

XX. 1963 ~ The 712 Returns

1963: The official log for the first day of 1963 was written by LTJG T. E. Smith, USN and reads as follows:

00-04

*The place is the Naval Base ~ In Charleston, S. C.
To our port Pier Papa ~ Our berth is Three
Six lines are doubled ~ The destroyerman way
Our bow and our stern ~ Held by a spring lay
From number four boiler ~ Steam mightily flows
From the pier we get water ~ From a thick canvas hose
Our needs are many ~ In an electrical way
But number two generator ~ Is saving the day
In a modified manner ~ Condition YOKE is set
With readiness now Six ~ We see no real threat
Around us are ships ~ The Atlantic they sail
District Craft are nearby ~ On call with a hail
Our SOPA this morning ~ Is CruDesFlotSix
There'll be no flails ~ He cannot fix
The sound of the whistle ~ Tells us '63's here
It's goodbye to Charleston ~ For the coming New Year
Norfolk is now ~ The place we call home
At the end of the week ~ From here we will roam
Also this morning ~ with a simple chop
We went back to work ~ In CruDesLant's shop
With all these changes ~ I'm having a time
Fitting a new DivLog ~ Into this rhyme
Alas, it's now final ~ From Squad Six we've fled
And best of all ~ There's no more Med
Our game is now testing ~ We're looking for fun
We've gone to work ~ For DesDiv Six Zero One
The Captain and Exec. ~ Are ashore for the night
But I have the duty ~ An OOD's plight
All things are secure ~ The watch has been set
With this in mind ~ I've but one duty yet
To shipmates of ours ~ Both far and near
My wish this morning ~ Is a Happy New Year!*

Signed/T. E. Smith, LTJG, USN

It was Sunday, the NFL Championship, the New York Giants versus the Philadelphia Eagles. The wardroom personnel still aboard was looking forward to viewing the game on the only television aboard ship - but it wasn't working – it seems that there were some wires not properly connected. The ETs (Electronic Technicians) were called and they took the TV set to the electronics shop. The ETs dismantled the set, the tube here, the controls there, the signal boards and other boards all spread across the work area and all connected but at the time not working. The officers came to the electronic shop, observed the condition of the set and headed to the base Officer's Club to watch the game. When the duty ET saw the officers clear the pier he connected the loose wires and enjoyed the game along with other members of the crew that were able to squeeze in to the electronics shop. When the game was over and prior to the officers returning to the ship, the TV set was assembled and returned to the wardroom in working order.

On the 15th day of February command of the Gyatt was transferred to Commander Lester L. Gutshall (15 February 1963 to 5 September 1964). Commander Gutshall was very familiar with the Gyatt, having served as a Lieutenant on the USS Bailey DD-713 in the early 1950s when both destroyers were part of Desron Four.

On the Gyatt's first trip under the new Captain the ship went to Washington DC for Armed Forces Day or some similar holiday and part of sea detail in the Potomac River involved an elaborate ceremony rendering honors to the grave of George Washington as the ship passed Mount Vernon. The ship's navigator made careful calculations when to start, stop and the exact protocol to be observed, etc. Everyone wanted to put on the best performance for the new Commanding Officer. Meanwhile, the Communications Officer, quite a jokester, prepared a bogus message; seconds after the honors ceremony was completed and everyone on the bridge breathed a collective sigh of relief, a Radioman Seaman handed the Officer of the Day a piece of yellow "Sked" paper which looked as if it had just been pulled off the teletypewriter. The Officer of the Day read it, blanched and silently handed the message to Commander Gutshall. People "in" on the joke peered around the bulkheads to see the new captain's reaction; what would he say, what would he do, how would he react?? The "message" read: "From: CNO (Chief of Naval Operations) To: GYATT: You have rendered honors to the Embassy of Thailand. Send name, rank and serial number of Navigator to CNO." The captain read it - through narrowed eyes and in a loud whisper, he exclaimed "Motherf...r!!!" Apparently those in the know tiptoed around for some times afterwards, and the story became humorous only after a long span of time had passed – it was always told out of earshot of the Commander.

