



James A. McEwen
Lieutenant Commander
Class of 1980



The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting
the Distinguished Flying Cross to
Lieutenant Commander James A. McEwen
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

For service as set forth in the following Citation:

Lieutenant Commander McEwen is cited for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight on 21 November 1994 while serving as Aircraft Commander and On Scene Commander aboard HH-65A helicopter CGNR 6588. The aircrew was launched from Air Station Corpus Christi to rescue three severely burned victims from an exploded oil rig 30 miles offshore of Corpus Christi. The explosion turned the rig into a mass of twisted, burning metal making it impossible to land on the rig's severely damaged helipad, requiring Lieutenant Commander McEwen to hoist the rescue swimmer and victims from a precarious position between the rig's crane and the still burning remains of the destroyed helipad. Lieutenant Commander McEwen bravely maneuvered the helicopter into position with its radome just inches away from the crane and the fenestron tucked under the helipad, the rotor arc within a few feet of the crane's arm. Lieutenant Commander McEwen pushed the aircraft to its limits in the 150-foot, high gross weight, rock steady hover, allowing the flight mechanic to place the rescue swimmer aboard the rig and subsequently retrieve one of the victims from the burning wreckage. Immediately after the flight mechanic maneuvered the very large victim into the cabin, Lieutenant Commander McEwen directed another aircraft into position and departed the scene to deliver the badly burned victim to the local trauma center. He quickly refueled and returned to the scene to again weave the helicopter into the same dangerous and precarious position to hoist the last victim. Lieutenant Commander McEwen's actions, aeronautical skill, and valor were instrumental in the rescue of three people. 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.

Lieutenant Commander McEwen retired at the rank of Commander after 20 years of service having been stationed aboard CGC DUANE, Naval Air Training Pensacola, Air Station Brooklyn, CG Aviation Training Center Mobile, Air Station Corpus Christi, and Air Station Traverse City.
