

XXIII. PFC Gyatt's Records Come Home

1966: The official log for the first day of 1966 was written by LTJG G. E. Shindler, USN and reads as follows:

00-04

*'Tis a warm New Year's Evening,
Liberty sections are leaving
Double lines hold us port to the pier.
The Norfolk Shipyard's the name,
We're in Portsmouth just the same
Berth 35 is the name where we're.*

*Spring lays are both out
Cold iron watch looks about
All services come from the pier.
You'll see all around
'LantFleet units abound
Yard and district crafts also are here.*

*The stars are all twinkling
Somewhere glasses are tinkling
But there's one place no highballs tonight-
"CC - Two" is the number
and her watch will not slumber
'Tis SOPA: Captain, USS Wright.*

Signed/G. E. Shindler, LTJG, USN

The start of the New Year found the Gyatt in the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard continuing her overhaul and the crew still living and eating on land. To celebrate the coming completion of this lengthy overhaul a two-day Ship's Party, with dinner and dancing, was held at the Fleet Recreation Hall

The Gyatt returned to OPTEVFOR operations in March. In early April or there about the ship was tied up at the Norfolk Naval Base Destroyer Piers along with other ships of the squadron to partake in an open house in honor of the head of DESRON 2. About a week later the Gyatt headed for Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for refresher training, stopping at Key West, Florida. Enroute to Key West the Gyatt had some interesting experiences: the first, was the transfer by Coast Guard helicopter of SOSN Newman who developed appendicitis; the second, was encountering a small boat afire while entering the harbor. The fire was handled by the Harbor Patrol and other small boats assisted in survivor rescue.

While in Key West a memorial ceremony was held honoring the ship's sponsor, Mrs. Hilda Morrell, who had died in her home in Syracuse, New York. Mrs. Morrell was the mother of Private Gyatt for whom the ship was named. It was the following summer and the family of Private Edward Earl Gyatt desired that his medals should be aboard the ship. The Executive Officer (XO) of the Gyatt, LCDR Harold B. Sachs, was designated as the attendee and with his wife Annabel they headed north to Syracuse to accept the medals. Interestingly enough the XO was a graduate of Syracuse University and had not returned to the city or the university since his graduation in 1950. The community made an occasion of the presentation gathering in the National Guard Armory with Mr. Sachs in his dress whites along with politicians and members of the Gyatt family. The medals, the Silver Star, Purple Heart and other mementos were brought back to the Gyatt and a presentation case was built to display the medals and memorabilia along with a photograph of Private Gyatt. The case was mounted in the wardroom of the Gyatt.

Now back to 1966 - from Key West the Gyatt's next scheduled stop was Guantanamo Bay and along with the official cargo all stored below decks it carried some "unofficial cargo" all located topside. Part of the "unofficial cargo" was a 13-foot runabout owned by the XO, which was fine-tuned by the duty motor whaleboat engineman. The runabout was off loaded in Guantanamo Bay and was used for recreational by the crew during the REFTRA exercise.

While at Guantanamo Bay Commander Edward C. Elliott (14th May 1966 to 23 August 1968) became the fifteenth captain of the Gyatt. Commander Elliott relieved Commander Louis L. Junod. As a young Ensign in the Navy Reserve, in April 1944, Commander Elliott went aboard the USS Merriwether and served aboard the destroyer during landings at Okinawa and Tokyo Bay.

On the 11th day of June the Gyatt found time to enjoy liberty in Montego Bay, Jamaica and before returning to Norfolk at the end of the month the Gyatt visited Saint Thomas, Virgin Islands, qualified in naval gunfire support at Culebra and refueled in San Juan, Puerto Rico. While at San Juan the officers were treated to a cookout by the previous XO of the Gyatt, Commander Solterer, who had been promoted and assigned to the San Juan naval facility. Back in Norfolk the Gyatt resumed her duties as a test and operation ship and in October went to the New York Shipbuilding Yard in Camden, New Jersey for a two-week period while new equipment was added.

In 1966 the Gyatt completed the evaluation of new surface search radar and evaluations of the Omega and satellite navigation systems while serving as the test vehicle for a classified project. Part of the evaluation was to see how well the brand-new surface search radar (AN/SPS-55) operated in the rain. So the technicians assigned to the ship waited for it to rain. The rain finally came and since the ship was on the "cold iron" watch the radar wave-guide was pressurized by the ship's air supply after it had been filtered for oil and moisture. The wave-guide was usually pressurized by using the ship's low-pressure steam line, but when the boiler was lit someone forgot to close the connection between the airline and the steamline. Keith Kellum, an ETI and the technician assigned to perform the tests for the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) was totally surprised when he saw the wave-guide filter blowing steam. The test was ruined and would have to be rescheduled. The bright spot in this failed testing program

was that the ship remained in port and the crew was able to enjoy another night on the beach. With no rain in the forecast and a need to complete the “rain test” those responsible improvised – rigging a fire hose and spraying the antenna while it was in the operating mode. Navy ingenuity at its best.

In addition to the radar evaluations part of the Gyatt’s role was to demonstrate the tactical use of the Satellite Navigation System by anchoring with supreme accuracy and becoming the reference point of the entire amphibious group. The Gyatt performed well while making ample use of the available visual aids to make the anchorage even more accurate and taking little chance on the new satellite system. It is only when the “old” shows that the “new” works - does one become comfortable with the new.

In December the Gyatt participated in “LantFlex66” which was conducted in the Caribbean. While operating with other ships of the Atlantic Fleet off of Vieques Island in Puerto Rico the Gyatt took a command position of one of the blockade units of “LantFlex 66.” The return to Norfolk was in time for the Christmas Holidays.

In 1966 a B-52 bomber crashed in Spain with three unarmed hydrogen bombs aboard, having jettisoned one at sea and after a three-month search all were recovered. Miniskirts came into fashion. The New York Herald Tribune closed its doors after keeping people abreast of the news for more than one hundred years. The first television space program, still viewed today, made its debut. The Salvation Army celebrated its 100th birthday.

“A Man for All Seasons” was the Academy Award winning movie, “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Wolfe” was a close second, John Houston’s “The Bible” was the extravaganza of the year, Hitchcock’s “Torn Curtain” was the year’s thriller and “Georgy Girl” had everyone laughing. Top songs were; “Born Free, Sinatra’s – Stranger in the Night and Lane’s – on a Clear Day You Could See Forever.”

The Baltimore Orioles shutout the Los Angeles Dodgers to win the World Series, Green Bay won its fourth NFL championship in the last six years and the Boston Celtics beat the Los Angeles Lakers to win their eight consecutive NBA championship.