



John G. Denninger, Jr
Captain
Class of 1962



**The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting
the Distinguished Flying Cross to
Lieutenant Commander John George Denninger, Jr.
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

For service as set forth in the following Citation:

For extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight during the predawn hours of 13 February 1974 as aircraft commander of Coast Guard helicopter HH-3F 1481 engaged in the perilous rescue of four crewmen of the fishing vessel NORMAR under extremely hazardous conditions in the Shelikof Strait, Gulf of Alaska. The vessel had been trapped by a vicious storm in the Shelikof Strait, grounded in a cove along the mountainous Alaska Peninsula and capsized due to heavy superstructure icing encountered in the hurricane force wind-swept seas. The four-man crew abandoned their vessel and took refuge in a life raft tethered to her stern. Lieutenant Commander DENNINGER and his crew dispatched from Kodiak Air Station successfully battled 70-knot winds, severe turbulence and near zero visibility due to sea smoke, spray and fog, until they reached the distress scene 180 miles from Kodiak. Carefully coordinating instruction from an orbiting C-130 and information from radar, he skillfully maneuvered the helicopter along the jagged coastline into the narrow mountainous cove in which the NORMAR lay capsized and broken and located the survivors huddled in a raft. Lieutenant Commander DENNINGER immediately established and maintained an exact hover over the wind-driven raft in the face of the 2500-foot mountain directly in front of him and steep cliffs on two sides which restricted maneuverability. Although the NORMAR caught fire during the hoisting operation, further compounding the hazardous flying conditions as smoke and fuel vapors enshrouded the helicopter Lieutenant Commander DENNINGER, undaunted, maintained his position throughout the 13-minute hover until all survivors had been hoisted to safety. With expert precision, he then maneuvered the helicopter to escape the confines of the hazardous cove before setting course for Kodiak. Lieutenant Commander DENNINGER's expert aeronautical skill and dauntless valor throughout this perilous mission resulted in saving the lives of the men. His heroic courage, sound judgment and unwavering devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.

Lieutenant Commander Denninger was also awarded a second Distinguished Flying Cross and a Coast Guard Commendation Medal for heroism during his career. Lieutenant Commander Denninger retired with the rank of CAPTAIN.
