

XXI. 1964 ~ A Change of Operations

1964: The official log for the first day of 1964 was written by Ensign J. M. Holmes, USN and reads as follows:

00-04

*Moored port side too in a nest of four
this cold New Years morning 19 64,
Berth Two is the selected location
At Pier 21, NORVA, U. S. Naval Station.*

*The order of ships outboard from the pier
finds Shenandoah, Pratt and Gyatt near,
the USS Furse to our starboard lies
to us her lines are rigged and tied.*

*The Pratt has all our mooring line to port
standard and doubled we dutifully report,
the springlay is out fore and aft
also doubled and secured to the USS Pratt.*

*Steam and power from the tender are led
so that our machines and men may be fed,
water through channels and aqueducts flow
to bubble up through our scuttlebutts, cold.*

*Condition VI and Yoke (modified) are set
to insure that we don't get our feet wet,
the ships from the yard, district and fleet
all join round the New Year to greet.*

*SOPA ComSubLant at NAVSTA resides
To his our assurance and confidence lies,
The old year now gone, passed away
We wish you all a Happy New Year and New Year Day.*

Signed/J. M. Holmes, Ensign, USNR

January found the Gyatt in the Caribbean patrolling the area and in close proximity to the Russian merchant ship SS Lchgansk the coordinates were 21 degrees 47 minutes North and 79 degrees 47 minutes west. It was a time of great concern.

While on this cruise and considering the time in history the Captain was most concerned with operations, especially at night. It was midway between the 2000 to 2400 watch that the messenger of the watch returned from an errand and realized that he had misplaced his flashlight. The messenger's flashlight had a red covering over the lens to diffuse the light, while still allowing him to see. The messenger was at the chart table trying to find something in the dimlight of the pilothouse and realized he couldn't see. Glancing around the pilothouse he spotted a flashlight by the Captain's chair, retrieved it and returned to the chart table to continue his search. He no sooner turned the flashlight on that the Captain, who had been standing outside the starboard hatch stepped in, took the flashlight from the messenger and threw it over the side - saying: "You are not allowed to use a flashlight without a red lens after dark - go and get mine if you need to find something." The messenger, taken aback by the action, looked at the Captain and stammered; "but - sir - that was your flashlight."

Returning to Norfolk from this cruise the Gyatt encountered stormy seas and rolled and pitched continuously as she headed north out of the Caribbean. The Executive Officer, LCDR Schick, was in the process of entering the wardroom at about the same moment that the Steward Mate (SM) was departing and the movement of the ship caused the XO to lurch forward and bump into SM who landed on the wardroom table. The XO looked at the SM and saw that he was sliding on the table with a funny look on his face said: "Arroyo in the side pocket" and moved on. The SM got off the table and went about his duties.

In early summer the Gyatt headed to Guantanamo Bay for an abbreviated period of Refresher Training. For a very long week after arrival, the ship and crew had been put through the paces, all quite arduous for a ship that appeared to be nothing more than a test platform for antennae and not often found in the company of other ships or conforming to strict Naval Procedures while underway. It was a Friday and the ship was heading toward Jamaica for what the officers and crew considered a well-earned weekend of R & R., away from other ships, away from the strict rules imposed by Guantanamo Bay, away from other unknown dangers. The evening found most officers in the wardroom eating supper. The Captain has already eaten. Unknown to this group of officers enjoying their evening repast, a compatriot of the Captain's, from the Great Lakes area where he had previously been posted, was sailing the same waters, heading to a liberty port. When the Gyatt and the other ship got within hailing distance, the Captain went to the ship's whistle and either personally or under careful instructions to the QM (Quartermaster), proceeded to give a long and complicated "Great Lakes Salute" to the other Captain. Fearing imminent collision or other major catastrophe, the officers still at evening mess dropped their forks, some in mid bite, as they stumbled over each other bolting for the Main Deck expecting to see danger that required lifeboats or a dive overboard. What they found was a hard laughing Captain waving energetically to his friend. The "adrenaline rush" received by the officers enjoying a quiet evening meal took a long time to pass.

