

VII. 1950 ~ The Beginning of the Korean Conflict

1950: The official log for the first day of 1950 was written by Ensign A. Stanford, USNR and reads as follows:

00-04

*The sound of whistles from other ships noted the passing of the forties,
The old Gyatt retorted with a stream of black smoke from her stack.
As if to say "take heed thy frenzy sailor, quiet, tranquil,
I will still be honored by the mermaids at the end of the fifties."
Not just one day of cheer,
But lasting every single hour
Through every day and year.*

*Moored at Norfolk, Virginia, pier 21, berth 212, Convoy Escort Piers.
Alongside the Vesole, Bordeleone, Leary and Gearing.
Standard mooring lines are on the ballards.
Senior Officer Present Afloat is Commander Second Task Fleet,
Receiving Norfolk, spirits from the dock, not like wine.
The Sons of Neptune carrying the overbearing
Landlubbers have started to return aboard;
After the eleven o'clock rendezvous and before the sleep.
Boiler number three is on line.
Various units of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet present,
Sailors, marines, sea serpents, whaler, sharks, porpoises,
Dolphins, suckers, and all things of the sea.
To one and all, Happy New Year.*

Signed/A. Stanford, Ensign, USNR

The early part of the year found the Gyatt in training exercises from Long Island to Guantanamo Bay with a side visit to Kingston, Jamaica. March and the ship was heading to the South Atlantic with pollywogs looking forward to becoming shellbacks. But alas, the ship lost a bearing on the main reduction gear in the after engine room and spent six weeks moored to a pier in Guantanamo Bay while repairs were being made. The tropical work hours, six in the morning to noon, with lunch and siesta time till three in the afternoon allowed the crew the rare luxury of daylight recreation time.

Somewhere in this period, while part of a detachment plane guarding for the aircraft carrier Midway, the Gyatt was taking fuel from the Midway and discretely over the connecting telephone line requested some DDT insecticide for use in the commissary areas. The Midway complied with our request and in addition shouted to us over the loud speaker "What is your problem over there? Does everyone have the crabs?"

April and May found the ship operating in the Chesapeake Bay area and the crew enjoying liberty in New York. June and the Gyatt was back in Norfolk where the ammunition was off loaded before heading to Boston for a major overhaul at month's end.

In late April the CIC gang received word that a temporary member of their group was one of the ten killed over the Baltic Sea when the plane (a PB4Y) that he was a passenger aboard was shot down by Soviet fighters. William Purcell, a communications technician, was killed on the 8th day of April 1950. Purcell had been transferred from the cruiser Columbus to the Gyatt, in 1949, to assist the Gyatt radiomen in listening to certain classified radio transmissions in the early stages of the "Cold War."

The 25th day of June 1950, a Sunday, signaled the start of the Korean Conflict and as a result of this Conflict, as the Korean War was referred to the President of the United States, Harry S. Truman, declared a national emergency. The declaration of this emergency authorized the recall to active duty of inactive naval reserve personnel. As the overhaul of the Gyatt was being completed the reservists began reporting aboard, filling vacancies and building the ship from its peacetime complement to a wartime manning level.

The months of July, August and September found the Gyatt in the Boston Naval Shipyard. While in the yard the ship had its single mast replaced with a tripod mast and had the starboard motor whaleboat removed - providing for a more uniform distribution of weight. In addition, the 20mm guns were replaced with hedgehogs. The Gyatt also received the latest in "Radio Counter Measure Equipment" or as it is now called "Electronic Surveillance Equipment" (which set the tone for future operations).

It was in this shipyard that a Seaman Apprentice, who had just reported aboard found out what a Boatswain Mate, was all about. The apprentice had just finished chipping and scraping paint in an area on the portside bulkhead just aft of the motor whaleboat and was in the process of coating it with red lead, the paint primer, over the bare metal. The bulkhead had a variety of small areas - from as high as the Seaman Apprentice could reach - to where the deck and bulkhead met. All these little areas had been prepared for red lead. The apprentice having chipped and scraped from the top down was sitting on the deck applying red lead to the lowest areas when a burly Boatswain Mate, who was called "Hog" came by and observed the striker for a moment and the bellowed: "What are you? A G-- D--- Chinaman? Only a Chinaman paints from the bottom up." For whatever reason that apprentice always seemed to get in "Hog's" way and in short order the apprentice became the "Captain of the Head." This duty lasted only a few days for the apprentice secured the after facility so well, during the three-hour cleaning period, that all hands had to go forward to use the facilities. The inconvenience caused by the apprentice, which was within his control, allowed him to strike for a rating almost immediately. The Boatswains Mate just wanted him gone.

