

## ***XI. 1954 ~ Europe a Fifth Time***

**1954:** *The official log for the first day of 1954 was written by Ensign N. Kusnitz, USNR and reads as follows:*

00-04

*To the portside of the Gearing we seem to be moored  
Blessed be the fates that kept me aboard  
At C. E. Pier Twenty, Berth 202  
Norfolk, Virginia, is our good crew.  
With standard mooring lines out,  
Tonight was the night we gave a great shout.  
Also out forward are wire and breast  
So that resting in peace are six (6) ships in a nest,  
The order of ships outboard from the pier;  
The USS Grand Canyon; her job to repair.  
To give her our jobs is our great goal  
And tied up right next to her is the USS Moale  
Then the H. J. Ellison, her men brave to the core,  
And next to her the Gearing with ComDesRon 4.  
Then comes the Gyatt, so fine and so fit,  
The mainstay of the squadron as all will admit.  
Outboard of us is a ship that carries a bang,  
Her name, you pronounce it, is the Vogelgesang.  
Our steam is supplied by the last mentioned ship,  
Fresh water from the pier so we take more than a sip.  
Our snipe spaces are cold, with nothing in use,  
And tender assistance supplies us with juice.  
Other ships can be found, both forward & aft,  
They are LantFlt units and district small craft.  
The Senior Officer Present Afloat  
Strange as it seems is not in a boat.  
He's ComSecondFlt in CinCLantFlt compound,  
Where staff men reside and top brass abound.  
And so as I stand, wind blowing in my face,  
I wish there were someone who would take my place.  
But ere I hit my rack, all in good cheer,  
I wish all the world a Happy New Year.*

*Signed/N. Kusnitz, Ensign, USNR*

*This year, for the one and only time aboard the Gyatt, the Petty Officer of the Watch wrote the ship's log in rhyme. One of the crew sent it to the Navy Times and it was printed in the 26<sup>th</sup> of January 1954 edition of the paper. It reads as follows:*

***Petty Officer on Watch Pens Ship's Log in Poetic Rhyme***

*USS Gyatt - Ship's logs may recount more adventurous exploits than that described in the midwatch entry of January 1 on the log of this destroyer. But not many entries, will match for ingenuity this rhyming one composed by petty officer of the watch, F. A. Barata, FT3.*

*"0000 -- Today will start another long year,  
fifth ship out from the new C. E. Pier.  
The pier numbers twenty, the ships total six,  
we're tied up in Norfolk, right down in the sticks.  
Our lines are all standard for a ship of this kind,  
a cable out forward, and a barge tied behind.*

*Now the tender Grand Canyon is ship number one;  
the Moale is the second, then the Ellison.  
Now there is the Gearing, and here is the Gyatt,  
along with the Volgey, it's really a riot.*

*From the Eight-Sixty-Two we are getting our steam,  
our power from the tender, out on our beam.  
Now we're taking our water, all the way from the pier,  
Making the cold iron watch, the racket this year.*

*The S-O-P-A, a Man of Renown,  
he's Com 2nd Fleet in CinCLANT compound.  
Now a list of ships present should be included;  
since they're in yesterday's log, I've concluded.*

*s/ F. A. Barata, FT3 January 1, 1954*

*It was some time in early January or maybe it was late December of the previous year that the Petty Officer of the Watch, standing the 1600 to 2000 watch on the quarterdeck, received a call on the ship telephone asking if the area was clear. The caller was advised that the area was clear. The caller asked if anything was near the gangway and was advised that it was also clear. Shortly before 1700 the officers and their wives or lady friends were returning aboard ship for a celebration to be held in the wardroom and at about the same time the Stewards Mate called the quarterdeck advising that a cake prepared for the celebration was missing and they had only ice cream to serve the wardroom. The Petty Officer of the Watch deduced what happened and by ship's phone contacted the person who had made inquiries at the start of his watch. The caller,*

*a Boatswain Mate petty officer, stated that he had a great cake that he would be glad to share. The petty officer of the watch had a piece of cake to go with his coffee when he was relieved.*

*The Gyatt spent the first three months of 1954 in the Caribbean on exercises and visited the ports of Havana, Cuba; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Kingston, Jamaica and St., Thomas, Virgin Islands. The Gyatt's stop in Havana was the first in five years for an American fighting ship. It seems that five years previously Juan Batista, the dictator in power at the time, took offense when one or more sailors from US ships in the harbor went ashore, got drunk and then relieved themselves at the base of the statute of Jose Marti. The punishment for this insult was to ban all American warships from entering Havana.*

*It was while the ship was in Kingston that Patricia Neal, one of the foremost actresses of her time, visited the ship. Miss Neal was invited to the Gyatt by a group of ensigns who had been enjoying the nightlife on the beach. The ensigns had no sooner sat at their table when Miss Neal came over and began chatting and eventually invited the young officers to join her group. The ensigns were wined and dined by Miss Neal and as a result she was invited to visit the ship. Miss Neal arrived the following evening and had dinner in the wardroom, partaking of lobster and baked Alaska and then toured the ship. A few members of the crew were on the bridge deck, with blankets spread, participating in a game of chance when Miss Neal, with her escorts, visited the bridge. Miss Neal questioned the stakes and was advised that they were matchsticks. Miss Neal was every bit the lady she portrayed in her movies.*

