

# Resolution

No. \_\_\_\_\_

RECOGNIZING RETIRED PETTY OFFICER 3RD  
CLASS MITCHELL PAUOLE LANI ON BEING  
AWARDED THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD  
MEDAL OF COMMENDATION FOR HIS BRAVE  
AND HEROIC EFFORTS IN AVERTING DISASTER  
IN 1952

WHEREAS, on an afternoon in May 1952, Hoolehua, Molokai native Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Mitchell Pauole Lani, the ship's cook, was on board the United States Coast Guard Cutter Forster, which was participating in gunnery exercises 400 miles offshore of Honolulu; and

WHEREAS, the exercise involved the Forster firing at an airborne target and drone being towed by an aircraft, and as the ship fired upon the airborne target, the tow aircraft dropped the target, drone, and towline into the ocean; and

WHEREAS, the Forster was then dispatched to retrieve the equipment, but as it approached the location where the towline landed, the cable sank, disappearing under the 300-foot-long ship and becoming entangled around its propellers, forcing the ship to come to a complete stop; and

WHEREAS, the Forster's Commanding Officer asked Petty Officer Lani, whom he knew to be an experienced free diver, to investigate what he suspected had occurred, and Petty Officer Lani, without any diving equipment available on board, put on his lucky pair of homemade Hawaiian bamboo goggles and dove in; and

WHEREAS, after Petty Officer Lani reported that the cable was wrapped around the Forster's propellers, his commanding officer asked Petty Officer Lani to perform an even riskier task of free-diving again to untangle and remove the cable from the Forster's propellers; and

WHEREAS, realizing the enormity of the task and risk to his life and limb, and chalking it up to doing his duty and the eventuality that "we all

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must die someday,” Petty Officer Lani proceeded over the next two hours to make six dives to depths of 35 to 40 feet, spending about a minute unwrapping cable before coming up for air and repeating; and

WHEREAS, Petty Officer Lani managed to single-handedly remove the cable that bound the 1,600-ton ship’s two propellers, while battling swells of 8 to 12 feet that smashed him against the ship’s hull and caused internal injuries, averting certain disaster for the ship and his fellow crew; and

WHEREAS, although many of the scars and effects of that day were internal, Petty Officer Lani has suffered a lifetime of physical pain, difficulty, surgeries, and psychological impacts from going above and beyond the call of duty; and

WHEREAS, the United States Coast Guard rules and regulations have changed over the years and the requests made of Petty Officer Lani that day 66 years ago would not be made today; and

WHEREAS, 66 years after the fact, the United States Coast Guard has corrected an injustice by honorably recognizing and saluting the brave and heroic efforts of Petty Officer Lani for his actions in averting damage and disaster to the Forester and its crew; now, therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the County of Maui:

1. That it hereby recognizes Retired Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Mitchell Pauole Lani on being awarded the United States Coast Guard Medal of Commendation for his brave and heroic efforts in averting disaster in 1952; and
2. That certified copies of this resolution be transmitted to Retired Petty Officer 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Mitchell Pauole Lani; his wife, Florence Lani and their eleven children; United States Coast Guard District 14 Commander Rear Admiral Kevin E. Lunday; the Honorable Alan M. Arakawa, Mayor, County of Maui; the Honorable David Y. Ige, Governor, State of Hawaii; the Honorable Joshua B. Green, Lieutenant Governor, State of Hawaii; the Honorable Brian Schatz, United States Senate; the Honorable Mazie K. Hirono, United States Senate; and the Honorable Tulsi Gabbard, United States Congress.