving as SAR aircrewman of Coast Guard HH-52A 1420 helicopter engaged in the perilous rescue of sixteen crew members and passengers from a small commercial aircraft which had ditched two miles south of Victory, British Columbia, Canada. Departing Coast Guard Air Station Port Angeles, Washington, the helicopter encountered a dense fog bank covering the entire water area enroute to the ditch site which required flying at altitudes as low as 10 feet and at very slow speeds. During this demanding flight, Petty Officer CAWLEY concentrated on both searching and on readying the after cabin by rigging the sea rescue platform and several rafts. After locating the wreckage, the helicopter was landed in the water and the rescue operation commenced. Realizing that, because of the distance, he would not be able to throw a line or a raft to the hapless victims, Petty Officer CAWLEY, without hesitation or regard for his personal safety, plunged into the frigid water and towed a raft to the partially submerged aircraft. As he was directing the first survivor into the raft, the wreckage settled further and capsized, striking the rotating blades of the helicopter and throwing the remaining survivors into the water. Petty Officer CAWLEY swam back to the helicopter, shouting instructions to restore calm, and helped the people onto the rescue platform. When all were apparently on board the helicopter, he then swam around the wreckage a last time to ensure that everyone had been rescued. This task completed, he returned to the helicopter and remained outside to allow the survivors the shelter and relative comfort of the cabin. The helicopter was then water taxed clear of the fog area and the people transferred to arriving surface craft for evacuation to safety. Petty Officer CAWLEY demonstrated remarkable initiative, exceptional fortitude, and daring in spite of imminent personal danger in this rescue and contributed to the saving of sixteen lives. His unselfish action, courage, and unwavering devotion to duty reflect the highest credit upon himself and the United States Coast Guard.