*While in the Caribbean the Gyatt and the destroyer USS Dyess (DDR-880) were on an ASW exercise attacking the USS Jallao (SS-368) an attack submarine. The Gyatt had located the submarine and was advancing toward its periscope. Slightly astern and on the portside of the Gyatt was the Dyess traveling at a high rate of speed. In a matter of moments the Dyess passed and cut across the bow of the Gyatt heading toward the Jallao's periscope and hit its conning tower. The Dyess literally split the conning tower of the submarine while inflicting heavy damage to her own bow and starboard side. Almost immediately the submarine sent red flares into the sky, it was like the impact of the two ships triggered the flares. Both the Dyess and Jallao were badly damaged and both required towing. The Gyatt was assigned to tow the Dyess and another destroyer was assigned to tow the Jallao. It was a long slow trip back to Norfolk.*

*It was shortly after this incident and on another ASW exercise that the Gyatt had its own close call with a submarine. It was mail pickup and movie exchange time when the Gyatt was coming along side the submarine, USS Becuna (SS-319), starboard side too. The wardroom and galley emptied immediately to the aggravating scraping sound of metal on metal that was ringing in everyone's ears – but the two ships only kissed and after a survey of the Gyatt's starboard side and the Becuna's portside the Captains agreed not to log the incident. The movies were exchanged, the submarine picked up its mail and the ships were on their way.*

*It should be noted that the start of the New Year saw a change in DesRon 4 as radar picket ships were added to each division. The USS Dyess (DDR-880) replaced the USS Bailey (DD-713) and the USS Bordelon (DDR-881) replaced the USS Charles R. Ware (DD-865). The Bailey and the Ware were modified and eventually became DDRs. DesRon 4 remained with the ships noted*

until the Gyatt's decommissioning. In 1957 DesRon 4 was again restructured – but we will save that for later.

While the ship was tied up at the C. E. Piers, one weekend and Liberty had been called away, the Command Duty Officer, an Ensign, who also served as Intelligence Officer felt that quiet of the ship as a result of the reduced crew would allow him to do an accurate inventory of classified material with minimum disturbance. The young officer, working in the privacy of his quarters, had neatly spread the documents across his bunk when the announcement came over the IMC (PA) System – **“Fire in the Paint locker.”** This - the aft paint locker – was located on the starboard side just forward of the “K-Guns” and after officer quarters. The young officer felt torn between two situations – as Command Duty Officer go to the nearby fire scene and check to see if all was under control or remain with the classified documents. The young officer elected to check the fire and left the “classified” documents on his bunk. Finding the fire controlled the young officer returned to his quarters and was alarmed to find his bunk empty – the documents gone. The young officer searched the area and then went forward to query the watch – finding them unaware and without knowledge of the documents he began making preparations to seal and search the ship. As he began his preparations another officer, who quartered in the same area, happened by and was asked if he had seen anything. The second officer said: “Oh yes – I forgot to tell you – as I walked by your quarters I noticed your predicament and secured the documents in my locker.” It amazed me that he did not tell me what happened until I questioned him even though it appeared that he was aware that I was ready to seal and search the ship. It was still better late than never.

In May the Gyatt sailed for another tour of the Mediterranean, arriving at Gibraltar in the middle of the month. During the crossing of the Atlantic the USS Purdy (DD-734) lost both of her evaporators and the Gyatt was directed to go along side to assist in this hour of need. The Gyatt assisted by pumping roughly six thousand gallons of distilled water to the Purdy and sending the “Water King” via high line to assist in repairing the evaporator units aboard the Purdy.

During this short Mediterranean cruise the Gyatt used Naples, Italy as her base of operations until the return to Norfolk during the second week of July. While visiting Genoa, Italy on this cruise, with the Hunter Killer Group, the Gyatt was moored to the quay and the carrier was anchored outside the bay. With weather threatening the staff chaplain came over to ask each destroyer how many of their liberty party could be sheltered in case the weather precluded their return to the carrier. The XO told the chaplain the 712 could take all that were stranded if necessary. It rained and blew that night and the Gyatt was preparing breakfast for 150 men who had been on liberty when their boats arrived to return them to the carrier. The remaining ships of the squadron had sheltered about thirty-five liberty personnel. Those eating breakfast in the Gyatt crew's mess seemed to relish their breakfast of hotcakes as they returned for seconds and even thirds. When queried by one of the cooks serving on the chow line as to what was so great about the hotcakes – he was told - that aboard the carrier they were only allowed two hotcakes at breakfast – no seconds. The liberty personnel aboard the Gyatt included the aircraft squadron commander and many of his pilots - this was the result of the courtesies extended one of his lieutenants who had been aboard the Gyatt for a few days and knew they would be welcome.

