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Reno nurse, 90, recalls kamikaze attack on hospital ship

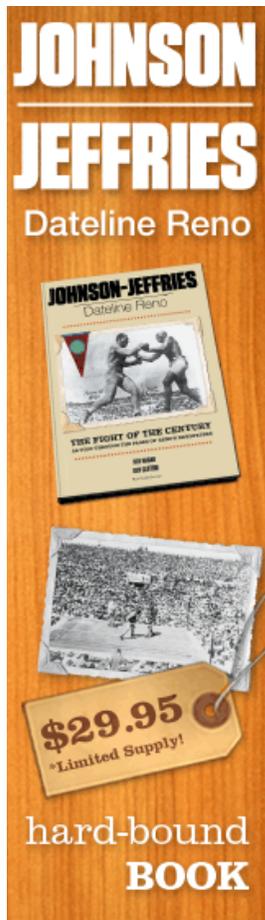
BY FRANK X. MULLEN JR. • FMULLEN@RGJ.COM • JULY 9, 2010

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Carnage surrounded her, she said.



She couldn't hear for 10 hours after the explosion, but using hand signals she was able to help the wounded. She said she saw 28 people die, including six nurses, and 41 patients.

"I think there were more deaths than that," Howard said. "How many there were, 100 or more who died, patients and nurses, and there were."

For years, she kept in touch with her fellow nurses. When they passed on, she would write them a letter.

"All my cabinmates are gone," she said. "I may have been on the Comfort left."

On Thursday, Howard walked through the waves of oppressive humidity on the deck of the latest USS Comfort.

She toured the hospital wards and the engineer was invited to the event by both the outgoing and incoming commanders of the vessel.

She is living history.

"What an honor it is to return to the Comfort," she said. "I want to see my stateroom, but I keep reminding myself it's not the same. The Comfort has given aid in Haiti recently, and I have been on track of the many humanitarian trips she has made around the world."



A photo of Doris Howard in her nurses uniform in 1942. Photo by Tim Dunn/RGJ (RGJ)

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Reno resident Doris Howard shows a newspaper photo of her (second from right) and other nurses as they look over the remains of a Japanese kamikaze plane that attacked their hospital ship, the U.S.S. Comfort, during WWII. Dozens were killed and injured in the attack near Okinawa. (Tim Dunn/RGJ)

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DETAILS

USS Comfort (AH-6): It was launched in 1943 and served as a hospital ship in the South Pacific campaign of World War II. Operated with a Navy crew and Army medical staff.

USNS COMFORT (T-AH-29): Built as an oil tanker in 1976 and delivered to the Navy in 1987. The

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Howard said the vessel reminds her of her own of the same name at a time when she could ha stateside and never volunteered to go into harr

USNS designates a Navy ship crewed by civilians. The first USS Comfort (AH-3) served in World War I.

around the globe.

"We were nurses," she said. "We felt we could do more."

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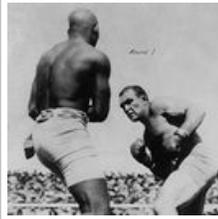
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WashoeGreens wrote:

You should have seen her going up the steep and long gangplank like a trooper. "Admiral Howard has come aboard!" Capt. Ware proclaimed as she walked onto the ship.

A very eventful and emotional day. She spoke with USATODAY and the Surgeon General's Special Assistant, the Rear Admiral of naval medical care including the Comfort and Bethesda as well as the incoming and outgoing captains and spent the day on a whirlwind tour presonally given by the Director of Nursing Services.

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