

X. 1953 ~ The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

1953: The official log for the first day of 1953 was written by Ensign G. M. McGregor, USNR and reads as follows:

00-04

*Moored in a nest of destroyers at berth two three three
Cowell, Owen, Keith, Gyatt and Bordelon from pier outward are we.
At the Convoy Escort Piers, Norfolk, wire out aft
Com Second Fleet is SOPA – Ships Atlantic and other craft.
Standard Destroyer mooring lines are in use
Our “Snipes” are supplying heat and juice
With fires blasting in boiler one
And number one generator getting the gun.
We’ve had a good year, worked long and hard
To get thru Gitmo and the Navy Yard.
'53 appears a challenge more and more
To make her the best ship in DesFlot Four.*

Signed/G. M. McGregor, Ensign, USNR

January was a little different this year, the Gyatt did not leave for Europe as it had in previous years; but left Norfolk for plane guard detail with carriers operating out of Jacksonville and Key West, Florida. In addition to plane guarding the Gyatt and her crew, under the direction of her Captain, A. B. Register starred in the making of three Navy Training films. The movies covered, Ship Handling, Going Alongside a Pier and Mooring to a Buoy. These plane guard and movie-making duties took the ship through the months of January and February.

The ship made three training movies, all related to seamanship, while on this cruise. The movies are still in use today and viewed by those at the academy and reserve stations. It is sad to say that not one officer or one sailor qualified for a career in the movies.

In regards to the Gyatt receiving the movie detail – it must have been as a result of his ship handling abilities and not of the crew’s abilities, although the crew was pretty good. Two stories come to mind relating to Captain Register’s ship handling ability. The first story was related to rough weather but no one seems to recall the port – it was somewhere in the North Atlantic or Northern Europe. The ship had the option of anchoring or mooring to a buoy but because of past transgressions with anchoring - mooring to the buoy was preferred – but anchoring was safer for the crew. Both of these functions were the responsibility of the First Division. The First Division had a leadman named Louie Adamo, BM3. Adamo had been on the Gyatt for, what seemed to some, ever. Anyway – the word was sent to the bridge that if the bow of the Gyatt could be held directly over the buoy Adamo would attach the necessary lines to the buoy. Upon hearing this Captain Register took control of the bridge and with numerous

commands to the engine room held the bow over the buoy. The crew of the engine room commented that they had more commands in a few minutes than they ever had in a normal watch.

The second story deals with operations in the Mediterranean during Sixth Fleet exercises. The weather was rough and the Gyatt was taking a pounding. Captain Register, concerned for the safety of the ship and the crew, altered course – steering more into the wind. No sooner had the Gyatt completed her turn that the Fleet Commander wanted to know what the “hell was going on.” The Captain advised that he altered course because his ship was taking a pounding. Within moments the Sixth Fleet was on the same heading as the 712.

Before the ship left Norfolk for this movie making venture five new ensigns reported aboard. The ensigns were Lyle Clark, Norman Kusnitz, Alfred Landess, Louis Laffoon and Raymond Stein. One of the initial guidelines regarded topics of discussion given the young officers seated at the wardroom table was that there would be no discussions regarding politics, religion or women. The ensigns looked at each other and wondered what else of interest might be left for discussion that was worth talking about – especially with feeling. It turned out that the young officers covered all the major religions – specifically the Catholic, Jewish and Protestant faiths and before long they were in a give and take mood with various humorous and serious comments regarding each faith. Somehow the word got around and the DESRON Four Chaplain came aboard to investigate the rumors regarding religious harassment among the officers of the Gyatt. After a few days of investigation and observation aboard the Gyatt the Chaplain submitted a favorable report advising that the badgering observed was both educational and morale building and he did not consider it to be harassing. The same officers were at a recent reunion and continued as if they were still aboard ship.

