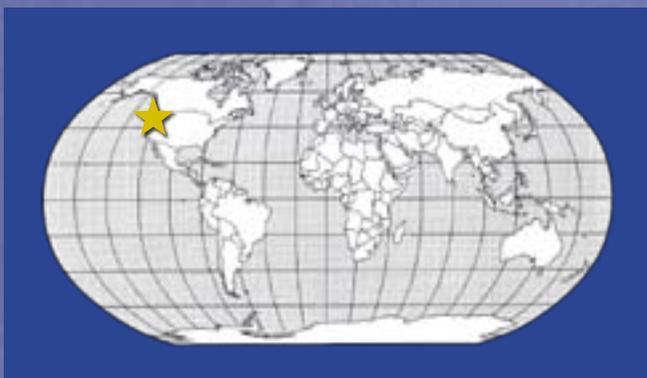




Thomas W. Finnegan
Lieutenant Commander
Class of 1957



**The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting
the Distinguished Flying Cross to
Lieutenant Commander Thomas W. Finnegan
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

For service as set forth in the following Citation:

For extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight on 31 December 1968 as pilot of a Coast Guard HH-52A helicopter engaged in the rescue of a stranded hunter from Sand Island, near Bridal Veil, Oregon. Blowing snow, 65-knot winds, poor visibility and air temperatures near zero prevented a rescue by vessel or helicopter on the first day. On the second day, despite continuously severe weather, Lieutenant Commander Finnegan hovered the aircraft between 10 and 50 feet above the Columbia River and air taxied to the island navigating by spotting surface aids. On the second pass, one man was sighted leaning against a tree with the other hunter in a prone position. Lacking a clear area for the hoist in the vicinity of the victims, he skillfully maneuvered the helicopter approximately 60 yards upwind and hovered while the copilot was lowered to the ground. Constantly searching for a hoisting area, he maneuvered downwind while his crewman guided the copilot to the location of the men by hand signals. Locating a clearing about 50 yards further downwind, the copilot was again guided by hand signals to this spot in company with the lone survivor who was suffering from severe exposure and frostbite in both legs. Lieutenant Commander Finnegan held his position despite the severe weather while the hunter was hoisted to safety. After ascertaining that the other hunter had died and the copilot was safely hoisted, Lieutenant Commander Finnegan departed the scene, flying in heavy ice and rapidly deteriorating weather. Lieutenant Commander Finnegan displayed expert airmanship and dauntless valor throughout this perilous mission. His aeronautical skill, courage, sound judgment and unwavering devotion to duty reflect the highest credit upon himself and the United States Coast Guard.

Lieutenant Commander Finnegan retired at the rank of Commander after 20 years of service. After retirement, Commander Finnegan continued flying until 2002, pursuing a career in EMS helicopters.
