

## **XVIII. 1961 ~ Europe – A Seventh and Final Time**

**1961:** The official log for the first day of 1961 was written by Lieutenant W. N. Head, USN and reads as follows:

00-04

*Now you might say it is a curse  
Moored port side to the U. S. S. Furse,  
But since we are in a nest of three  
I refuse to hear your plaintive plea.  
The third ship I'll mention before she fades  
Is good old "Mother" Everglades.  
The lines we have over are just as standard  
As the first division bos'n mate's lanyard.  
Charleston, S. C. is our exact location  
Though in eight months we're due for rotation.  
Now there's some that can and some that can't,  
But if your SOPA is COMINLANT  
You always know when you are here  
Everything's furnished with much good cheer.  
Among ship's present I am told  
Are Mitscher, Vesole, Ability and Bold.  
To keep you afloat here's a good bet,  
Just make sure YOKE modified is set.  
Electricity and steam we get from the tender.  
Hope it continues through the New Year's bender.  
Since the required remarks are now written  
Here's a few more that are just as fittin'.  
The Captain's ashore, the exec is too  
And all that is left is the duty crew.  
The Gun Boss went to Norfolk I think  
But where ever he is he's hoisting a drink.  
And further on down the Atlantic Coast  
The night resounds with a cheer and a toast,  
Because our CICO has just been led  
Down the primrose path and to a fair maid wed.  
The Comm Officer has left on annual leave.  
The DCA is in school, I believe.  
The Warrant ET is feeling so fine,  
Since the Air Search Antenna is back on line.  
Our good Chief Snipe has crossed the brow  
He must be tucked in bed by now.  
The First Lieutenant and the MA*

*I'll mention this New Year's Day.  
The Officer-in-Charge of ASW  
You can't forget or he won't love ya'.  
The Missile Officer is in Newport  
So he can't sit on a special court.  
The JG in command of the cryptic shack  
Has the duty tomorrow so he'll be back.  
If this goes on we'll have to buy  
Some more log sheets from supply.  
The Operations Officer as you can see  
Is all that's left and of course it's me,  
Since this probably the very last time  
That I'll write a Gyatt log in rhyme,  
I'd like to say before I'm done  
The best of all in sixty-one.*

*Signed/W. N. Head, LT, USN*

*The repairs to the Gyatt were completed by the 8<sup>th</sup> day of February and the Gyatt headed for the Caribbean a few days later to participate in two exercises and fire training missiles. While on this cruise and at sea it was found that the radio antenna insulators required cleaning. The after insulator was mounted on the missile house and posed no problem when cleaning was required. However, the forward insulator was mounted at the end of the port yardarm and its location did pose a problem. The procedure was for one of the members of the radio gang to go along and assure that all the radar antenna were inactive and to insure that the safety switch at the mast platform was in place. These precautions were to assure that the million-watt air search radar would not cause bodily harm. On this particular day Danny Hutchison, RM2, was the duty cleaner; so he put on his safety belt and with an ET climbed the mast to the platform. Danny then climbed to the end of the port yardarm and while hanging by his feet cleaned the insulator located on the farside of the antenna. Considering the height of the antenna and the roll of the ship, which was somewhere between ten and twelve degrees, the ride at the end of the arc produced by the roll was a little scary. However, Danny finished his task and moved from the antenna to the yardarm and finally to the platform. At this time, the ET who accompanied Danny noticed that he had not fastened his safety belt. When Danny realized that he was swinging at the end of the yardarm without the security of his safety belt snapped to the cable leading to the antenna he froze and gripped the railing around the platform. It took thirty minutes for the ET to pry Danny's fingers from the railing and lead him to the comfort of the bridge deck about forty feet below the yardarm.*

*It was during this cruise that the pollywogs in the crew were looking to becoming shellbacks when a radio message from command advised the ship to head north for plane guard duty. The Gyatt was within fifteen miles of the equator when the message was received. It was on this cruise that the ship entered the port of Trinidad in a smart seaman like manner having cleared all obstacles without difficulty as she headed for her mooring spot. When the Officer of the Deck (OOD), who had control of the bridge at the time, turned to look at the steel drum band greeting*