It was in Key West that a Quartermaster (QM) Striker on liberty was delivered aboard ship, courtesy of the Shore Patrol, with two pints stuck in the waistband of his regulation blues, as his blue uniform was commonly referred to. It seems that this striker was walking across the street in Key West when he tripped on the curb as he was getting to the sidewalk. The Shore Patrol driving by in a vehicle observed this, stopped and asked - if he was drunk. He replied that he was not and that he was returning to his ship. They offered a ride and he accepted. The QM striker reported aboard and headed to the solitude of the bridge where he indulged himself with memories of life outside the Navy, while sharing his refreshments with a more seasoned QM striker. The “regulation” blues made it easier to hide things in the waistband as compared to the tight fitting “tailor-made” blues. This takes us back to the seasoned QM striker. It was a few minutes before the New Year started that the seasoned striker came across the gangplank and reported aboard prior to his liberty ending. He was somewhat inebriated as he reported aboard with a lackluster salute and his request to come aboard. As he turned and started moving forward he tripped on the edge of a deck plate and stumbled; as he did so the Petty Officer and the Messenger of the Watch heard the breaking of glass. As these two members of the watch turned they saw the remnants of a pint laying on the steel deck and a saddened striker who had anticipated bringing in the New Year aboard ship. This sailor was wearing the tight fitting “tailor-mades” which had only socks for hiding places.

On the 12th day of January, during one of the plane guard operations shortly before 1800, a pilot while attempting to land his plane hit the back end of the carrier. The carrier was the USS

Coral Sea CVA-43, the plane was an F-214 and the pilot, who was the squadron executive officer, was killed. At 1900, K. C. Spayde, Jr. a LTJG qualifying to land A1s put his plane in to the sea and was rescued by a Gyatt seaman, other than the duty swimmer. The duty swimmer a sailor with excellent swimming skills was to go in and retrieve the pilot – but it was January and the water was cold and choppy and he refused. Leslie Gleason, a seaman from the First Division, stepped forward and without hesitation tied the line about his waist and dove into the frigid water. For the next several days, while the pilot was aboard the Gyatt, he never seemed to be far from Gleason - nor was he to far from the bridge, where he was a constant observer of the carrier landings. It was also around this time that a Quartermaster and Radioman, having imbibed the night before, while on liberty, were in the emergency radio room relaxing, shooting the breeze and generally trying to sober up when general quarters alarm disturbed their journey to sobriety. As these two white hats stepped out on the deck to the sound of the GQ alarm and looked to starboard they saw the fantail of the aircraft carrier ablaze. The radioman's GQ station was the main radio room and the quartermaster's station was the helm. The two men claim that the sound of the alarm and the fire on the fantail of the carrier erased all feelings on insobriety as they raced to their battle stations on the upper decks. If memory serves – there were three incidents relating to the plane guard operation that night.

It was sometime during this period that one of the aforementioned young ensigns found that senior officers were not always accommodating. The ensign was to relieve the senior officer on the quarterdeck watch and was not familiar with the procedures. As the ensign was relieving the senior officer he began querying him on procedures and as soon as his first question was asked he was cut short with a comment that went somewhat like this: "The regulations are in the ship's office – Mister. I suggest you memorize them – now." And the young ensign did. The ship spent the month of March taking on supplies and ammunition in preparation for an April departure to Northern Europe. This was the year of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

The Gyatt headed north in 1953, not leaving Norfolk until the 20th day of April on the journey to Northern Europe. The first stop was Argentia, Newfoundland and it was cold. Although it was late April ice seemed to be everywhere and the seas were both high and rough. The seas inflicted heavy damage to the both the life raft supports and the depth charge racks. The ship left Newfoundland after two days in port and continued north to Reykjavik, Iceland running parallel to the USS Zellars (DD-777) who usually was on the Gyatt's portside. It was early evening shortly after leaving Newfoundland and the Officer of the Deck (OOD), who had the bridge, went below to the wardroom for dinner, leaving the ship in the hands of a junior officer. The OOD was joined at dinner by the Captain and a number of other officers that were not on duty. As those in the wardroom were eating they could feel the ship going hard to the portside. The OOD and the Captain were out of their chairs immediately heading to the bridge – the Gyatt was on a collision course with the Zellars. As the OOD and the Captain arrived they found the young officer making the necessary corrections to avert the impending disaster. The Captain never lectured the young officer and advised the other officers to refrain from comments. The Captain's observation of the corrective actions taken and the look on the young officer's face indicated that he had learned the necessary lessons. However, the Captain did ask the OOD to finish his dinner on the bridge. The Captain retired from the Navy, the OOD retired from NASA and the young officer can be seen on television as the London based correspondent for CBS.

