

XIX. 1962 ~ A Missile Destroyer – No More

1962: The official log for the first day of 1962 was written by Lieutenant W. N. Head, USN, who thought that he had written his last log in rhyme the previous year. His venture this year read as follows:

00-04

*In this land of Italy on the 1st of the year
Moored portside to a molo (Italian for pier)
Molo di Ridosso is the name of the thing
Mooring lines doubled and also a spring
Another precaution that some might disdain
Is holding us forward, the port anchor chain
To help us come in while the pilot he fought her
Is the anchor to starboard in sixty feet of water
The last time I looked and I hope it's still there
'twas fifteen fathoms of chain come out of its lair
Before I go on I must but just tarry
To say that this town is a place they call Bari
The USS Furse came in with us too
Carrying our SOPA ComDesDiv Six Two
Number One Generator is now on the line
The lights are still on so I guess it's just fine
To keep us supplied with heat and steam
Number four boiler is right on the beam
The "good" Italian water we get from the pier
Why couldn't it be wine or even some beer?
The above listed entries are ones I must make
But because of this day a few liberties I'll take
The Captain and three ensigns are out to a dance
The MPA and CICO are taking a chance
The XO is up in Rome with his wife
And I have the duty, oh what a life.
Tis five months now we've been in the "Med"
Under the command of a DivCom called "Red".
It's blues on the bridge and khaki at nights,
It's whites and kites and friendship lites.
From here to LaSpezia we go to our tender
I swear after Bari I'll go on a bender.
Some of the officers and part of the crew
Are rucked in their racks to name but a few.
But just about half are still on the beach
If we had to depart how many could I reach.
It's part of the game that we must play*

*As time marches on, day by day.
I've rambled enough, but I'll bet on the Furse
They're really straining to write this in verse.
And maybe, could be if they like my rhymes
I'll grab a big prize in "Navy Times"
Like all good things must come to an end
Lend me your ears before I descend
All over this world I'm hoping so hard
That '62 will be the year of our lord.*

Signed/W. N. Head, LT, USN

On leaving Bari the Gyatt went to sea for seven days; at which time participated in the fifth of six underway replenishments. During the deployment the ship participated in an air defense exercise and in general, conducted basic Sixth Fleet operations. The exercises preceded the Gyatt's entry into La Spezia, Italy for a second tender period.

It may have been about this time that an electronic technician and a radioman were working on a communications transmitter and had hooked to the ship's lights for a dummy load. The two requested another radioman to use a speed key and check out the transmitter while they tuned the output load. As the transmitter was being keyed, the lights that were strung up the mast and were being used as the "dummy load" were blinking at the speed that the message being input was sent. The flagship, in the convoy, sent an over to our ship for the signalman to slow down because their signal personnel were unable to read lights flashing at that speed.

The ship was in La Spezia; moored alongside the Grand Canyon, for twelve days (January 10th to January 22nd). The time in La Spezia afforded the crew time to do some much-needed work about the ship. It also allowed those members of the crew, who had missed previous opportunities, the chance to visit Florence, Pisa or Rome as La Spezia is close to all of these cities. It was at LaSpezia, that Olan Weeks, while on Shore Patrol proved that it was a duty that could be hazardous to one's health. Weeks and his Shore Patrol partner entered a bar to escort some sailors out. While inside the bar Weeks moved between a Frenchman and a sailor that were arguing, when without warning a hand flashed and an Italian cut him across the chest with a razor blade taped between his fingers. Weeks was taken to the Navy hospital, sewn up and returned to the ship. The Captain, Commander Hancotte, indicated to Weeks that he was the last person he expected to be in such a situation. Weeks echoed the Captain.

Probably the most significant event that occurred in La Spezia, was the inspection by the new Squadron Commander, who was seeing the ship for the first time. His report of the inspection was something for all to be proud for the Gyatt received an overall grade of outstanding.

ON the morning of January 22nd the Gyatt left La Spezia and steamed forty miles up the Italian coast to Rapallo for a port visit. The ship was in Rapallo with the USS Henley, another Sixth Fleet destroyer. While in Rapallo, the University located in the city staged a basketball tournament and invited the ships' teams to participate. The Gyatt was a third place winner in

the tournament and each member of the team was presented a medal. In return, the entire school was given a tour of the ship.

