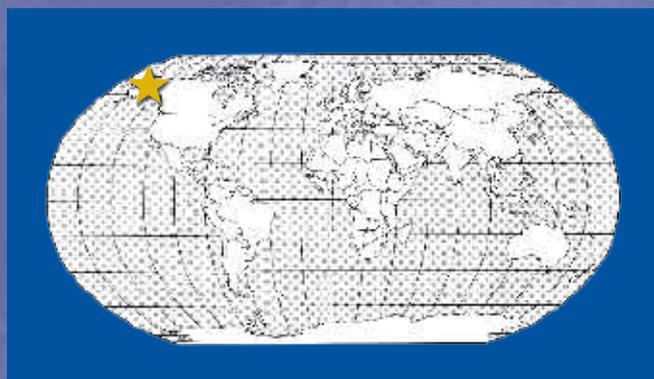




Donald E. Estes

Commander
Class of 1971



**The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting
the Distinguished Flying Cross to
Commander Donald E. Estes
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

For service as set forth in the following Citation:

Commander Estes is cited for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight on the morning of 22 September 1990. As aircraft commander of Coast Guard helicopter HH-3F CGNR 1467, Commander Estes launched his aircraft to determine the source of an Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) signal near Cordova, Alaska. Flying at 100 feet through heavy rain showers, gale force winds gusting to 75 knots, severe turbulence, 30-foot seas, and visibility less than one quarter mile, Commander Estes was further hindered by inaccurate readings from the aircraft's direction-finding systems, which were soon determined to be the result of two separate EPRIB signals. Upon arriving on scene and locating the burning hull of the F/V JANICE N, no survivors were visible. Commander Estes immediately began several exhaustive search patterns for signs of survivors in the water. Finally, after two and one half hours, with fuel running low and visibility reduced to one-eighth of mile, the aircrew sighted a raft with three persons onboard. Undaunted, Commander Estes maintained a hovering position for 40 minutes, despite severe weather, communications malfunctions, and a critical fuel shortage. With no visual references, three extremely demanding hoists were completed to recover the survivors, who were then delivered to Cordova for medical treatment. Commander Estes' actions, aeronautical skill, and valor were instrumental in the rescue of three victims. 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.

Commander Estes retired at the rank of Captain.