It was on this trip that a radioman and an electronics technician were working on the power supply of the search radar recently installed. After the necessary repairs they elected to test the unit. Although no one was aware, the unit was trained on a government building located reasonably close to the ship. It was evening and the building was generally dark; however, when the power switch for the antenna was turned on every fluorescent light in the building went on. It was estimated that the antenna projected more than a million watts of power. This incident resulted in another directive being issued. This directive related to positioning and direction of antennas and radars being tested, as well as the ship's location.

This was all a part of the Gyatt's new "electronic" period – when the latest in radio and radar jamming and anti-jamming equipment was put into operation. Clinton Westbrook, was a Chief

Radarman aboard the Gyatt in 1963 and tells of the radarman refining anti-jamming devices brought aboard for testing and the positive results obtained by the Gyatt personnel.

Chief Westbrook is a story in his own right, as many of the men aboard the Gyatt were and are. On the fateful day, December 7th 1941, the Chief was a Seaman Second (later referred to as a Seaman Apprentice) aboard the battleship USS Arizona. The Chief was just returning from a six A.M. boat run to the beach as the boat-hook man on the fifty-foot liberty launch when he saw his ship take two hits by Japanese torpedo planes. Those aboard the Arizona waved off the launch and it went about the task of retrieving men in the water as they were being strafed by the Japanese aircraft. The Chief recalls other hits suffered by the Arizona as she settled to the bottom of the harbor where she still rests today as a memorial to that fateful day in 1941. The chief also recalls that the launch was sunk by the strafing fire of the Japanese planes. After a short hitch aboard the USS Conyngham (DD-371) a very active Mahan Class destroyer and a few forays into the Pacific, Westbrook was sent east via troop ship and rail to Boston where he went aboard the brand new USS Taylor (DD-468), a Fletcher Class destroyer.

The Taylor made two crossings of the Atlantic as a convoy escort vessel before going to the Pacific in January 1943. History tells us that the Taylor and the Conyngham were both very active during WWII and distinguished themselves in a very positive manner. Westbrook was aboard the Taylor through the remainder of WWII and recalls many stories about his time aboard the ship but the two that follow are favorites. Both stories concern the ship's duties prior to the signing of the "Unconditional Surrender" of the Japanese in Tokyo Bay. The first story had to do with the anxiety of the crew being the lead ship entering a harbor protected by 18-inch guns that may or may not be manned. The second had to do with the "LAST OVERT ACT OF WORLD WAR II" as the newspaper headlines of the many reporters aboard the Taylor reported. The Taylor was the transportation vessel for all reporters covering the signing of the "Unconditional Surrender" aboard the USS Missouri. Almost six months prior to entering Tokyo Bay one of the crew had brought aboard a small under nourished puppy that eventually became the ship's mascot. The pup became very friendly with the reporters as he scampered about the quarterdeck with each new reporter who came aboard. The last of the reporters who came aboard the Taylor to cover the signing of the surrender were Japanese and they were under military escort. As the last Japanese reporter cleared the gangway the pup ran to him and bit him on the calf of his leg – this according to a number of reporters was the last overt act of a member of the allied forces against the aggressors. Anyway it's time to get back to the Gyatt and its happenings.

It was April and a family cruise was arranged for family members of the Gyatt and so at 0730 on a sunny Saturday the ship sailed for the Virginia Capes. The Gyatt crew held demonstrations in the use of submersible pumps, the handling of the mooring lines and handling of small arms. The raising and lowering of the motor whaleboat was also demonstrated with most visiting personnel observing from the vicinity of the fantail. Also demonstrated was the firing of the hedgehogs, the three-inch guns and the five-inch guns.