*In appreciation for the hospitality extended by the Gyatt and for recognition in setting a record for fueling while underway (four minutes from waiting station to pumping) the Chief of Staff sent a large cake from the carrier to the Gyatt. The XO, W. D. Taylor who retired as a Captain, believes the fueling record still stands. It was during this cruise that Ensign Laffoon realized that educational background meant nothing to the military when he was assigned, as a collateral duty, the responsibility for the Electronics (ET) Group. This assignment was necessitated by the departure of Ensign Fred Schick. Ensign Laffoon ascertained that this assignment became his as a result of the location of his quarters to the electronic shop - he had "zero" training in electronics. Ensign Laffoon felt that he would be able to handle the job since the ET group was considered to be exceptional.*

*One of the lead ETs was George Samia, a petty officer, who hailed from New York City and was unfamiliar with bovines (cows) until he had joined the Navy (saw one on liberty). Anyway – the ship was at sea, in heavy weather, one of the radios failed. After investigation as to cause – it was determined that the problem lay with the aerial antenna on the forward stack. Samia indicated that the antenna could be repaired but felt uncomfortable doing it in heavy seas with the rolling and pitching the ship was encountering. After numerous calls as to the status of the antenna Samia advised that he would do the repair if someone would assist – no one volunteered and so Ensign Laffoon ventured forth as Samia's assistant. The climb aloft proved to be both "hairy and scary" even though they did not look down as they climbed but still seemed to come face to face with the water at limit of each roll of the ship. The rolling and the rain complicated the climb and the repair of the antenna but Samia completed the task with his able assistant. Both, Ensign Laffoon and Petty Officer Samia, felt pretty good after a very hot shower and replacement of their "hash marked skivvies."*

*In August the Gyatt sailed for plane guard duty off the coast of Pensacola, Florida and returned the first week of September to undergo an overhaul at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard. The Gyatt remained at the shipyard until the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 1955. While in the shipyard the Gyatt formed a flag football team and participated in the DesRon Four Football Conference, which they won. The stalwarts of the team were Eure, Myers, Davisson, Denmead, Toddy, Wuebben, Smude, Pittman, Ramierz, Grimes, O'Neil and Montigny.*

*During his time aboard the 712 the XO recalled weathering two hurricanes - one while the ship was in dry-dock and the other while it was anchored in Chesapeake Bay. The hurricane while the ship was in dry-dock was of particular concern to the OOD, an Ensign, who was worried because of the directive to – "cut the mooring lines if the ship starts leaning." The wind had reached speeds in excess of 100 miles per hour and the OOD was huddled in the midship passageway with the Petty Officer of the Watch and Messenger of the Watch when they began hearing loud banging and clanging on the OI deck above. Finally, when the wind abated that the watch members inspected and found that a large sheet of corrugated metal "blowing in the wind" was causing the clatter. The OOD was most thankful that he was not required to give the order to use the fire axes on the "mooring lines" during his watch and that there was no damage caused by the high wind.*

*For its many accomplishments, in 1954, the Gyatt received the “E” for Excellence – it was to be the first of many.*

*The “Cold War” was still very evident in 1954 and the United States built the DEW line (Distant Early Warning) across northern Canada in hopes of identifying aircraft or missiles flying over the Arctic. A study showed that the United States had six percent of the world population, 60 percent of all the automobiles, 45 percent of all the radios and 34 percent of all the railroads. The H-bomb tested in the Pacific was equal to twelve million tons of TNT. The first jet airliner, the Boeing 707, was tested and cruised at more than 600 miles per hour and it carried 219 passengers. Two things still around in the year 2000 were started in 1954; “Sports Illustrated” the magazine and the late night television program “The Tonight Show.”*

*On the 6<sup>th</sup> day of May Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile barrier. The New York Giants beat the Cleveland Indians in four games to win the World Series. The Philadelphia Athletics move to Kansas City, Missouri and eventually to Oakland, California to become the Oakland Athletics. The Cleveland Browns tired of losing close championship games to the Detroit Lions prevail with a 56 to 10 win to capture the 1954 NFL championship. The Minneapolis Lakers beat the Syracuse Nationals in seven games to win the NBA championship. In golf Bob Toski was the leading money winner with \$65,819, which was more than \$20,000 greater than the previous high cash amount. In 1945 Byron Nelson had won \$63,335 in savings bonds.*

*“On the Waterfront” with Marlon Brando won the Academy Award; other top movies include: “Rear Window, The Barefoot Contessa and The Country Girl.” From Italy came “La Strada” and from Japan came “The Seven Samurai.”*

*Hit songs included: “Mr. Sandman, Hey There, Oh My Papa, Stranger in Paradise, Papa Loves Mambo, Three Coins in a Fountain, Secret Love, Misty, Hold My Hand and Hernando’s Hideway.” Top vocalists still included; Bing Crosby, Perry Como, Tony Bennett, Eddie Fisher, Rosemary Clooney, Doris Day and the Chordettes.*