When the ship reached Iceland, the name of the country truly applied – we were always in foul weather gear and the crew, when ashore, found that the people of Reykjavik were colder than the weather. As the crew, on liberty, walked the streets of Reykjavik the people coming toward them would leave the sidewalk as they approached, cross the street and walk the other side of the street until they passed the crew members of the Gyatt and then cross back continuing on their way. Liberty was restricted while the ship was anchored in Reykjavik since we were in a Communist country during their May Day celebrations and the Captain did not desire a conflict - of any kind. The uniform of the day, in Iceland as it was in Newfoundland, for the crew was dress blues ashore and undress blues aboard ship accompanied by long johns as illustrated in the photograph to the right. The photograph shows Williams, BMSN in long johns and Borland, CSSN in undress blues.

While in Iceland the crew was able to fish off the ship and found that it was great and that the flounder were plentiful. The Captain and the XO allowed the crew a fish fry on the fantail and in fact joined them eating fish that was the freshest - going from the sea to the frying pan to the stomach in a non-stop continuous flow. The rule for the fish fry was those that those that could catch fish - caught fish and those that could not catch fish - well they cleaned them and cooked them. Years later the XO, while in command of his own ship and anchored in Reykjavik, told the story of the fish fry to the Icelandic Ambassador, who advised him that fishing in the harbor was not permitted. The ship left the frigid waters of Iceland and participated in operations on the way to Plymouth, England, arriving on the 8th day of May.

While in the north of Europe the Gyatt usually operated alone but on occasion was joined by the USS Zellars (DD-777) - but back to Plymouth and the continuation of the ship's journey alone. Shortly after reaching Plymouth the Gyatt was ordered to check the boiler downcomer tubes for leaks, for it had been determined that the explosion the previous year aboard the USS Bennington that killed a number of the crew was caused by such leaks. The crew had found such leaks and subsequently new tubes were airlifted to the Plymouth Naval Shipyard, where the tubes were replaced and the Gyatt was declared fit for sea. On this cruise, overnight liberty was common place and some of the crew took advantage of the opportunity. One seaman, a Gunners Mate Striker out of the First Division who hailed from New York State took advantage of such opportunities. While cruising Plymouth he found himself slightly inebriated and low on cash. This young Lothario met a young lass on his cruise through the community who knew the local jailer and was able to get him sleeping accommodations in the local jail. When the young lady arrived at the ship the following afternoon and he saw her in the light of day he disclaimed meeting her. This same Lothario met a very attractive young lady, named Susan, when the ship was in Istanbul or Izmir, Turkey. Susan must have been totally under the young Lothario's spell for she met the ship at all the ports visited during operations in the Eastern Mediterranean.

From Plymouth the ship went to Flushing, Holland or Vlissingen, as the Dutch call it; a town of wide streets, white buildings and tulips everywhere and good eating; potatoes, cabbage and sausages - all kinds of sausages. The Gyatt was the first Navy ship to visit Holland since the end of World War II; consequently a tour was requested and arranged for Queen Wihelmina's daughter, who had not been aboard an American warship. As the Captain and a group of officers were escorting the princess through the ship they eventually found themselves on the bridge. As the group stepped out to the portside and started moving aft they were stopped by an

officer who had been sent ahead to assure that all was ship shape and he whispered to the Captain that the party should return the way they came. When queried by the Captain, away from the group, the officer advised that a sailor was sleeping in the starboard flagbag in his skivvies. The Captain advised the guests that both sides of the bridge were similar and they should return below – which they did. It was in Flushing that the white hats found that Dutch beer was tremendously potent. Some of the crew got so rowdy when returned to the ship that they ended up wearing straight jackets. After a few days of outstanding food and strong beer the ship left Flushing for Bremerhaven, Germany and then returned to England with an anchorage at Eastbourne and side visits to Brighton and Rye.

The 30th day of May 1953 found the Gyatt anchored at Eastbourne, England a short ride from London and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. Tour buses were run from the ship to London and many of the crew took advantage of this opportunity to visit the old city and observe the pageantry generated by the coronation. Flags, banners and festivities were everywhere in London and the surrounding countryside. Those that made the trip also took time to visit Saint Paul's Cathedral, the Tower of London, Piccadilly Circus, the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey and the Palace of Westminster, see Big Ben, visit the Pubs and enjoy the food and drink.

