

SYNOPSIS OF EVENTS PRECIPATING THE FOLLOWING AWARDS

CDR R. S. VEHMILYA	AIR MEDAL
LT(jg) V. H. VON SYDOW	Navy Commendation Medal
AXC T. GRISHAM	Commander 7th Fleet Letter
AX3 R. A. SITKO	Commander 7th Fleet Letter

The crew, flying an unarmored A3W helicopter, embarked in the USS KEARSARGE, intercepted a "MAYDAY" from an aircraft over the North Vietnam mainland and immediately proceeded toward the distress signal to render assistance. Upon arrival at the rescue scene, the downed pilot could not be located and a close area search was conducted from the coastline seaward. A search aircraft finally found the survivor and marked his position with a smoke light. The rescue helicopter proceeded to the smoke light, which was approximately three miles off-shore, and spotted the survivor. In order to expedite the rescue, the crew decided to make a manual approach to a hover rather than employing an automatic approach which usually is made for night rescues. Skillfully bringing the helicopter into an instrument hover over the survivor, the pilot used his red hover lights and directions from the crew to place the rescue sling in the hands of the downed pilot. The survivor was quickly hoisted into the aircraft and a rapid departure ensued. The crew's exceptional skill and judgment were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.