

USS JOHN F. KENNEDY'S MEDICAL OFFICER AND THREE HOSPITAL CORPSMEN SAVE A LIFE

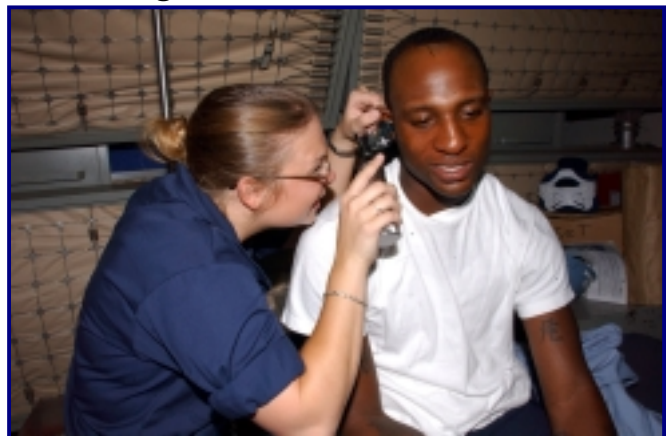
The USS John F. Kennedy (CV 67), named in honor of slain President John F. Kennedy and affectionately nicknamed the *JFK* or *Big John* by her crew, was originally designated as the CVA 67, an attack aircraft carrier of the Kitty Hawk class. The aircraft carrier's classification was subsequently changed to CV 67, indicating the ship is capable of supporting antisubmarine warfare aircraft, making her an all-purpose, multi-mission aircraft carrier.



USS John F. Kennedy (CV 67) remained moored in homeport of Mayport, FL during nine-month Extended Service Repair Availability period, which extended the operational capabilities and life of the ship.

Early in 2003, the Kennedy was moored at a pier in her homeport of Mayport, Florida for an Extended Selected Restricted Availability (ESRA), an all-inclusive maintenance period during which contract workers and the ship's crew worked together to upgrade and renovate the 35-year-old aircraft carrier. The crew and contractors painted, welded, and renovated berthing compartments, offices and common areas.

The unprecedented maintenance project was the largest ever conducted outside a naval shipyard. Contractors and crewmembers together invested more than 600,000 man-hours to refurbish the 35-year-old carrier, carrying out more than 10,000 work tasks. The *JFK* was the first carrier to employ that approach to maintenance; a shipyard was essentially built around the carrier instead of moving the ship from her homeport to an established shipyard.



HM3 Rebecca Hunt examines a USS Kennedy crew member during his annual medical screening. The Kennedy's medical department handled nearly 4,000 crew sick call visits during the nine-month ESRA period.

Wherever the Navy or the Marine Corps goes, the Navy's Medical Department, especially Navy Hospital Corpsmen, go with them. Hospital Corpsmen are formally trained at the Navy's Hospital Corps School, to care for injured and ill sailors and marines. The fourteen-week Hospital Corps curriculum includes medical fundamentals, emergency medical procedures, nursing procedures, general military training, and health promotion topics. Additionally, student corpsmen get two weeks of practical, *hands-on* experience in nursing care before graduating. During the ESRA,

a mishap aboard the JFK put that training to the test. A medical officer and three Kennedy Hospital Corpsmen rescued a critically injured contract worker who had fallen vertically, more than 20 feet, into an ordnance storage compartment.

Hospital Corpsman Second Class (HM2) Renville Marsh, HM3 Rebecca Hunt and Hospitalman Patrick A. Ruddock were the first responders on the scene.

HM3 Hunt recalled, "When the call came, I knew by the location that the mishap could be really bad. I realized just how serious it was when I first saw the worker and all the blood."



A sailor uses a needle gun to remove layers of paint during USS John F. Kennedy's ESRA period.

HN Patrick A. Ruddock recounted that, as soon as he realized the severity of the situation, his training kicked in. "When we got down there and saw all the blood," he continued, "I recognized it as a worst-case scenario."

Not only was their patient seriously injured, but access to him and rescuing him were both very difficult. Commander (CDR) Charles Ciccone, the Senior Medical Officer on board, described the entry hatch into the compartment as only about 30 inches in diameter, leaving the

rescuers very little room to maneuver. The rescue team also faced a 90-degree vertical drop and a 90-degree climb to move the patient out of the space. "We had to work practically on top of him," said Doctor Ciccone. "And we ourselves were at risk of injury while stabilizing the patient and moving him out of there."

CDR Ciccone believes his medical response team reached and rescued the injured man within the *golden-hour*, saving his life. The physician described the *golden-hour* as the hour immediately after a serious trauma. "If you can start resuscitation, treatment, and transport within that time, it significantly increases the chance of survival. We did it right, and we did it in time to save a life."

HN Ruddock agreed that teamwork determined the fate of their patient. "We knew what we had to do. All of our training and working together as a team saved the man's life." Marsh, Ruddock, and Hunt added that the gratification that comes from knowing that they saved someone's life humbles them. "Just knowing that when called upon, I was able to make a difference in whether or not a person survived, means so much to me," stated HM3 Hunt.



Two of the USS John F. Kennedy's crew members removing floor tiles in the launch catapult room during the ship's ESRA.

Teamwork, dedication, and Hospital Corps School training proved instrumental in the rescue. According to Ciccone, these values once again triumphed over uncertainties and perilous conditions to save one man's life. CDR Ciccone has recommended HM2 Marsh, HM3 Hunt, and HN Ruddock for a Navy and Marine Corps Medal.

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