It was on one of these trips, specifically on the 2nd day of June, the actual Coronation Day, that a group of below deck sailors (snipes) took advantage of the hospitality of the locals and visited one of the more popular dance halls to partake of the live music, good food and warm beer. There were six or eight of these below deck sailors in the group and they were lucky enough to get a table near the stage, which put them reasonably close to the band that was performing on stage. One of this group was a young fireman who had a tendency to talk a lot but in actuality mumbled a lot and it got to the point where his shipmates paid no attention to him. The young fireman's shipmates got to the point where they paid no attention to him and in fact stated that he swallowed three out of every four words he spoke. About midway through the evening the young fireman's shipmates found him on stage talking to the bandleader and offering his services as a drummer – free of charge. After a few minutes of pleading the young fireman was coaxed off the stage with a polite “maybe later.” The young fireman, not one to accept a subtle hint, was not dissuaded and made at least two more trips to the stage. In between his trips to the stage the young fireman practiced by rattling a pair of spoons while sitting at the table and it became evident to his shipmates that he was without musical talent. The evening wore on and eventually the bandleader announced that the dance was over and asked for everyone to stand while the National Anthem was played. The crowd rose to their feet and began singing. The young fireman apparently realizing that this would be his last chance to play the drums headed for the stage yet another time. Turned back again the young fireman walked calmly back to table mumbling continuously. When the young fireman reached the table and without breaking stride turned and kicked the table and in a loud, clear and distinct voice and without a mumble said: “(expletive deleted) the Queen.” This utterance put the young fireman's shipmates in double shock. First, because there was no mumbling and no swallowing of words and secondly, because it was while the people at the dance hall were singing Great Britain's National Anthem on the Coronation Day of Queen Elizabeth the Second. Maybe it was the euphoria, the patriotic spirit and the crowd singing that insulated those nearby from hearing the remark. Or may be it was the quick action of his Gyatt shipmates that had the young fireman and themselves out of the

dance hall before two bars of “God Save the Queen” could be uttered. Regardless the group of below deck sailors with their young fireman in tow made it to fleet landing without a hostile crowd in pursuit. The absence of comment in the London Times and the International Herald Tribune made it apparent that an international incident did not occur. When the young fireman was queried about the incident he denied everything and was back to mumbling and swallowing three out of every four spoken words. His shipmates were relieved and thankful that he had returned to his standard method of speech – one day of articulate speech by the young fireman was more than enough. This group fared much better than the 1949 Gyatt sailors on liberty in Edinburgh, Scotland.

It was in April 1949 and the Gyatt was tied up in Leith, the port of Edinburgh, and a Boatswain Mate striker on liberty in Edinburgh made a disparaging remark about the queen and subsequently got his clock cleaned. This was the same boatswain place on report for shooting up the city of Ancona, Italy almost two years later.

On the 6th day of June the Gyatt departed Eastbourne for Southend on Sea, arriving on the 8th day of June. As the Gyatt was getting under way to leave Southend on Sea, eleven days later, a radarman striker developed a toothache of epic proportions and was dispatched to a military medical facility in London to have it extracted. To this day the striker, who was only eighteen years old at the time, wondered what was best – his two weeks of liberty while living in an English flat (apartment) after the extraction of his aching tooth or the loss of his trip through the Kiel Canal with its magnificent views of castles and the stopovers at Port Ronne, Denmark and Bremerhaven, Germany.

After eleven days the ship left Southend on Sea heading east, lagging behind three Russian ships, including at least two cruisers of the Sverdlov Class, that had been present during the coronation period. The Gyatt followed the Russian ships through the Kiel Canal and into the Baltic Sea. The Gyatt’s primary responsibility was to play “I Spy” as those in the “Off-Limits” Radio Counter Measure (RCM) room listened to Russian radio transmissions. While in the Baltic, the Gyatt encountered three Russian “E-Boats” off the port side moving at flank speed and the Captain, concerned for the safety of the ship and crew, ordered all hands to “General Quarters.” Fortunately, the “E-Boats” were on their way to greet the cruisers. The “E-Boats” were from the East German port of Sassnitz.

The Gyatt went as far east as the Danish Island of Bornholm and moored at Port Ronne. After a few days in Port Ronne the ship returned to England with a stop in Bremerhaven. The people on the Island were very friendly and many of the crew were guests of the residents.

The Gyatt arrived at Harwich, England the port for Ipswich about a week after the encounter with the “E-Boats” in the Baltic Sea. While at Ipswich the ship’s baseball/softball team played an English Boys School a game of cricket. The English team, taking only half their outs, defeated the Gyatt team by the score of 143 to 38. However, when we played baseball or softball against the English or American Service teams within driving distance of the port we were visiting we usually won by a decisive score. The Gyatt spent the 4th day of July at St. Peters Port on the Isle Guernsey, located off the northwest coast of France - then back to Plymouth and on to Gibraltar, arriving there on the 21st day of July.

