

XXV. 1968 - Scientists and Reservists

1968: The official log for the first day of 1968 was written by David J. Anderson, USNR and reads as follows:

00-04

*Moored portside to berth Two One Four
Receiving all services from the shore
At destroyers – submarine piers in holiday dress
The Norfolk Naval Station, Virginia U. S.
With anchor chain port to the pier
While underfoot the starboard anchor resting near
With breast lines present, standard-mooring lines doubled
And two springlay aft, we moor untroubled
In a nest of three, the Gyatt, Rich and O’Hare in that order be
From the pier (DD 712), (DD 820) and (DD 889) respectively
The cold iron watch securely is set
Awaiting schedules soon to be met
Through the ship, yoke is set
Now D. C. A. do not fret
The ship is in readiness condition five
Awaiting till dawn to come alive
Yard and district craft are present about
With U. S. Atlantic Fleet units providing the stout
SOPA is ComNavAirLant – VADM Booth
Have a Happy New Year, and that’s the truth!*

Signed/David J. Anderson, Ensign, USNR

In early January of 1968 the Gyatt was scheduled to go to Vietnam and a short time later the directive was changed. The ship remained operating in and out of Norfolk until the 18th day of March when it became part of the Springboard ASW Operation that included ships from the United Kingdom, Canada and West Germany. During this period of ASW exercises, which ended the 28th day of April the Gyatt visited the Caribbean ports of San Juan, Puerto Rico; St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands and Willemstad, Curaco. In addition the ship visited Roosevelt Roads and the Isle de Culebra, Puerto Rico; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and on the return to Norfolk stopped at Port Everglades, Florida. It was on this same exercise, while refueling at sea, that the Gyatt had an emergency breakaway from the mother ship and diesel fuel was everywhere.

On the 23rd day of August, Commander Ronald A. Campbell, USN (23 August 1968 to 30 January 1969) took command of the Gyatt relieving Commander Edward C. Elliott, USN.

Commander Campbell's primary responsibility was to provide services to the Naval Ship Research and Development Center (NSRDC), Naval Research Facility (NRF), Naval Research Laboratory (NRL), USN Weapons Laboratory, USN Weapons Center, Naval Security Station and Westinghouse. During Captain Campbell's tenure the Gyatt could be found leaving port with anywhere from nine to fourteen experts responsible to the aforementioned agencies.

Specifically, the Gyatt was to assist in ways and means to protect naval vessels from heat seeking missiles. To that end a very elaborate water wash down system was installed to completely blanket the ship, including the sides, with salt-water sprays. It was anticipated that the water sprays would minimize or eliminate the thermal signature of the ship. During these experiments, nozzles powered by high-pressure water pumps at full throttle sprayed water. The spray pattern extended from the mast down throughout the ship, covering the ship like a tent. The ship was well out to sea during these wash-downs.

When the wash-downs were in full operation NRF and NRL scientists would circle the ship in helicopters equipped with specialized monitoring equipment taking readings. On occasion, the ship would fire high intensity flares to determine if this could decoy missile trackers away from the ship. Readings and observations indicated that running at flank speed was a more beneficial way of dissipating the hot gases produced at the stacks. After such exercises and the return to port, NRF would direct modifications based on findings and the exercises would be repeated. The Boatswain Mates and their strikers were never thrilled by the problems and subsequent cleanup caused by the wash-down system – it produced nothing but work and the loss of barrels and barrels of fresh water - to clean everything properly.

The Gyatt, during this experimental period, found that the Denny-Brown Stabilization System that had been installed during its conversion to a missile destroyer and had not been removed with the missiles proved useful during the many experiments. For example; when the stabilizer was placed "out-of-sync" the ship rolled erratically and extensively in calm seas and provided a most interesting sight to its observers.

In late fall the Gyatt was directed to Key West, Florida for completion of the current series of exercises and the crew was excited about a little R & R.. However, enroute to Key West a major storm was encountered that ripped away some of the topside wash-down system and all of it that was mounted along the sides. OPTEVFOR sent a high priority message checking on the status of the Gyatt and was relieved to find the ship was still afloat.

Shortly after returning from Key West the Gyatt was transferred to the "Select Reserve." This program reduced the regular crew to a minimum for upkeep and was supplemented by a reserve contingent including a reserve commanding officer when the ship got underway for reserve training. The new homeport for this assignment was the Naval Gun Factory in Washington DC and the ship arrived at its new port in early December. As in the past, the trip up the Potomac River became very interesting once the pilot came aboard. As the Gyatt passed Mount Vernon and the tomb of George Washington Navy Regulations regarding this event went into effect and honors were rendered in memory of our first president. The use of bugles, bells and/or the manning of the rail rendered these honors and the time of day was not relevant.

As the ship approached Washington DC, the bridge on the beltway was raised to allow passage of the ship and traffic in both directions on the beltway ceased as the ship slowly eased through the raised bridge deck. Many interested motorists vacated their vehicles to better observe the slow passing of the ship between the raised bridge decks, while others waited in quiet desperation as the parked vehicles increased in rapidly growing numbers.

The new homeport proved to be interesting as upper level officials, such as Congressmen, brought small visiting groups at odd hours. Flag officers also made unannounced visits and the crew had to remain alert at all times. A major benefit for the crew during time in this homeport was the viewing of major motion pictures that were first shown at the White House and before they were passed to the fleet.

During the Christmas Holidays the Gyatt was lit up like the proverbial Christmas Tree as lights stretched from the bow to the mast, from the mast to the stern and along the port and starboard lifelines.

In 1968, Robert F. Kennedy, Democratic candidate for president and brother of President John F. Kennedy, was assassinated. Martin Luther King, a leader for racial equality, was also assassinated. Richard M. Nixon became the 37th president by the narrowest of margins. An earthquake in Iran killed at least 12,000 people. The USS Pueblo, a poorly armed ship spying on North Korea, was captured and her crew taken prisoner.

The movie "Oliver" was the winner of the Academy Award. Other outstanding movies were: "The Lion in Winter, Funny Girl, The Odd Couple and 2001 – A Space Odyssey. The best songs were; "Hey Jude, I Heard It Through the Grapevine, Mrs. Robinson, Wichita Lineman and I Can't Take My Eyes Off of You."

The Detroit Tigers won the World Series in seven games, beating the Saint Louis Cardinals. Denny McClain, who pitched for Detroit, won 30 games during the regular season. The Green Bay Packers won Super Bowl II, beating the Oakland Raiders, 33 to 14. It was Vince Lombardi's last game as coach of the Packers. The Boston Celtics returned to their winning ways beating the Los Angeles Lakers, four games to two. Billy Casper was golf's first \$200,000 money winner when he grossed \$205,000 plus change in 1968. The women were just getting close to the \$50,000 number. In the 1968 Olympics, Bob Beamon set a record of 29 feet two-inches in the long jump that was to stand for almost thirty years.