

Citation for
THE ASSOCIATION FOR RESCUE AT SEA
Gold Medal

To: Joshua H. Mitcheltree
Aviation Survival Technician Third Class
United States Coast Guard

Petty Officer MITCHELTREE is cited for meritorious achievement in aerial flight while serving as a Rescue Swimmer aboard Coast Guard helicopter CG6041. On the evening of 29 April 2006 CG6041 was dispatched to assist the foundering 60 foot sailing vessel OUR LUCK. The OUR LUCK had encountered deteriorating weather for several days and was desperately low on fuel.

Upon arriving on the scene, CG6041 encountered 25-foot seas, 35 knot winds, and total darkness due to an overcast ceiling. With the worsening weather conditions and the OUR LUCK'S proximity to shoal water, it was decided to have the crew enter the vessel's life raft for the rescue. Petty officer MTICHELTREE was lowered into the rolling seas and began battling his way through the punishing waves toward the life raft 100 yards away.

Upon reaching the raft, he climbed aboard to prepare the survivors for the hoisting evolution to come. Just before entering the water with the first terrified survivor, both were thrown overboard by a violent swell. During the long swim to the basket, Petty Officer MITCHELTREE fought against the tumultuous seas with the panic-stricken survivor who had become combative.

After stopping several times to reassure her, he reached the hoisting area. He positioned her into the bask a split second before it was ripped from his grasp by a towering wave, and she was hoisted to safety.

After making his way back to the raft, he removed the second survivor and began another exhausting swim to the basket. After fitting the 250-pound survivor into the basket, a huge swell dropped out from under them. While maintaining his forceful grip on the basket, Petty Officer MITCHELTREE and the survivor swung wildly through the air and were slammed violently into the next wave, throwing the survivor out of the basket.

Petty Officer MITCHELTREE quickly recovered the survivor and skillfully repositioned him back into the basket. Another large wave dropped beneath them suspending them 10 feet over the wave's trough. After clearing the next wave, he released the basket and fell back into the sea as the survivor was hoisted to safety. Petty offer MITCHELTREE was then hoisted after sinking the abandoned life raft.

Petty Officer MTICHELTREE'S determination and swift actions throughout the demanding rescue evolution directly resulted in the saving of two mariners. His courage, judgement, and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United State Coast Guard.