From Gibraltar the Gyatt spent time in Piraeus, Greece; the Isle of Rhodes and Istanbul, Turkey. While at Istanbul the ship was dispatched to the port of Argostoli, Greece; on the Island Keffolania located off the western mainland of Greece. Argostoli had been hit by an earthquake that had a seven plus reading on the Richter Scale. The town had been leveled and through donations by immigrants was it rebuilt. Photographs of the destruction and subsequent rebuilding are located in the Historical and Folk Museum in Argostoli. Eight members of the Gyatt, led by LTJG Alfred M. Carey, were selected to go ashore to lend aid. Others who went ashore included; Arthur Liveratos, a seaman, of Greek descent, who was fluent in Greek and carried the nickname "Greek;" Francis "Bunzy" Guitierrez, a quartermaster, fluent in Italian; Kraig, a radioman; Keefer, Welch, Barata and Ensign Ray Stein.

The Gyatt left most of her supplies for the people who inhabited Argostoli. We were to learn that twenty-three families living on Argostoli had lived in America. There was also an Englishman married to a Greek woman, who visited with Mr. Carey. The Englishman, Evan John Simpson, was also a Civil War buff and had written a book on the Civil War titled; "Atlantic Impact – 1861," the book published by Putman was received by Mr. Carey's wife a few weeks after we left Argostoli. The crew from the 712 spent a week and a day on this island dispersing food and assisting marines with supplying fresh water. A detachment of US Marines had arrived during our stay and remained after we departed. North of the Gyatt's location on the beach was a detachment of British Medical personnel who had erected a tent hospital. During our stay on the island the British were extremely short of hospital beds – it turned out that a number of beds were taken by pregnant women whose labor had been prematurely escalated by the earthquake.

The Gyatt personnel stayed in touch with the ship using a hand generator radio set – and we all took turns cranking. The food for the eight members of the Gyatt, who remained on Argostoli, consisted of cans of "C-Rations" that had a 1942 date and a quantity of fresh fruit. The guys really enjoyed the fruit but when the marines learned that fresh food was around it disappeared - in a hurry. One night, while in our cots, in the tent, a shot was heard. When the officer in charge (LTJG Carey) went to investigate he found that a member of the Greek contingent sent to guard the supplies executed a man they caught stealing – no ifs – ands – or buts. The ship's port of call after departing Argostoli was Naples, Italy so that supplies that were left on the island could be replaced. The Gyatt anchored off Argostoli, sent in the motor whaleboat to pick up the crew that had been dispatched to the island, weighed anchor and departed for Naples.

As it happened so often - griping and complaining solicited stories of older shipmates. In the case of food the men of the Gyatt were to learn that any meal could be your last – so no matter how good or how bad it may be it should be eaten with gusto. The example in this case was the ship's Engineering Officer, Charles Severn Shores, Lieutenant USN. While aboard the Gyatt Mr. Shores ate every meal as though it was his last and readily admitted that it was the way he felt. It seem that during World War II Mr. Shores served aboard a merchant marine vessel that was sunk and as a result spent fifteen days in a life raft without food. He recalled that the night before the sinking he had no desire to partake of the cold cuts that were being served for supper - again - and consequently did not eat. Hence his reason for eating every meal as though it were

his last. I remember the Lieutenant as being tall and trim and his fellow officers attested to his eating habit.

The ship made an unscheduled trip to Naples to replenish supplies left at Argostoli and as with all foods coming aboard some found its way to the crew workstations – such delicacies as baloney, cheese, baked beans and various varieties of canned fruit. On this particular occasion there were two ten-pound tins of frozen strawberries slated to go to the wardroom pantry and as they were being delivered through the starboard main deck hatch one of the containers went below decks and not to the wardroom pantry located about ten paces forward.

To the eighteen-year old radarman striker, who spent two weeks in London in an English flat after his tooth extraction, the unscheduled stop was like a gift from the Gods. The striker was a first generation American of immigrant Italian parents who had left their families to come to the United States. Consequently the striker had no relatives in the States and had an opportunity to see first hand grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. The striker petitioned his Operations Officer, LTJG George McGregor, for some leave time to visit these relatives he had never seen or heard. Mr. McGregor approved the request, as did the Executive Officer, LCDR W. D. Taylor, who passed it on to the Captain. CDR A. B. Register, the Captain of the Gyatt at the time, had a lengthy discussion with the striker and subsequently approved the request. The officers, who were the only men aboard ship with civilian clothes, were kind enough to loan the striker portions of their wardrobes, along with some luggage, that allowed him to travel Italy looking like an American Italian or an American tourist. For seven days the striker enjoyed family that he had never met. Key words – compassion and understanding. It had happened before aboard the Gyatt and it probably has happened since. The remainder of the crew took the opportunity to make a trip to Rome and see the Pope.