*them with music he stared in disbelief as he saw the ship moving at a good rate of speed toward the beach. The OOD realized immediately that the engine room had not responded to the reduce speed signal as he gave the order for starboard rudder and watched the Gyatt split the pier in two and the steel drum band try to run and play at the same time. But – the ship was not aground.*

*The ship returned to Charleston in mid March and in April departed to take part in training exercises in the Charleston Operating Area. April 8<sup>th</sup> saw a change of command on the Gyatt with Commander John J. Hancotte, Jr., USN (8 April 1961 to 15 February 1963) taking responsibility for the ship. Also in April the Gyatt, for the second time, was on station as part of the nose cone recovery team for the Mercury Space Project.*

*On the last day of May, the Gyatt was part of a task force sent to “rescue if necessary” citizens of the United States living in the Dominican Republic. This was as a result of the assassination of General Rafael Trujillo on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of May. Shortly after this voyage, on a sunny Saturday afternoon that the Gyatt had completed Independent Ship Exercises (ISE) with the carrier Forrestal. Lieutenant Snyder had recently qualified as Officer of the Deck (OOD) and was enjoying a relaxing moment on the portside of the bridge; at that moment he heard a plane screaming almost directly overhead at low elevation. Lieutenant Snyder glanced in the direction of the plane looking through the wheelhouse and through the door on the starboard side of the wheelhouse, the door framed the bow of the carrier coming straight at the Gyatt while launching aircraft. Using all the expertise of a qualified OD Mr. Snyder and the Gyatt escaped a harrowing experience. Mr. Snyder waited anxiously the remainder of his watch for the blast he anticipated would come from the carrier – he was most grateful when his watch ended quietly.*

*It was a stormy late afternoon in the Caribbean and as usual the Gyatt was “plane guarding” for one of the Sixth Fleet carriers; LTJG Talley had completed his Combat Information Center (CIC) watch and was about to lie down in his “quiet” bunk in the compartment that he shared with Warrant Officer Carlson located next to the chain hoist of five-inch gun mount number two. Mr. Talley wasn’t in his compartment for more than two minutes when he got a call on the “squawk box” to return to CIC. At the same the Messenger of the Watch was knocking on his door with the same message. It took awhile for the messages to register for Mr. Talley had just left CIC. As Mr. Talley entered CIC the petty officer on duty handed him a radio head set and told him he was to tell the helicopter from the carrier where to set down on the Gyatt. The helicopter was responding to a medical emergency. The only available spot that came to mind was atop the missile house – so that became the landing spot.*

*The medical emergency occurred on the bridge and involved Lieutenant Snyder. Lieutenant Snyder was OOD and as stated earlier the sea was rough. Lieutenant Snyder was on the portside of the bridge and was holding on to the pelorus for all he was worth as the ship rolled to starboard. As the ship rolled back to port, an antennae isolator (a large lead lined box) broke free of the main battery director located atop the wheelhouse. The box hit Lieutenant Snyder’s left leg and cut it severely. The Lieutenant staggered to the wheelhouse, announced to Ensign Ingram, the Junior Officer of the Deck, that he had the deck and the conn and collapsed. The Messenger of the Watch passed the word over the 1-MC for the Corpsman to lay to the bridge;*

he then whipped off his belt and applied it Mt. Snyder's leg as a tourniquet. Within a short period of time the decision was made to transport Mr. Snyder to the carrier by helicopter.

Mr. Snyder was placed in a Stokes stretcher and carried aft to the top of the missile house. When the helicopter arrived at the missile house it lowered a cable that was connected to the stretcher; the stretcher and Mr. Snyder were winched skyward to the helicopter hatch only to find that access could not be gained. The stretcher and Mr. Snyder were both lowered to the top of the missile house and Boatswain Mate First Class Banegas proceeded to cut away the flotation gear fastened to the stretcher. The Boatswain looked at Mr. Snyder, noting his concern and stated "Don't worry Mr. Snyder, if they drop you, you'll land on the deck." Mr. Snyder returned to the Gyatt after it docked in Charleston.