The Gyatt left Rapallo on the 29th day of January and began a two-week operating period - the last during this deployment. The major portion of this operation was taken up by the exercise "Big Game", a bilateral exercise with units of the French Navy and Air Force and units of the Sixth Fleet. The Gyatt's participation was largely as an air defense and missile ship. If there was any one exercise, during this deployment, that the Gyatt excelled, this was it, and it was only fitting that this, the ship's last big exercise with the Sixth Fleet, be the best. For both the Gyatt's work as an air control ship and the utilization of missiles, the ship received much praise from the Force Commander at the end of the exercise.

At the termination of this operating period the ship anchored off of Theoule, France just south of Cannes, for an eight-day visit (February 8th to 16th). This was the Gyatt's last port of call during this cruise. Every one was able to enjoy the sights and sounds of the Riviera but this time with the knowledge that home was just around the corner. It might have been at Theoule that white hats returning from liberty found that they could not walk on water. Bill Stuckey, who was returning from liberty, was anxious to board the launch that would return him to his ship. As Bill stepped forward to board the launch he did not notice that it had moved away from the pier and as he stepped into the two-foot gap created between the launch and the pier he stepped into the cold waters of the sea. Danny Hutchison, who was near, reached for Bill and attempted to pull him aboard the launch but the weight of a water logged pea coat and dress blues curtailed his efforts. Immediately understanding the situation Danny started calling for help and shouting "man overboard" and almost immediately shipmates Fred Harwood, Olan Weeks and Tom Wright came to assist in rescuing Bill. When Bill returned to the ship, in his wet uniform, he was taken to sickbay where he was offered a shot of brandy. Bill looked at the brandy for a moment or two and said - "no thanks, I think I've had enough for one night." Bill went below to his compartment, stripped and hung his pea coat and uniform to dry and was totally surprised, along with others in the compartment, when he found that his blues were white.

Leaving Theoule, the ship stopped in Pollensa Bay on the 19th day of February and was officially relieved as a unit of the Sixth Fleet by the USS Stickle, a DDR home ported in Norfolk.

During the turnover ceremony aboard the USS Boston (CAG-1), a final tribute was paid the Gyatt by Task Group Commander, Rear Admiral C. B. Brooks, the Commander of Cruiser Division Two. In his parting comments, the Admiral made the statement that he would like to single out three ships, which he felt deserving of special praise during this deployment. The Admiral said that he felt that the USS Gyatt, USS Furse and the USS Intrepid had been outstanding in all phases of this deployment and should receive recognition for this action. Such a comment was certainly a fitting way to end deployment with the Sixth Fleet.

At around noon of this day the ship got underway with the USS Boston and Destroyer Squadron Six and headed for Gibraltar passing through the straits in the early morning of February 21st and into the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. The Gyatt spent six hard, but constructive and enjoyable months in the Mediterranean. The ship arrived in Charleston, South Carolina on the 3rd day of March.

The dedication to the foregoing report of the USS Gyatt's deployment in the Mediterranean Sea by the ship's captain was as follows:

"I freely admit a preference for the better things of life. Thus it has been with unlimited satisfaction and pleasure that I have commanded the GYATT during her recent deployment to the Mediterranean where she proved herself to be the best in the Sixth Fleet. I dedicate this Cruise Book with pride to each and every man aboard, to those who made the GYATT number ONE."

*Signed/J. J. Hancotte, Jr. Commander, USN
Commanding Officer USS Gyatt, DDG-1*

In the last "Family Gram" Commander Hancotte wrote: "In summing up, I feel we have had a good cruise, one in which the Gyatt distinguished herself as a leader in all fields. We did everything we were asked and more. Gyatt has established herself the enviable reputation of being outstanding in operations as well as being smart looking with a sharp crew. No one person is responsible for these fine achievements. It has been a real team effort. I am grateful to every officer and man serving in Gyatt for contributing his bit. I am convinced that Gyatt can accomplish any task, for professionals man her. You can be proud of your relatives serving aboard, for they are the best."

The Gyatt on the cruise was gone 213 days, with 129 days underway and 84 days in port. The ship traveled 39,197 miles, used 2,631,277 gallons of fuel, was refueled 50 times and made 1,932,544 gallons of fresh water for boiler and crew use.

In addition; the Gyatt used 490 gallons of ice cream, 2,800 pounds of butter, 34,440 pounds of potatoes, 65,520 eggs, made 322,600 cups of coffee, cooked 15,659 pounds of beef, passed out 79,660 packs of cigarettes and 8,067 cigars, drank 38,410 soft drinks and ate 35,557 candy bars. The dispensary gave out 10,000 aspirin and 2,800 seasick pills.