When in Naples the ships are usually anchored in the bay and are constantly preyed upon by men and women in boats selling a variety of wares – anything from hand carved wooden chests to fine Cameo brooches. Members of the crew referred to these boats as “bum boats.” During this particular cruise the Gyatt had a seaman from North Carolina who was constantly in trouble and was always on the lookout for a fight - when the odds were totally in his favor. Anyway – this seaman was on “K.P.-Duty” part of his extra duty assignments for his many observed indiscretions. On this stay in Naples the seaman walked along the portside toward the after end of the ship with a GI can of waste. When he reached the fantail he lifted the can over the life lines and held it on the edge while motioning one of the “bum boats” to come along side. When the “bum boat” was directly beneath him he dropped the can with everything in it amidships of the small boat and watched as the boat split in two. The boat owner ended up in the bay and was rescued by a countryman – his boat and his wares going to the bottom of the bay. The boat owner returned to the shore and was back again – about two hours later - with a pistol – looking for the seaman and threatening to shoot other sailors if he was not paid for his boat and wares. Fortunately, the damage control gang was checking fire hoses at the time and they blasted the gun waver with a 200-psi stream of water, which put him back in the water where he lost the pistol, while trying to save himself for the second time that day. When he was hauled into a countryman’s boat he blasted those on the fantail with a continuous string of expletives in his native tongue. The seaman who initiated this action never did come near the fantail.

Anyway, eight days after the stores were loaded the ship weighed anchor and headed to sea for gunnery exercises. At the time the Gyatt was leading the squadron by two targets, trailed by the squadron flagship Gearing. As the Gyatt departed Naples General Quarters (GQ) sounded and all men headed to their battle stations. One of the main GQ Stations was "Plot" as the Fire Control Room was called. This room almost directly amidships housed the computer for controlling the firing of the ship's main guns and the communication controls for the ship. The enlisted men were all at their stations with their radio voice activated head sets in place when the Fire Control (FC) Officer came through the hatch and for the first time ever looked behind the Fire Control Board with its myriad of switches already turned on. Well behind the board were the baloney, the cheese, some canned goods and the ten pound tin of frozen strawberries in a container of ice. The FC Officer turned from looking at our cache, looked at us and advised that we were all on report – the room went glum. At about the time the word came down to standby for targets, which were sleeves towed behind a plane. In addition to the controls for the ship's communications and its weaponry are two gyroscopes, or gyros as they were called, one for the navigation system and one for the rangefinder that sits atop the bridge. When the range finder locks on a target the gyro stabilizes, the range operator, the elevation operator and the bearing operator all match their indicators with the information generated by the range finder and advise the computer or "plot" operator as he was referred to. The men respond that they are matched with the incoming information by saying; "gyro set, range set, elevation set and horizontal set." The computer operator, when his indicators are matched after receiving the various inputs, advises "plot set." The words that follow are: "standby – commence firing." On this particular day those words did not come and the Gyatt did not fire on its target. The Captain called, via the squawk box, and asked the FC Officer why he did not fire and the FC Officer advised that he had no answer. The target made its second pass and the crew responded as before, the Captain called as before and the FC Officer responded as before. The Gearing was now tied with the Gyatt for accuracy in the squadron gunnery competition. This happened a third time and the captain advised that he had heard again that all stations were "set" and again he did not here the commands "standby – commence firing." The FC Officer again responded that he had no answer and as he released the talk switch turned to the plot operator and asked why the commands "standby – commence firing" were not issued. The plot operator advised that those commands were not issued by an enlisted man, that they were an officer's responsibility. The FC Officer asked "could we go back to the way it was" and the plot operator asked if he meant like previous GQ operations, before he came in today. The FC Officer responded with a yes. The plot operator asked if that meant no one was on report and again the FC Officer responded with a yes. The Gyatt hit the last four targets but lost squadron gunnery championship to the Gearing by one target.

