

*by The San Diego Union-Tribune*

An Illinois teen got an early and unexpected Christmas present, courtesy of the Navy.

Fourteen-year-old Laura Montero of Albion, Ill., was on a cruise ship to Mexico last week when her appendix ruptured, and so the ship's captain put out a distress call. Luckily, the signal was picked up by the Ronald Reagan, a U.S. aircraft carrier operating nearby on training. The Reagan immediately altered course to meet up with the cruise ship.

What happened next would make a great movie. Laura was rescued from the cruise ship via a litter basket and helicopter, and flown back to the carrier for emergency surgery. By all accounts, the operation was first-rate and the Reagan then headed to San Diego as planned. After the ship docked on Tuesday, Laura was quickly hustled off and transported to Children's Hospital to complete her recovery.

Well-done. What a wonderful and heart-warming story. It is no exaggeration to say that the quick thinking of all concerned, especially the captains and crews of both the cruise ship and the Reagan, saved this girl's life. And at a time when so many in the media seem to have trouble finding positive and uplifting stories about the U.S. military - even though those stories do exist - a tale as dramatic and uplifting as this one is just what the doctor ordered.

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