Since this cruise was primarily for the wives the stores normally used, by the 220-man crew, for the two meals served was noted and were as follows. Breakfast; dry cereal, seven pounds; eggs, 30 dozen; bacon, 18 pounds; toast, 15 loaves; milk, 24 gallons; coffee, 10 gallons; grapes, 20

pounds and peaches, 78 pounds. Lunch required the following; chicken fryers, 120 pounds; potatoes, 100 pounds; giblet gravy, one gallon; salad dressing, one gallon; fresh tomatoes, 30 pounds; canned vegetables, 36 pounds and 30 pies. In addition, to food and shelter, the families found that the ship had a barber shop, laundry, dispensary, post office and store. The ship produced fresh water and electricity; there were internal phones for ship personnel and they were connected by radio outside the ship. The ship also showed movies. There are a large variety of disciplines required to operate a ship such as the Gyatt and many prove useful in life after the Navy. Life on a ship teaches teamwork, tolerance and sharing. It appeared at the end of the day that the guests felt more informed as to what their spouse or father's life aboard ship was about.

On the 0400 to 0800 bridge watch, on one of the early cruises, under the command of CDR. Gutshall, the Junior Officer of the Day (JOOD) observed the Officer of the Day (OD) sending the Messenger of the Watch (MOW) to the mess deck, for coffee, a number of times. Apparently this upset the MOW and he decided to get back at the OD by putting several spoons full of salt in a cup of coffee. Just as the MOW arrived on the bridge with the "salted" coffee, Captain Gutshall came out of his sea cabin, sat in his chair located on the port side of the bridge and said that he was ready for a cup of hot coffee. Needless to say, the OD directed the Messenger of the Watch to give the Captain the cup of fresh, hot coffee. The Captain took a large drink of the coffee, and immediately spat it and threw the cup and contents over the side – stating "that was the worst cup of coffee I have ever had." The JOOD does believe that the Captain was never told what happened that day.

Orron Dixon, a BT1, came aboard the Gyatt in late 1962 and one of the first persons he saw when he stepped aboard was Lawrence Bagley, also a BT1. Dixon and Bagley had served together before, the first time on the USS Vogelgesang (DD-862) and the second time on the USS Cony (DDE-508). Shortly after Dixon reported aboard the Gyatt, it was reassigned to Norfolk, Virginia leaving Charleston, South Carolina its base of operations since the summer of 1959. Anyway - as Dixon reports, his wife and three children came to Norfolk for a visit the summer of 1963 and they spent a lot of time with the Bagleys and their five children during their stay in Norfolk.

As it was in those days, before seat belts and car seats wives and kids, no matter how many, would get in a car and go – shopping – the pool – whatever. On this day, the two wives and the eight children were in one of the family cars and at a stop light when a sailor pulled alongside them and looked at the two ladies and then the back of the car. The cars, early 1960 models, were divest of air conditioning and all the windows were open. Anyway – the sailor turned to the young wives and said; "I don't know where you've been and I don't know where you're going, but I do know what you've been doing;" and then sped off when the light changed. In September the Gyatt sailed for Annapolis, Maryland and took aboard ninety-six midshipmen for a cruise in the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean. The Naval Academy Superintendent pronounced training and indoctrination of these future officers to the ways of the sea a success. Shortly after the cruise the Gyatt was dispatched to the Norfolk Naval Shipyard for the installation of a new mast. The year was completed with scheduled operations.

On the 22nd of November 1963, John F. Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States was assassinated in Dallas, Texas; he was 46 years old. He left his wife Jacqueline, his six year old daughter Caroline and a son, John Junior, who turned three the day after the president's burial.

Hurricanes and tsunamis wreaked havoc; East Pakistan reported more than 22,000 killed; West Cuba and Haiti reported 4,000 killed and an earthquake in Yugoslavia claimed 1,100 people. Astronaut Gordon Cooper circled the earth twenty-two time before landing his spacecraft. The Dodgers beat the Yankees in four to take the World Series. The Chicago Bears were the NFL champions and the Boston Celtics took their fifth consecutive championship. "Tom Jones" was the picture of the year and Hitchcock's "The Birds" had everyone on the edge of their seats. Top songs were "Blowin' in the Wind and Puff the Magic Dragon."