It was some time during this period that the decision was made to paint the Fire Control/Internal Communication (FC/IC) Room. The room with eye-ease green bulkheads and ceiling hadn't been painted since the ship was commissioned in 1945. This room is the heart of all weapon, internal communications and navigational controls. There is electrical wire and communication wire everywhere. The wire is bolted to the bulkheads, the ceiling and to the deck beneath aluminum deck plates. The wire is not bolted directly to any of these surfaces but to brackets welded to the bulkheads, ceilings and decks resulting in spaces that are next to impossible to paint with a brush. It was decided that the best way to paint this area was with a spray gun –

but there were no volunteers except for a fire control petty officer. The paint with a drying agent was a lead-based eye-ease green. To minimize painting problems the blowers were shut down and vents closed. Initially the painting went well; however, as the fumes from the paint spray increased the enclosed area, which was painted in slightly less than three hours, became more and more confining. The petty officer, who painted the area, was virtually out on his feet intoxicated by the paint fumes. The petty officer was led staggering from the FC/IC Room to his quarters in the Second Division. After stripping down and staggering to and from the showers he fell into his bunk where he remained for more than twenty-four hours. Looking back, based on today's standards, he committed a whole bunch of no-nos.

It was during this same period that the same volunteering petty officer received the shock of his young life. The Internal Communications (IC) Petty Officer, the only IC person in the IC/FC room was very possessive of what he considered his. Well there were two chairs in this room, which was usually housed by one IC person and a whole flock of FC people and the FC people usually were sitting in both chairs. Unbeknownst to the FC people the IC person wired the chair. When the volunteering petty officer, who happened to be the first person to sit in the chair after the wiring, sat down he was stunned by a twenty thousand-volt charge. After getting over the initial shock, the volunteering petty officer charged out of the chair in pursuit of the fleeing IC petty officer, who was already through the hatch and up the ladder on his way to a safer area.

Within a few minutes everyone accepted what happened and everything remained the same with fire controlmen occupying the chairs in proportion to the number of people in the room.

After the gunnery exercise the ship returned to the waters of the Eastern Mediterranean, continuing operations and spending more time in Piraeus, the Port of Athens and Thessalonika (Salonika), Greece. While in Thessalonika the supply division of the ship played host to twenty-seven orphaned children; escorting them about the ship and treating them to ice cream.

The next port was the City of Izmir, Turkey where for the first time the ship was moored to a dock instead of being anchored in the harbor. The crew was able to observe the happenings ashore and listen to the prayer calls that were held throughout the day. Izmir was celebrating a major fair and many countries of Europe and Western Asia had displays at the fair. Shore patrol at the fair was an interesting experience and those patrolling the fair were paired with Turkish police and Turkish soldiers with the responsibility of keeping Americans out of the "Walled City" as the forty homes for the ladies of the night were called. The "Walled City" was on the perimeter of the fairgrounds.

After Izmir the ship returned to the states and Norfolk with another stop at Piraeus, Greece as well as stops at Cannes, France and Palermo, Sicily. Our prolonged stay in the Eastern Mediterranean and specifically the Aegean Sea was the result of the RCM gear aboard the ship. The men attached to this operation kept to themselves and were not really a part of the crew. It was only before sunset that more than two of the authorized visitors to the RCM room could be observed together as they held a "burn-party" on the fantail. The regular crew was to find that these little groups attached to the RCM room were burning transmissions recorded the previous day. They were a busy group while the ship was in European waters.

While we were anchored in Cannes an officer from command was conducting a personnel inspection of the First Division and as he looked at the men he was extremely pleased that their white hats were so well blocked and that they were virtually all alike. As the inspecting officer was walking in front of one of the men he asked to see his hat, he examined it and returned it, and he repeated this action again, again and then again. After the fifth hat the visiting officer asked if he could meet Seaman D. A. Ahlin. It turned out that there were more than a dozen hats shaped by Dale Ahlin and six actually had his name stenciled in them, including four of the five inspected by the visiting officer.

It was on the way back to the States that the XO, LCDR W. D. Taylor, advised Ensign Laffoon that he would not be going ashore when the ship docked in Norfolk. Mr. Laffoon had been married about the same time that he was commissioned as an Ensign and that was just prior to reporting aboard the Gyatt. While in Europe on this most recent six-month deployment he stood watches for every bachelor officer that wanted to spend time ashore and built up a substantial reserve of “standbys or covered duty days.” It seemed that Mr. Laffoon was a member of the Cryptology Team but had avoided getting deeply involved with the procedures, since he felt other duties to be more important. The team was under the guidance of LTJG Thomas Fenton, currently a senior correspondent for CBS in London, who was ably assisted by Ensigns Norman Kusnitz and Benjamin Mauthe and they “all” readily carried the load. Needless to say, Ensign Laffoon may have set a record in becoming qualified in Cryptology Procedures.