It might have been this same cruise; the Gyatt was steaming in the Caribbean, it was a beautiful quiet evening with calm seas and long rolling deep troughs that sort of lulled you into a languid state. Edward Hanna, a newly qualified Officer of the Day, was on the bridge for the first dog watch (1600-2000). At the same time the first meal sitting was taking place in the wardroom and the captain, L. L. Gutshall, was in his normal place at the head of the table, which was on the portside of the table. Anyway, the ship was to rendezvous with a tanker at the end of the watch

(2000) and Mr. Hanna, who was also the navigator, knew that a course change was to be made if the rendezvous was to be made. Mr. Hanna plotted the new course, called the Captain in the wardroom and advised him of the course change. Mr. Hanna was also thinking of the Captain's Night Orders that he was responsible for writing as he directed the helmsman to come right 120 degrees to his new heading – knowing that there was no hurry he directed a ten degree rudder change. As the ship slowly came around one of those long rolling breakers hit broadside from the starboard side and the ship took a deep roll to port – no one noticed the inclinometer as they grasped for something to hold on to and saw Mr. Hanna holding on to the compass stanchion with both hands. It was only a few moments later that Captain Gutshall arrived on the bridge with the evening meal of mashed potatoes, peas and gravy dripping from his lap to the deck at his feet. The Captain looked a chagrined Mr. Hanna in the eye and said; “Mr. Hanna – in the future – when you are turning the ship in these kind of seas, please – use more rudder.” The Captain noted for his teaching skills had used his appearance to drive home the point and to this day Mr. Hanna has not forgotten the lesson. To emphasize the point and maybe as a form of “penance” the Captain had Mr. Hanna spending two hours more than normal writing and rewriting the “Night Orders.”

Captain Gutshall, who was an expert marksman, believed in maintaining his shooting eye. On occasion, when at sea, he would have plastic containers filled with colored liquid thrown from the bow of the ship and with one of the ship's rifles he would hone his skill. In previous years, when time permitted, officers often practiced from the stern of the ship using rifles and/or pistols on towed targets that bobbed in the ship's wake to maintain their shooting eye. The early years also found crewmembers assigned to the landing party shooting at targets from the ship's stern. Except for shark watch, during swimming parties, no one could ever recall anyone shooting from the bridge. Maybe because the Captain expressed a keen interest in weapons that the crew felt that a pistol team might be assembled and get some participation by all hands – so with the blessings of those above him James Gonos, a FTG1, put one into action. The pistol team fared quite well in its short tenure, competing with other ships so inclined and competing with the various base teams

In August the Gyatt left the Norfolk Naval Base for a port visit in New York where the crew enjoyed the weekend. At the end of their weekend the ship departed on what was referred to as the “Monday Morning Flail” in the New York harbor as ships and ferries seemed to be everywhere in the harbor. The Captain who was a pretty fair seaman looked at the Pilot, who was easing the Gyatt through the maelstrom, and asked; “how can you handle this?” The pilot, without looking away from the helm, replied; “I just close my eyes and pray.” Only those that saw the expression on the Captain's face could appreciate the moment.

In early September, specifically the 5th day of September, command of the Gyatt was transferred from Commander Lester L. Gutshall, USNR to Commander Louis L. Junod, USN (5 September 1964 to 14 May 1966). Shortly after the ceremony the ship headed for the Virginia Capes where she participated in OPTEVFOR operations until entering the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard in early December for alterations; prior to entering the shipyard the ship took liberty in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

While in the shipyard the Engineering Officer was escorting the skipper around the ship. The ship was having a new piece of equipment installed that required electrical power, so many of the electrical breakers were tagged out. The procedure for tagging out a breaker is to open the breaker to prevent electrical hazards and to attach a red tag to it. The electrician responsible for the work being performed signs the tag. It so happened that the ship-yard electrician's name was W. Short and he signed the tag as such. The skipper having read the tag and observing the word "short" assumed that to be the cause of the red tag and announced loudly to those in the IC room "be careful of the Main Board - it has a short in it."

Lyndon B. Johnson signed the "Civil Rights Bill" and was elected 36th President of the United States. Martin Luther King received the Nobel Peace Prize. The "Poll Tax" is abolished by the 24th Amendment. The B-70 flew at three times the speed of sound (more than 2000 miles per hour). The longest suspension bridge in the United States, the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, in New York is open to traffic. Ford introduced the sporty Mustang.

The best movies were: "My Fair Lady, Mary Poppins, Zorba the Greek, Goldfinger, Lord of the Flies and Topkapi." And the winner of the Academy Award was "My Fair Lady." The best actor was Rex Harrison and the best actress was Julie Andrews.

Some of the hit songs were: "Mary Wells – My Guy, The Four Seasons – Rag Doll, The Beach Boys – When I Grow Up and Leslie Gore – You Don't Own Me." Great songs were: "Fiddler on the Roof, Hello Dolly and I Want to Hold Your Hand." The "Beatles" invaded America.

The Olympics were held in Tokyo, Japan and the United States ruled the swimming and track events. The St. Louis Cardinals beat the New York Yankees in seven games to win the World Series. The Cleveland Browns with Jim Brown as their running back were the NFL champions and the Boston Celtics were the NBA champions for the sixth consecutive time.