In all that time (213 days) the payroll totaled \$172,781.21 or \$811.18 a day for the whole crew. Based on a total crew of 242 hands this amounted to an average of \$3.35 per person per day. On an eight-hour per day basis this amounted to about forty-two cents per hour with benefits, which included room and board.

The Gyatt remained in Charleston moored to a tender until the 1st day of April and then spent a time on operations in the Caribbean area. A portion of these operations had the fleet passing in review in front of President John F. Kennedy and the Gyatt was a participant. This exercise routine remained in effect until the last week of June, when the Gyatt off loaded her ammunition at the Ammunition Depot in Charleston prior to reporting to the Charleston Naval Shipyards for a routine overhaul.

While in the Caribbean the Gyatt visited Trinidad in the British West Indies. The day the ship arrived in Trinidad Danny Hutchison was sent to the base radio room to both - deliver and pickup documents. On his way to the base Hutchison found the ocean was to his left and the jungle was to his right. As Hutchison was approaching the radio room he caught something to

his right coming out of the jungle and to his horror the country boy from the Midwest believed it to be a monster coming toward him. As Hutchison looks back on the incident it reminded him of the "Our Gang Comedy" as he recalls saying to himself "feets don't fail me now" as he let out a loud scream and made a mad dash to the radio room – moving as fast as his feet could go. Out of breath and shaking as he let himself in the radio room Hutchison explained what he thought he had seen. As those inside the room listened to what Hutchison was saying they started laughing and after a few minutes they calmed down and said the reason the "monster" was running toward him was that she wanted something to eat. Hutchison said that's what he was afraid of and he had no desire to be anything's meal. Again the men in the room started laughing and with tears in their eyes explained that the monster was a four-foot Iganua that had a liking for apples, carrots, lettuce and other similar foods. It seemed that the sailors on the base had adopted this four-foot "monster" and when they walked by she wanted some food and her head scratched. Having never seen a lizard before, especially one so large and with such a long slithering tongue, one could readily understand such apprehension. Needless to say on future visits Hutchison carried some food and even made an effort to rub the "monster's" head.

As the ship's time in Trinidad was drawing to a close, a number of the hands in the radio gang rented a taxi to take them to a cove that they heard about so that they could enjoy a quiet day on the beach. The taxi delivered everybody to a horseshoe shaped cove on the other side of the island and after the group surveyed the area they went to a secluded area to switch into their bathing suits. Almost immediately some of the crew decided to go swimming and as they surveyed the beach they found a fairly wide ditch about thirty inches deep close to the shore. It appeared that ditch had been made by the breaking and the pull back of the waves eroding the sand. Immediately beyond the ditch the water was extremely shallow and then slowly deepened as the beach reached toward the sea. As the initial group returned from their swim one of the members, who had lagged behind, decided it was his turn to get wet. None of those that had returned from the swim mentioned the ditch and the shallowness of the water beyond. The returning swimmers watched in dismay as the sailor executed a swan dive into an incoming wave and just sort of stopped as he hit the shallow water. The lone swimmer pushed himself up slowly from the water on the seaward side of the ditch and turned to his shipmates with blood streaming down his face. The shipmates rushed the lone swimmer to an aid station where the flow of blood was stopped and a bandage placed on the large bared spot on the lone swimmer's scalp. The spot was almost two inches wide and three inches long on the head of this young man who had executed a swan dive in less than three inches of water and it left a permanent bald spot. The shipmates that were with the lone swimmer were disappointed in themselves when they realized that they had not searched for the scalp that had been removed by the sands on the beach. The lone swimmer was observed later drinking out of a coconut – looking none the worse for wear. It makes one wonder what was in the coconut.

Sometime during this period Larry Harper, a Third Class Electrician Mate, went to the bow to repair the capstan control. It appeared that the cover on the switch had never been removed since the seam between the cover and the base was totally obliterated by countless coats of deck gray paint that had been applied almost yearly since the ship was placed in commission almost seventeen years previously. Harper worked diligently using his screwdriver to remove the paint and the screws and to pry the cover from the base. He felt comfortable looking for the problem and he worked with some energy as he endeavored to pry the cover from the base since he was

secure in the knowledge that the power was off and the main switch properly tagged. As he pushed the screwdriver between the cover and the base it made contact with the wiring within and he was shocked to the point that he was believed dead. At first the duty corpsman, called to the forecandle, could not find a pulse and after intent listening detected a heart beat. Some that were aboard at the time believed Harper was dead when he was removed from the ship in a gurney and were pleasantly surprised when his name appeared on the reunion roster. An investigation indicated that the main switch had been energized after it had been disconnected.

