

**U.S. Department of
Homeland Security**

**United States
Coast Guard**



**Commander
United States Coast Guard
Personnel Service Center**

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MAR 23 2017

The U. S. Coast Guard is pleased to select Chief Aviation Survival Technician Michael S. Spencer for the 2017 Non-Commissioned Officer Association Military Vanguard Award. The below contact information is provided:

Michael S. Spencer is assigned to Coast Guard Sector Columbia River where he serves as Chief Aviation Survival Technician.

On 01 February 2016, Coast Guard Helicopter CG6003 diverted from its assigned mission to search for a missing teenager who had fallen from a cliff in the vicinity of Cape Kiwanda, Oregon. Meanwhile, North Lincoln Fire and Rescue deployed a personal watercraft with two fire and rescue personnel aboard attempting to assist with the search effort. While searching for the survivor, the two firemen quickly became the subject of the recovery effort when they were ejected from their personal watercraft. As the heavy surf swept the firemen toward the rocks, the crew of CG6003 deployed Chief Spencer into the incredibly violent, unpredictable surf through a narrow chasm carved into the rocky cliffs to affect a rescue. Upon reaching the survivors, Chief Spencer assessed their condition and prepared the more critically injured survivor for a hoist to a safe area above the surf line. He then directed CG6003 into a position above the entrance of the cave where the second survivor had been swept into. Chief Spencer swam into the cave, out of sight of the aircrew, and recovered the second survivor seconds before he would have been swept to the back of the cave. CG6003 hoisted Chief Spencer and the second survivor to the same rocky ledge the first survivor was transported to where both survivors' injuries were assessed and transferred to awaiting emergency medical care. Chief Spencer's efforts saved the lives of the two first responders.

ASTC Spencer's actions and performance embody the selfless bravery of the very best the U.S. Coast Guard has to offer. His pride and professionalism exemplify Coast Guard Core Values and are of the lineage of Signalmen First Class Douglas Munro. If additional information is needed, please contact USCG.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Matthew T. Bell, Jr.", is positioned above the printed name.

MATTHEW T. BELL, Jr.
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard
Commander, Personnel Service Center

Enclosure: (1) Biography of ASTC Michael S. Spencer
(2) Digital picture

Michael S. Spencer
Chief Aviation Survival Technician
Sector Columbia River, Warrenton, Oregon

Chief Spencer serves as the Survival Shop Chief for Coast Guard Sector Columbia River leading the Rescue Swimmers search and rescue efforts for a variety of diverse geographical and environmental areas. Prior to his assignment at Pacific Area he was the Assistant Division Chief of the Rescue Swimmer Standardization Team in Mobile, AL, instructing the world's premier helicopter rescue crews on and around the unforgiving Columbia River Bar known as the Graveyard of the Pacific, flying with and inspecting the USCG Air Stations Rescue Swimmers nationwide and developing the latest Rescue Swimmer Tactics Techniques Procedures and equipment.

Born in La Grande, Oregon, Chief Spencer grew up in a small town in North Central Oregon. After attending boot camp in Cape May, New Jersey, in September 1992, he was issued orders to the Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) ACTIVE in Port Angeles, Washington. While aboard USCGC ACTIVE he began his 36 month wait to be admitted to Aviation Survivalman (ASM) A School. Still on the waiting list after two years he was sent to Station Coos Bay Oregon in January 1996 and issued orders to ASM A School. Graduating in April 1996 he was stationed at Aviation Training Center (ATC) Mobile, Alabama, and began his career as a helicopter Rescue Swimmer. His other assignments include Air Station Savannah, Georgia, as a duty standing Rescue Swimmer/Instructor, Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) as an Aerial Gunner and precision Marksman/Instructor, Air Station Astoria, Oregon, as a duty standing Rescue Swimmer /Instructor, ATC Mobile, AL as the Assistant Branch Chief/Rescue Water Craft Operator/Instructor and Sector Columbia River Survival Shop Chief Rescue Swimmer Duty/Instructor.

Chief Spencer earned an Associate Degree in Multi Disciplinary Studies from Grantham University. His personal awards include the Distinguished Flying Cross with Extraordinary Heroism, two Coast Guard Medals with Extraordinary Heroism, Commendation Medal, five Coast Guard Achievement Medals with Operational distinguishing device, Army Achievement Medal, three Commandant's Letter of Commendation Ribbons with Operational distinguishing device, eight Coast Guard Good Conduct Medals and the USCG Special Operations Ribbon.