The ship arrived in Norfolk on the 21st day of October and except for some short exercises spent the rest of the year moored to the C. E. Piers. While moored to the C. E. Piers, outboard of the destroyers Gearing and Vogelgesang, on a Sunday afternoon Ensign Laffoon had the OOD watch and Louis Adamo, BM3 was the Petty Officer of the Watch. It was shortly before 1600 and the watch was drawing to a close and Ensign Laffoon was making his final tour of the ship prior to being relieved when he heard the shrill whistle of the Boatswain’s Pipe and Adamo saying; “Now hear this – Will the duty chicken lay up to the galley to run through the soup.” Needless to say the message brought laughter to all within hearing distance.

On the 29th day of October Commander Ben B. Pickett, USN (29 October 1953 to 22 July 1955) became the seventh commander of the Gyatt as he relieved Commander Alan B. Register, USN. At the start of World War II Commander Pickett served as Gunnery Officer aboard the USS St. Louis (CL 49). The St. Louis was at Pearl Harbor on the 7th day of December 1941 and shot down three Japanese planes as it was moving away from the pier to open water. The St. Louis survived a torpedo attack as she headed to open water in search of the Japanese fleet. In 1943 Commander Pickett received a Navy Unit Commendation as part of the crew of the St. Louis. The citation read as follows: “For outstanding heroism in action against enemy Japanese forces during the Battles of Kula Gulf and Kolombangara, from July 5 to 13, 1943...Steaming up the slot with her Task Force shortly before midnight on July 5 to intercept the Japanese on their nightly run from Bougainville, the USS St. Louis met and engaged a superior enemy force of cruisers and destroyers, sinking or severely damaging a majority of these ships. In another furious night engagement off Kolombangara Island one week later, she assisted in damaging or destroying five more ships of the Japanese cruiser-destroyer force...A resolute and sturdy veteran, complemented by skilled and aggressive officers and men, the St. Louis rendered distinctive service sustaining and enhancing the finest traditions of the United States Naval

Service.” In late 1943 Commander Pickett left for the Boston Naval Shipyard to oversee the final stages of the construction of the cruiser, USS Flint. The Flint became the third USS Vincennes (CL 64) when the second Vincennes (CL 44) was sunk at Savo Island in August 1942. The Vincennes was commissioned on the 21st day of January 1944 and sailed to the Pacific. During Commander Pickett’s tenure the Vincennes joined Task Force 58 and participated in the first strikes on the Bonins and then on to Saipan, the Pagan Islands and the Philippine Sea. Commander Pickett retired from the Navy as a Rear Admiral.

The “Korean Conflict” ended on the 27th day of July 1953, three years, one month and two days after it officially started. Tornadoes were deadly in the United States killing 300 people in the states of Texas, Michigan and Massachusetts. Queen Elizabeth II is crowned in London on the 2nd day of June. Sir Edmund Hillary of England and Tenzig, a Sherpa guide, are the first to climb Mount Everest – 29,028 feet above sea level. Dr. Jonas Salk discovers the polio vaccine.

The New York Yankees took the Brooklyn Dodgers in the World Series for the fifth consecutive time. The Boston Braves moved to Milwaukee and eventually became the Atlanta Braves. The Saint Louis Browns move to Baltimore and became the Orioles. The Detroit Lions win their second consecutive NFL championship from the Cleveland Browns, 17 to 16. The Minneapolis Lakers win a second consecutive championship from the New York Knicks. Bobo Olsen replaces Sugar Ray Robinson as world middleweight boxing champion.

The Academy Award for best picture went to “From Here to Eternity with Burt Lancaster, Frank Sinatra and Deborah Kerr.” Other movies for 1953 include: “Niagara, and Gentlemen Prefer Blonds,” both starring Marilyn Monroe, “Roman Holiday, The Robe, Julius Caesar, The Living Desert and Stalag 17.

Hit songs: “I Believe, Stranger in Paradise, Ebb Tide, Baubles – Bangles and Beads, Don’t Let The Stars Get in Your Eyes, Vaya Con Dios, The Doggie in the Window, April in Portugal and Till I Waltz Again With You.”