In early October the ship left Boston for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for training and operations in the Caribbean; stopping along the way at Newport, Rhode Island and Norfolk, Virginia. While training, which lasted to mid December, the ship visited the ports of Port-au-Prince, Haiti and Kingston, Jamaica.

It was also in October that Martin Autio planned to get married but found himself on the way to Guantanamo Bay instead. Autio was a rather poor letter writer and did not inform his bride, Audrey, that he would not be available for an October get together. One evening while the ship was anchored in the bay Autio received a message that he had a long distance phone call ashore. He wasn't aware of who the caller was but since he had a such a call he felt it was important – but the liberty boat had already left and he had no way ashore. The Captain hearing of Autio's plight sent him ashore in his gig. The call was from Autio's bride to be who wanted to know if they were still getting married and why didn't he write and tell her what was happening. Well after many minutes and probably many dollars the wedding was scheduled for the 16th day of December with Autio's father officiating. Audrey took care of all the details; including notifying Autio's father, invitations, etc., etc. On the 16th day of December in the year 2000 the Autios will have celebrated fifty years of marriage.

Autio was also the ship's baker and his watch was from 1900 to 0500 while the ship was at sea and he had an open gangway when the ship was in port – what a racket – no duty in port and liberty every night. Anyway – with a bakeshop aboard Autio had to use the galley. Every night, by hand, Autio mixed five fifty-pound batches of dough – enough for 120 loaves of bread. The dough was mixed in a large round bottom bowl placed on a GI can filled with flour. After Autio finished mixing the dough he formed the loaves and placed them on the deck to proof (raise) – he did this because the decks were always warm. Autio did not enjoy baking in rough weather, especially after watching the bowl raise above the GI can filled with flour and come to rest on the can as it lay on its side in a galley strewn with flour and partially mixed bowl of dough – the baker had no slow periods that night as he tried to get the baking done and the galley cleaned.

Autio recalls one night receiving a call from the bridge and someone saying this is the Captain and asking if he had any hot rolls. Autio made a comment and hung up. It was only a few minutes later that the Captain appeared in the entryway of the galley and asked what the problem was – Autio murmured a reply and a mutual signal was arranged. This turned out to benefit the crew also – for it seemed that hot rolls, hot coffee and butter was always available at the galley for those wanting a midnight snack.

It was a weekend morning, in Guantanamo Bay, and the bow and stern watches were being secured. These two watches are dusk to dawn watches that are held when the ship is in port. The watches require seamen with rifles standing at the ready both forward and aft. Anyway – at the end of these watches the seamen report to the quarterdeck and turn their weapons over to the Officer of the Deck (Watch), who in turn has them secured in the small arms locker. This particular morning the aft watch, a seaman apprentice - who had reported aboard ship while it was in the Navy Yard, reported amidships without his rifle. The seamen apprentice advised the Officer of the Deck that he had tripped on a deck plate and dropped the rifle over the side. The ship was moored to a buoy and the water was both deep and murky. The Officer of the Deck was one of the Chiefs and he said; “Well – that's too bad, son – I guess I will have to put you on report for losing government property.” The seaman apprentice – who had reported aboard ship, fresh out of boot camp and fearful of being on report – stammered – “If I go back and look I think I could find it.” The Chief smiled and said: “Do that.” The seaman apprentice went aft and returned with the weapon and was given a stern lecture by a compassionate Officer of the Deck, in lieu of placing him on report.