As the DDG-1, the Gyatt had completed two deployments to the Mediterranean and won several outstanding awards. The latest of these awards came at the end of the deployment when the Gyatt was named the outstanding "Anti-Air Warfare" ship in Cruiser-Destroyer Force, U. S. Atlantic Fleet.

The Gyatt reported to the shipyard on the 29th day of June for an overhaul that included the removal of the missiles and conversion of the missile magazine to an electronics laboratory of newly developed equipment. This equipment would set the stage for the Gyatt's new job with OPTEVOR (Operational Test and Evaluation Force).

Changes and repairs were not only in the hands of those working at the navy yard but also in the hand of the crew. Work done by the crew included most of the areas below decks – specifically the engine rooms and boiler rooms and a lot of the work included painting, using haze gray paint. On the Gyatt paint was kept in paint lockers and these were under the control of the deck forces – who, naturally took care of themselves – first. It wasn't that they didn't want to take care of the below deck sailors but topside painting came first and the lengthy amount of time at sea; as well as the changes being made called for a lot of paint – haze gray paint. One of the below deck sailors – more commonly referred to as a "snipe" was rather resourceful. Tommy Gardner, being in his fourth year on the Gyatt – having come aboard as a fireman and now holding the rate of MM2 – knew where and how to get things or as they said back then "cumshaw" things. Tommy had heard that the base paint locker had a large supply of gray paint and would be willing to "exchange" for the right thing. The right thing in this case was - coffee. In his four years aboard ship Tommy had cultivated the cooks with repairs on short notice and other favors that kept the cooks satisfied – so he went to them and began bartering large tins of coffee for five-gallon cans of haze gray paint. No requisitions – no waiting periods. Tommy had something the base paint locker wanted and they had something the Gyatt needed.

Immediately after getting out of the yard the Gyatt put to sea for some experiments relating to the Denny-Brown Stabilization System. The "engineering experts" decided that the leads from the stabilization system to the gyroscope should be reversed and that the crew should induce a rolling motion by running from side to side. All topside sailors, not on duty, reported to the main deck and were then evenly distributed between the foc'sle and stern. When the men reached their assigned locations they were directed, at the same time, to run from the portside of the ship to the starboard side of the ship. While the crew was going from port to starboard and the starboard to port the "engineering experts" reversed the aforementioned leads and found that 30 to 40 degree rolls could be induced on a calm day while operating at sea. Various captains have had the ship rocking and rolling before and after this experiment – but none ever did it manually. Well – you don't know if you don't try it.

On the 1st day of October the Gyatt's classification was changed from missile destroyer DDG-1 to conventional destroyer DD-712. The Gyatt was barely out of dry-dock when assigned to participate in the blockade of Cuba during the missile crisis and had a very interesting experience with a Russian merchant ship attempting to ignore the blockade.

The Gyatt was chosen to test an air search radar system and a quick coupling fuel system that was faster and safer than the one in use at the time. A similar system, called the "Wiggins System" was also being tested in the heavy excavation and mining industries and has become the standard for fueling large pieces of equipment.

The Gyatt's preparations were completed by the 1st day of January 1963 and the ship was reassigned to Norfolk, Virginia and to Destroyer Squadron Two (DesRon Two). The Gyatt continued testing and evaluating new and experimental equipment. This change and subsequent reduction in armament, resulted in a further reduction in crew size; the complement, including officers, was now 220.

In 1962 an earthquake in Iran killed more than 10,000 people. John Glenn became the first American to orbit the earth. On the 22nd day of October the Cuban Blockade was put in place. Physicians concluded in numerous published articles that cigarettes were the primary cause of lung cancer.

The Yankees beat the San Francisco Giants in seven games to win the World Series. The Green Bay Packers were the NFL champions for the second year in a row. The Boston Celtics won their fourth NBA championship in a row and Wilt Chamberlain score 100 points in one game on 36 field goals and 28 foul shots. Arnold Palmer won his third Masters and was the top money winner in 1962 with a little more than \$81,000.

The Academy Award winner for best picture was "Lawrence of Arabia." Other top movies in 1962 included: "The Trial" with Orson Welles, "Cleopatra" with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, "The Miracle Worker" with Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke, and "The Manchurian Candidate."

Top Songs were: "Go Away Little Girl, Blowin' in the Wind, Any Day Now And Baby It's You."