The following text is copied from the USS Gyatt DDG-1 1961 Mediterranean Cruise Book with further comments from the "Family Grams", a letter written, periodically, by the Captain to the family of the crew:

The Gyatt departed Charleston, South Carolina, on Thursday, the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of August with DesRon Six, to join the Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. The Gyatt fit well into a fleet such as this. Converted in 1957 into the Navy's first guided missile destroyer, she was armed with Terrier surface-to-air missiles launched automatically from a twin launcher. She operated well as an air defense ship as her missiles give her the capability of seeking out and destroying aircraft approaching at supersonic speeds.

Most of the time, on the way over, was spent participating in extensive training drills to help prepare us for our deployment. On most of these drills the Gyatt was judged excellent.

For the crew's enjoyment, on the way over, a mustache-growing contest was held. Robert A. Cole, IM1 of Milton, Florida won first prize, a wristwatch and second prize a transistor radio went to Larry A. Hodne, BM3 of Carroll, Iowa.

On the morning of August 14<sup>th</sup> we traditionally entered the Mediterranean when we passed the Rock of Gibraltar abeam to port. Two days later we anchored for several hours in Pollensa Bay off the island of Mallorca one of the Balearic Islands southeast of Spain, for an official turnover to the Sixth Fleet. The Gyatt relieved the USS Rush another destroyer.

That same day, as we left Pollensa Bay, we were assigned duties as a rescue destroyer for the aircraft carrier Independence and we were in the middle of a rescue operation within hours. One of the A4D aircraft from the carrier ran into trouble and her pilot was forced to eject. We were able to move in and pick him up within 30 minutes from the time he left his plane 15 miles from Gyatt. The pilot was in good condition and was returned to his parent carrier the next morning. For this action the Gyatt was one of the first ships, during this deployment, to receive a "well done".

On the morning of the 18th the ship anchored in Golfo di Palmas, Sardinia; for a day of conferences aboard the Fleet Flagship Springfield, and the carriers Independence and Intrepid.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> day of August the Gyatt arrived at the first port of call - Athens, Greece. Highlighting the visit to Athens was a visit to the Gyatt by his Royal Highness, Prince Peter of Greece and fifty delegates of the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers for a daylight cruise on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of August. The Prince and the other guests received a missile demonstration during the cruise and were served a buffet luncheon on the ship's fantail after returning to port.

There was ample time for recreation in Athens and the ship crew enjoyed the city visiting such places as the Acropolis, the Stadium and Adrian's Arch of Triumph. There were also one-day tours to Old Corinth, Daphni, and Eleusis.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> day of September the Gyatt left Athens for a fifteen-day period at sea during which time we participated in the combined NATO exercises, Checkmate II and I. These exercises are annual Sixth Fleet training exercises and utilize surface, air, and sub-surface elements of both U.S. and NATO forces. Our participation was basically as an air defense ship emphasizing our ability to control aircraft and make full utilization of our missile capability. For this exercise our CIC team received a well done for their work during sixty consecutive hours of air defense work.

At the conclusion of the Checkmate exercise the ship arrived at our second port, Corfu, on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of September. Corfu is a Greek resort island in the Ionian Sea considered by many to be second in beauty only to Crete. After a three day visit was completed the Gyatt, departed for sea and KM drills, an air defense exercise, and some anti-submarine maneuvers. On September 25<sup>th</sup> the ship stopped at Rhodes, Greece; our third port visit.

It was in Rhodes that Gyatt had its first surprise personnel and material inspection, a requirement of the Sixth Fleet. The ship was given four hours notice by the Commander Destroyer Squadron 22 to get ready for the inspection. He was quite pleased with us and said we were one of the best he had seen.

After leaving Rhodes on September 27<sup>th</sup> the ship had a five-day operating period before returning to Athens for a second visit. The ship was there for ten days on this occasion, from the 30<sup>th</sup> day of September to the 9<sup>th</sup> day of October. It was on this visit that the horrors of the famous Greek liquor "Ouzo" reared its ugly head. If you recall from the 1949 cruise information "Ouzo" ranged in quality, from pure poison to something else. Anyway, a Radarman 1<sup>st</sup> Class (name properly noted in the Deck Log) returned to the ship after spending hours sampling this local refreshment and immediately tore the Gyatt plaques from the bulkhead and dropped them over the side. The RMI could not be controlled without restraints and they very quickly became part of his attire and remained so for the next thirty-six hours. In the mean time divers were sent over the side to retrieve the two plaques.

