



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR FORCE COMMENDATION MEDAL
TO
TECHNICAL SERGEANT JAMES H. LACASSE

Technical Sergeant James H. LaCasse, distinguished himself by an act of heroism involving voluntary risk of life on the broken ice of the Yukon River near Tanana, Alaska, on the night of 18 April 1955. At this location, five people were stranded as a result of an aircraft accident. Sergeant LaCasse was dispatched to the scene as a para-medical aboard an H-19 helicopter. Upon reaching the crash site, the pilot held the helicopter in a precarious hovering position while Sergeant LaCasse, with complete knowledge of the danger in which he had placed his own life, made repeated trips on foot across a thawing and cracking ice in order to rescue and guide the survivors to the helicopter. The night was black and moonless, the snow was blowing and the visibility was near zero. Sergeant LaCasse rescued one victim by litter and two others in his own arms after wrapping a baby in his own parka exposing himself to the elements. Voluntarily Sergeant LaCasse exposed himself and placed his life in jeopardy by crossing the cracking ice repeatedly. Only after all survivors were safely aboard the aircraft, did Sergeant LaCasse himself seek safety. The courage, fortitude, and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant James H. LaCasse reflect the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

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