

Pelican Air Crew Honored for Heroic Rescue - 24 Years Ago

Tuesday, 24 July 2012

Cmdr. Joe Mattina, left, the aircraft commander aboard the HH-3F Pelican helicopter that saved the lives of two people aboard the fishing vessel Wayward Wind that sank in 1988, receives an Air Medal from Rear Adm. Thomas P. Ostebo during a ceremony at Air Station Kodiak, Thursday, July 19, 2012. Mattina and his crew conducted the rescue at a time before there were rescue swimmers in the Coast Guard and executed some very challenging maneuvers in 15-foot seas, 40 mph winds and blowing snow during the rescue. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Jonathan Klingenberg

Jay Barrett/KMXT

The now-retired crew of a Coast Guard HH-3F Pelican helicopter was honored Thursday for their bravery in a rescue almost a quarter-century ago.

The 86-foot trawler Wayward Wind sank with four of its six hands on January 18, 1988, in 15-foot seas, 40 mph winds and blowing snow, 115 miles southwest of Kodiak. Two crewmembers were rescued by the Air Station Kodiak helicopter crew.

Rear Admiral Ostebo presented the Coast Guard's Air Medal to the four helicopter crewmen, Commander Joe Mattina, Commander Chris Broxterman, AMT1 Marty Heckerman and AT2 Claude Brown. The admiral said the heroic action of the men in saving two of the Wayward Wind's crew was overlooked at the time, and wanted to recognize their extraordinary effort.

Debra Neilson of Kodiak was one of the two people rescued from the boat, and told the air crew at the ceremony that they had actually saved a third life - that of her unborn daughter she was pregnant with at the time.