During this stay in Athens, the Engineering Department made arrangements for a softball game ashore between their personnel, followed by a steak picnic. Since it was only possible to let half the department ashore at one time this party was actually held on two consecutive days, so that all hands could enjoy.

Also, while in Athens we had our second personnel and material inspection. This one was by our immediate senior, Commander Destroyer Division 62. He had seen us at an inspection in Charleston before deployment and made the comment in Athens that he detected a great deal of improvement

After departing Athens and a week at sea the Gyatt entered Naples, Italy. That week at sea was one of our most strenuous periods during the cruise. The ship had two air defense exercises, several ECM night exercises, a full day of anti-submarine operations with the nuclear submarine Shark before being detached, to proceed to Naples, the ship spent the last two days at General Quarters competing in gunnery exercises and competitive firing. On the way to Naples the ship transited the Strait of Messina between Italy and Sicily, and the crew got a birds-eye view of Stromboli the semi-active volcanic island north of Sicily.

The Gyatt entered Naples on October 16<sup>th</sup> and moored alongside the tender, Grand Canyon, for the first routine tender period during the deployment. The ship was in Naples for two weeks and everyone enjoyed the visit to this well-known city. There were tours offered to Mount Vesuvius, Pompeii, Sorrento, and to the island made famous by song, Capri. Several of the officers and crew took advantage of a three-day tour to Rome one of the oldest and most famous cities in the world. Probably the most singularly impressive sight was the Vatican City and St. Peter's Basilica, which have been the residence of the Popes and the heart of Catholicism since 1377. Some Gyatt crewmembers were part of a group granted an audience with Pope John on Saturday, the 21<sup>st</sup> day of October.

Departing Naples on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of November, the ship was detached with the cruiser Springfield, Flagship of the Sixth Fleet, to proceed to the Ceres Missile Range, located off the coast of Toulon, France; for a missile firing exercise. All components of the missile's intricate system worked perfectly and our shot was a success. A report on the exercise that went to Chief of Naval Operations called the firing a "complete success".

On the 7<sup>th</sup> day of November the Gyatt entered Livorno, Italy; often referred to as Leghorn. Livorno is only twelve miles from Pisa, Italy and the famous leaning tower and only 45 miles from Florence, Italy one of the most beautiful of the Italian cities. Everyone desiring had the opportunity to visit these places either by themselves or on a tour.

It was in Livorno that the best of many successful parties for children was held aboard the ship. The ship received a group of thirty underprivileged girls, ranging in age from six to ten, from a children's home in Livorno. They were aboard for an afternoon and given a tour of the ship, shown the missiles and then taken to the mess decks for a cake and punch party. The ship's band was there and played for them. Their eyes lit up when the band launched into some favorite Italian songs it had learned since being there.

On leaving Livorno the ship spent a relatively quiet week of operations, except for one missile firing exercise with the Newport News who provided drone services. The Gyatt successfully fired two missiles.

*On the 21<sup>st</sup> day of November the Gyatt anchored off Cannes, France; for a weeklong visit over the Thanksgiving Day period. Cannes, is the home of the International Film Festival, and one of the best known of the many resorts on the French Riviera. It is located within 35 miles of Golfe Juan, Antibes, Nice, Villefranche and Monaco and everyone was able to visit these places, taking a grand tour of the Riviera.*

*On Thanksgiving morning three French models from Nice come aboard for a fashion show. Everyone enjoyed seeing the latest fashions from Paris and was amused at the novelty of a fashion show on board a man of war.*

*While in Cannes, Captain's Meritorious Mast was held to award advancement in rates to all those who had earned them during the last testing period. The Gyatt had thirty-seven men receive advancements. The Engineering Department took top honors, with twenty-two of the thirty-seven from that department. There were also five Good Conduct Medals presented.*

*Leaving Cannes on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of November the ship steamed to Barcelona, Spain; arriving on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of December for a weeklong visit. The weather was good and there were many things to see and do, everyone enjoyed the time spent there. Probably, the highlight of the stay in Barcelona was a bullfight arranged by the city in honor of the Sixth Fleet visitors. It was off-season for the bullfights; however, so many people expressed a desire to see a fight that one was arranged.*

