

XV. 1958 ~ A Visit From the CNO – Admiral Arleigh Burke

1958: *The official log for the first day of 1958 was written by LTJG R. C. Ike, USN and reads as follows:*

00-04

*I met a messenger on this New Years morn
Who said: The Gyatt's moored in Portsmouth yard
Outboard the Wilson. Spring lay to the pier,
Port anchor walked out, and a standard moor.
Tell that its Captain well his lessons learned.
The plant is cold but life flows from the pier;
The watt's to light her and the steam to heat.
In the ships present list the words appear
Commanding Officer for Boston is SOPA for all.
A glance at the list made me think of this:
An enemy should beware! Round the berths
Of these missile ships, Boston and Gyatt.
The other units welcome the New Year.*

Signed/R. C. Ike, LTJG. USN

In the middle of January the Gyatt headed to the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard for six weeks of repairs and alterations. On March the eighth the ship departed Norfolk for refresher training in the Caribbean and spent time in the liberty ports of San Juan, Puerto Rico; Saint Thomas, Virgin Islands and Fort de France, Martinique. Returning to Norfolk at the end of March the Gyatt participated in training exercises off the Virginia Capes with the carrier USS Forrestal (CVA-39) and other destroyers.

It was while refueling from the Forrestal that Jerry Van Ness, an ET2, got the scare of his young life. Van Ness was standing on the portside of the O-1 level, about amidships, observing the Gyatt as she took on fuel. All of a sudden it became apparent that the Gyatt was too close to the carrier which outweighed the Gyatt by a factor of thirty. As Van Ness looked straight up all he could see was the underside of the carrier flight deck and could not believe that the Gyatt's mast with its large "bedspring" antenna wasn't touching the carrier. Van Ness was taken out of his momentary reverie by the loud clanging of the carrier's collision alarm as the two ships closed within a few feet of each other and the narrow space between the two ships had apprehension and maybe fear on the faces of those working the fuel lines. It appears that the Gyatt had a rather small left rudder setting that had been overlooked in the heat of staying alongside this floating airport but the clanging of the carrier's collision alarm brought everyone back to reality. The Gyatt Captain apologized to the crew for the lack of attention to detail by those in the pilothouse. The Admiral, stationed aboard the carrier, had the Gyatt make practice approaches to the carrier. The Gyatt crew was somewhat chagrined by this experience and

thankful that it was only an experience that raised their adrenaline level. As Van Ness said: "We were like a pea next to the carrier."

On the 5th day of April Commander Chester M. Lee, USN (5 April 1958 to 15 January 1960) was given command of the Gyatt, relieving Commander Charles F. Helme, Jr. USN. Commander Lee, a 1940 graduate of the Naval Academy, was aboard the Sumner Class destroyer USS Drexler DD-741 when it was hit and sunk by a Japanese Kamikaze attack on the 28th day of May 1945. The Drexler sank in less than two minutes and Commander Lee was one of 52 men saved out of a crew of 220. In actuality the Drexler was hit by two Kamikaze attacks the first had over shot the USS Lowry DD-770 and hit the aft end of the Drexler; the second hit the superstructure of the Drexler. With the end of WW II, Lee began intense training in missiles and was an active participant in the development of the Polaris Missile before taking command of the Gyatt. After the Gyatt Commander Lee moved on to command a destroyer group. Upon retirement, as a Captain, Lee became a director in NASA and an active participant in the Apollo program. Ironically - Captain Lee and Alfred "Ted" Carey, who was also active in the Apollo program and served as an officer aboard the Gyatt between 1951 and 1954, spoke many times while working for NASA but they were unaware of their Gyatt connection.

In early June the ship made a visit to Newport, Rhode Island and on the return took part in amphibious landing exercises off Camp Pendleton, Virginia. After these operations the Gyatt entered the Norfolk Naval Shipyard for a five month overhaul that was completed in November. For the remaining six weeks of the year the ship participated in various exercises while operating out of Norfolk.

It was sometime during this six-week period that Admiral Arleigh Burke, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), reported aboard the Gyatt to observe firing of the missiles. Initially, in calm seas, it was found that the missile control system did not lock on properly to a target. However, it was found that adjustments could be made to the recently installed Denny-Brown Stabilization System that led the fire control to believe that the seas were irregular and a lock to the target was made. The missile was fired on a drone and although a direct hit was not registered it fired what was designated a target destroying missile. Satisfied with the results the Admiral, the Captain and officers not on duty retired to the wardroom where the Admiral answered questions and told of experiences before departing to the aircraft carrier USS Boxer, CV-21.

Prior to transferring to the USS Boxer, Admiral Burke reported to the bridge along with the Captain as the Gyatt prepared to come alongside the Boxer portside to. The Captain offered the "Con" to the Admiral, who was noted for taking control of a ship in such cases, but he refused and the ship was moving into position under the control of the Captain. The bridge personnel could see the Honor Guard and Marine Band on the deck of the Boxer as the Gyatt made the final approach along the starboard side of the carrier. The Gyatt was coming alongside at flank speed as the Marine Band began to play and the Honor Guard came to attention. But alas either the engine room failed to respond to the "all back full" or the signal was not communicated as the Gyatt moved smartly along the starboard side of the carrier. As the Gyatt moved ahead of the carrier the Admiral turned to the Captain and said: "A nice pass in review."

It wasn't over yet as the Chief Boatswain Mate made preparations to pass Admiral Burke from the Gyatt to the Boxer via the highline. The transferring of personnel via the highline is always a little dicey but to transfer the CNO – that could be a career-ending move. The CNO did make the crossing safely as the Marine Band and Honor Guard welcomed him aboard the Boxer.

Captain Lee was noted for getting in formation with other destroyers of the squadron and while they were cruising along smoothly he would engage the Denny-Brown Stabilization System and adjust it in such a fashion that the ship would roll, while in the formation. The ship's rolling would scribe thirty to forty degree arcs in the sky with its mast.

In 1958 desegregation, in the South, began in earnest. The nuclear-powered submarine, "Nautilus," went beneath the Polar ice cap. The United States launched Explorer I. The term "Jet Setters" was started with the first non-stop flight from New York to Paris by Pan American World Airways on the 26th day of October. The "Hula Hoop" a loop of one-inch plastic tubing having a diameter of 42-inches was the rage and sold for \$1.98 each.

The Yankees beat the Braves in seven games to win the World Series, the Baltimore Colts defeat the New York Giants to win the NFL championship and the St. Louis Hawks beat the Boston Celtics to win the NBA championship.

"Gigi" won the Academy Award as best picture - other top movies were: "Big Country, Separate Tables, Marjorie Morningstar and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof."

The 1958 Hit Parade included: The Kingston Trio's "Tom Dooley," Perry Como's "Catch a Falling Star and Magic Moments," Louie Prima and Keely Smith "That Old Black Magic" and Connie Francis singing "Who's Sorry Now."