It was a lazy Sunday afternoon and the Gyatt was moving slowly on the waters away from Guantanamo Bay when some of the men on the fantail decided they wanted to go shark fishing. They headed to the machine shop, fashioned a hook from a half-inch steel rod, returned to the fantail and connected the hook to the eighth-inch steel cable used for soundings. The cable was on a winch mounted on the portside of the fantail. After a period of time the fishermen got a bite and brought a struggling seven-foot shark alongside where a well placed bullet by a Gunners Mate second ended the battle. The fishermen hauled the extremely heavy shark aboard and after selectively removing teeth and other parts tossed the carcass back into the sea where others of its kind attacked it. It is ironic that the movie that night, also shown on the fantail, was a South Sea type – very popular in the late forties and early fifties. A scene in the movie showed a beautiful damsel falling out of a boat in shark infested waters and the hero, a handsome native in a dugout canoe, taking his foot-long knife out of his loin cloth putting it between his teeth and stabbing the shark – one time, as he rescued the fair maiden. In the movie the shark just seemed to rollover and die. The shark fishers who witnessed a different scene that afternoon enjoyed a good laugh – but movies in the forties and the fifties left a lot to the imagination and realism was not part of the movie scene. Movies, prior to the sixties, were made to be enjoyable, relaxing and without controversy.

As the Gyatt headed north to Norfolk from Guantanamo Bay a radio call came from a merchant ship advised that they had a man in severe pain that needed medical assistance. The man was transferred to the Gyatt, who was carrying the squadron doctor. The doctor, LTJG Calvert, examined the man and found that he had an acute appendix – an operation was required. The USS Gearing was contacted for assistance and a hospital corpsman was high-lined to the Gyatt. The operation, which took a little more than an hour, was performed successfully on the wardroom table in mid-afternoon on the 8th day of December.

As the ship returned from its training exercise in Guantanamo Bay it was expected that holiday leave would commence immediately but found that the events in Korea had intervened. Communist China had entered the war and had reversed the gains made by United Nation forces. Atlantic fleet ships were being sent to the Pacific. As a squadron that had just completed overhaul and readiness training there was the distinct possibility that Destroyer Squadron Four (DesRon 4) would be sent. However, this was not to be. The January deployment with the Sixth Fleet in Europe was reconfirmed.

In the time remaining, in December, shortened leaves were granted and ammunition and stores were loaded for a four-month deployment. More reservists also reported aboard including a third class engineman. As the EN3 stood in the midships passageway he stared at the ship's dedication plaque in wonder. It was many years later that he confided to a shipmate that it might have been an omen. He recalled that during WWII that he had served aboard the USS Tulagi (CVE-72) and that the Gyatt his first and only destroyer was named after a marine who gave his life at Tulagi and that the Gyatt his first and only destroyer had a seven and a two. Fate? Coincidence? He wonders too.

It was an interesting sight watching Fred Geredien, FC2 one of the many inactive reservists called back because of the Korean Conflict as he asked permission to come aboard and report

for duty. Geredien was requesting permission from E. K. Goodloe, GMC who was a GM2 when both served aboard the USS Cread (APD 88) in World War II.

1950 saw an assassination attempt on President Harry S. Truman by two Puerto Ricans; one was killed, the other was captured and received a life sentence. The Korean Conflict began on the 25th day of June with the invasion of South Korea by North Korea. The world population was at 2.3 billion and the United States population was almost 151 million. The United States could now boast of one and one-half million-television sets. The Hydrogen Bomb was developed.

The Academy Award winning movie was "All About Eve." Others included; "Born Yesterday, Cyrano de Bergerac and Sunset Boulevard." Some of the best songs of 1950 were: "Mona Lisa, Tennessee Waltz, Music-Music-Music, If I Knew You Were Coming I'd've Baked a Cake, A Bushel and a Peck, Goodnight Irene and Rag Mop."

The New York Yankees won the World Series beating the Philadelphia Phillies in four games. The Cleveland Browns a new member of the NFL from the defunct AFL beat the Los Angeles Rams, Formerly the Cleveland Rams 30 to 28 for the NFL championship. The Minneapolis Lakers beat the Syracuse Nationals, now known as the Philadelphia 76ers in six games to win the NBA championship. Sugar Ray Robinson became the middleweight champion of the world. Soccer set a world record for attendance when 199,854 people attended the World Cup game in Rio de Janeiro between Brazil and Uruguay.