*It was also in Barcelona that some of the signalmen and quartermasters assisted by some of the "O-Division" personnel smuggled two young ladies aboard and kept them aboard until the day before the ship departed on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of December. The young ladies were hidden in the Captain's quarters that were located on the bridge deck – when in port the Captain used his quarters located on the O-1 level.*

*It was also in Barcelona that a number of the crew were invited to participate in the local wine tasting party. Since a large number of ships were in port a limited number from each ship were allowed to participate in the tasting event. Upon arrival the tasters were given a small glass, about the size of a shot glass, and a decanter to fill with the wine they thought best so that they might enjoy it at a later time. It appeared that in no time the white hats discarded the shot glasses and were filling the decanters with the fruit of the grape, which they guzzled immediately. It was only a matter of hours before the Shore Patrol appeared with open trucks to load sailors, who were not capable of navigating under their own power and who looked a sight in their soiled white uniforms. The men were hauled back to their respective ships and remorsefully faced the consequences. It turned out that the worse punishment resulted when the "tasters" drank water, which resulted in their returning to a drunken state.*

*The Gyatt spent the Christmas holiday season (December 19<sup>th</sup> to January 3<sup>rd</sup>) in Bari, Italy. Bari was a town of about 300,000 people, located on the Adriatic coast of Italy. While there were not many attractions in Bari as in many of the more famous places visited, everyone enjoyed the long stay in port; getting a well deserved rest.*

*The highlight of everyone's Christmas came on Christmas Eve when the entire ship's company attended a devotional service and carol sing on the mess decks. The Gyatt's choir led the crew in the carol sing and the singing of carols and Christmas songs moved all. After the singing many attended midnight services in the churches and cathedrals of Bari.*

*Three Christmas trees adorned Gyatt -one on the mess decks, one in chief's quarters and one in the wardroom. In the spirit of the season the ship's Mediterranean friendship lights were replaced with alternate red, blue and green bulbs and a six-foot star was displayed on the forward yardarm. The decorations did much to spread the Christmas spirit aboard the ship.*

*In Bari we had quite an interesting thing take place concerning youngsters visiting the ship. Up until this port, we had been giving out Sixth Fleet kites to children with no immediate reaction. However, the children in Bari were so impressed with the kites, that they went right out on the pier, assembled the kites and began flying them. Some of them needed help, so members of Gyatt's crew willingly went to assist. It was quite a sight to see Gyatt sailors and Italian youngsters mixing and playing on the pier with kites as the common factor.*

*While in Bari two of the white hats, who had been enjoying themselves, had decided to visit an Albanian freighter. The Communication Officer and the Assistant Communication Officer, thinking the enlisted men had been kidnapped, came looking for them with sidearms. A number of other white hats celebrating the time of the year, more specifically New Years Eve, celebrated by throwing wine bottles out of a hotel window doing what they thought to be an Italian custom. It was about this time period that one of the officers found his bunk adorning the forward gun mount; placed there by some unknown party.*

*In 1961 the Berlin Wall was constructed by the Russians. The "Bay of Pigs" was unsuccessfully executed. The Russian, Yuri Gargarian, was the first man in space and Alan Shepard of the United States duplicated his feat 43 days later. Gus Grissom followed Shepard almost four weeks later. Both American astronauts landed in the Atlantic Ocean approximately three hundred miles from Cape Canaveral.*

*The New York Yankees defeat the Cincinnati Reds in six games to win the World Series and Roger Maris broke Babe Ruth's long standing home run record with sixty-one. Vince Lombardi turns the Green Bay Packers into NFL champions. The Boston Celtics took their third consecutive NBA championship.*

*"West Side Story," with Natalie Wood and Rita Moreno was the winner of the Academy Award as best picture. Other good movies included: "Nuremberg" with Spencer Tracy, Burt Lancaster Montgomery Clift, Maximilian Schell, Judy Garland and Marlene Dietrich; "The Guns of Navarone" with Gregory Peck; "Two Women" with Sophia Loren; "The Hustler" with Paul Newman, George C. Scott and Piper Laurie and finally "Tiffany" with Audrey Hepburn. The best songs were: "Love Makes the World Go Round, Moon River, Exodus, Stand By Me, Will You Love Me Tomorrow and Blue Moon."*