

XIV. 1957 ~ A New Designation – DDG-1

1957: The official log for the first day of 1957 was written by Ensign Russell Knowles, Jr. USNR and reads as follows:

00-04

*'Twas the birth of a new and promising year,
Gyatt could be seen starboard side to the pier.
The wind and the tide should give us no trouble,
We've got a one-inch wire moor instead of lines double.
Condition Baker is set above and below,
While from Pier 9W we receive the below:
Fresh water, electric power;
Even steam and hot water for taking a shower.
You must know your neighbors just to be sporty;
The USS Tarawa (with SOPA) CVS forty.
The USS Albany (CA one twenty-three)
And Atlantic units in the yard wish thee,
And the rest of the world on this evening here,
All god's Blessings and a Happy New Year.*

Signed/Russell Knowles, Jr., Ensign, USNR

The Gyatt remained at the Boston Naval Shipyard until almost the middle of March conducting trials and operations until the second week of April. At the start of the second week of April the Gyatt left the Newport, Rhode Island area and sailed by way of Norfolk for Montego Bay, Jamaica and Havana, Cuba to participate in a shakedown training operation operating out of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The ship had her hull number changed during this period to DDG-1 in recognition of her performance as the first guided missile destroyer.

The Gyatt, working with the recently commissioned Destroyer Escort, USS John Willis DE 1027, was anchored and waiting for the Willis to come along side. It was early morning, probably about seven and those that had the midwatch were still in their bunks. Harold Matroni, who had just made Chief, was one of those who was still sleeping until roused out of the bed by the loud clanging of the collision alarm and a call to general quarters. Matroni was not quite dressed with one leg in his pants when he heard a loud "boom" and was thrown to the portside of the forward compartment utilized by the chiefs. The Willis with its single screw and single rudder was coming alongside and lost her steering gear. The result was a large gash in the crew's mess as the Willis plowed into the Gyatt's starboard side. The damage control group repaired the ship so that she was able to return to Guantanamo Bay. The Willis had been commissioned only four months before this - her first accident. The Willis was built for ASW work; she was 314 feet long and 36 feet wide and displaced about 1500 tons – her superstructure was aluminum.

While awaiting a decision from the powers to be, the Gyatt was tied behind a yacht owned by Frances Langford, one of the top actresses of her time. Miss Langford was also a standout USO performer while working with Bob Hope during World War II. Miss Langford was with a Mr. Evinrude the owner of the outboard motor manufacturer and her current husband. Miss Langford and her husband were invited aboard the Gyatt and both took the time to visit the ship.

While anchored in Guantanamo Bay and in the process of handling the latest experimental wave-guide antenna, required for the guided missile radar system, someone inadvertently dropped the antenna over the side into about ten fathoms of water. Since the wave-guide antenna was instrumental to the operation of the guided missile radar and a one of a kind item it had to be retrieved. Fortunately - the Gyatt had a qualified hard hat diver as a member of the crew. The diver, D. J. Eickhoff, Pipe Fitter Third Class, donned flippers, a weighted belt and a helmet connected to an air supply and went over the side in search of the antenna. After what seemed to be hours, but wasn't, Eickhoff recovered the antenna and both he and the antenna returned to the ship. The antenna was in good shape – Eickhoff wasn't. During his search through tons of debris in a harbor, that was also the settling basin for the wastes of the island, Eickhoff contracted blood poisoning and other ailments and spent the next thirty plus days at the U. S. Naval Hospital on the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base.

On the 23rd day of June the Gyatt returned to Norfolk for a “voyage” patch before heading to the Brooklyn Naval Shipyard for a “permanent” patch and other post-shakedown repairs that took slightly more than sixty days. The ship returned to Norfolk and on the eighth day of September commenced tests and trials in preparation for the Operational Development Force. The Gyatt sailed for Key West, Florida on the 10th day of December and returned to Norfolk in time for the Christmas Holidays. While in Key West area, more specifically about 100 miles west in the Dry Tortugas, the Gyatt was tied in an eight-point moor. In this mooring position various destroyers subjected the Gyatt to the dropping of depth charges. The pounding caused by the exploding depth charges continued for a period of eight or nine days. It was learned that this was the Navy's way of checking the various electronic units required for the operation of the missile system and to see if the units could take the rigors of a fighting ship. The tests were conducted until all outages caused by the explosions were corrected.

Desegregation began in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957. The Ford “Edsel” started its very brief career in the auto world limelight. On The 4th day of October the Russians put the first satellite, “Sputnik I,” into space and followed it a month later with another at least six times larger that carried a dog.

The Milwaukee Braves beat the New York Yankees in seven games to win the World Series. The New York Giants become the San Francisco Giants and the Brooklyn Dodgers become the Los Angeles Dodgers. The Detroit Lions with an eight and four record were the NFL champions and the Boston Celtics took the first of their many NBA championships when they beat the Saint Louis Hawks in seven games.

The Academy Award winner was “The Bridge over the River Kwai.” Other memorable movies that year were: “The Three Faces of Eve, Sayonara, The Prince and the Showgirl, Love in the

Afternoon and Twelve Angry Men.” Some of the top songs of 1957 were Harry Belafonte’s “Banana Boat Song” (Day-Oh), Debby Reynolds “Tammy,” Pat Boone’s “Love Letters in the Sand,” and Jimmie Rodgers “Kisses Sweeter Than Wine.” Other songs included: “Young Love, Seventy-six Trombones and Maria.”