

VIII. 1951 ~ Europe a Second Time

1951: The official log for the first day of 1951 was written by LTJG G. G. Ryan, USN and reads as follows:

00-04

*We must go down to the beach again, to the merry bars and rye
And all we ask is a tall drink and a chaser standing by;
For tonight, alas, we are duty bound and perforce must abstain
But tomorrow brings, we know for sure, liberty call again.
So listen all ye revelers to the seaman's tale of woe
And we'll spin a yarn of how things stand in this cotton-picking bateau.
Alongside the Shenandoah five ships are moored in a nest
Basilone, Kraus, Gearing, Greene, Gyatt; tin cans all abreast.
With standard lines and wires fore and aft we're tied up to the tender
Whose assistance to the "small boys" is accomplished in great splendor.
In number two boiler old shoes and rags the snipes are surely burning
While in the engine room the sparkies have number one generator turning.
Convoy Escort Piers in Norfolk, pier twenty-one is our berth,
We've been to others but, I'll tell you lads, there's none better on this earth.
Ships standard, hermaphrodite, and assorted from Lant Fleet;
OSOPA, ComAirLant is at Naval Air Station enjoying his New Years treats.
Now with eight bells on the forenoon watch this gang will be relieved,
Then it's all hands to the nearest pub, and once our goal achieved
We'll splice the main brace and celebrate with voices load and clear,
We'll toast your health and wish you all a Very Merry New Year.*

Signed/ G. G. Ryan LTJG, USN

In the first week of January the Gyatt took on ammunition and stores in preparation to leave Norfolk on its standard ten day crossing of the Atlantic, plane guarding for the carrier Midway enroute to northern Europe. While taking on ammunition for Mount Two a strongly built Fire Control striker dropped a five-inch projectile that he was lowering into the magazine. As the magazine left his hands the striker made a mad dash out of the magazine area heading up the ladder as fast as he could go. As he cleared the first level the Gunners Mate Chief, who was standing nearby, put his hand on the young man's shoulder and said; "where are you going – son." The young man replied; " I just dropped a projectile and I'm getting out of here." The Chief replied: "No cause to worry, son. If it did go off you would only be that much higher than everyone else." This proved to be true – when a year or so later a Gunners Mate striker – frustrated and slightly inebriated came off of liberty and tried to take out his anger by bouncing one of those same projectiles, which weighed fifty-four pounds, all over the magazine.

In addition to its required duties, the Gyatt acted as a passenger ship as she carried replacement crews for other ships already in Europe. All unassigned bunks were filled and another dozen

cots were set up in the crew's mess every night after the movie. Some of the passengers, specifically those attached to larger ships, became quite ill and ended up being fed intravenously. If memory serves some shipmates correctly - one of the passengers was so sick he was high lined to a larger ship and we received a report that he had died.

Getting sea sick was no picnic, and it was easy on a tin can, one of the petty officers from the after engineroom recalls coming off of the mid-watch – it was the first night out and about four in the morning. As the petty officer stood on the fantail, enjoying a smoke in the cool crisp air, he saw one of the new firemen holding on to the lifeline. The new fireman was experiencing his first night at sea and seasickness at its worst. The petty officer was amazed at the size of the upchuck leaving the mouth of the new fireman and was saddened when he learned that what he saw was a set of brand new false teeth which could not be replaced until the Gyatt returned stateside. Remembering boot camp in 1950 it seemed that if you had a few bad teeth they (the Navy) would extract all of them and before you left for your permanent duty station the Navy issued you a new set of teeth. The petty officer recalls that the young fireman was on a soft diet until the ship returned to the states.

Even though it was January the Gyatt had a pretty good crossing and were in the vicinity of the Canary Islands, preparing to head north the ship signaled the Midway. The Gyatt was requesting permission to depart at a speed of 195 knots instead of 195 RPMs, which is what should have been requested. The Midway signaled back, “circle twice and takeoff”. The speed requested, 195 knots, is equal to approximately 220 miles per hour; whereas, the speed of 195 RPMs is equal to 20 knots or 25 miles per hour, well within the top speed of 35 plus knots per hour the Gyatt had and a lot less than takeoff speed.

On the trip north to Plymouth, England the ship made a refueling stop at Gibraltar. It was at Gibraltar that Seaman Apprentice Barata showed his naiveté. Barata had the starboard side lookout watch as the ship was heading to the mooring point. Barata was searching the slope of the “Rock,” as Gibraltar is referred to, with his assigned binoculars. He scoured the slopes, up and down, left and right and continually repeated the searching. After an extended period of time the XO (Executive Officer), LCDR. Symons, who was observing Barata's glassing of the Rock asked him what he was searching for - Barata was noncommittal. The XO returned to the pilothouse and after awhile returned and again queried Barata, who again replied – nothing. The XO persisted and Barata again replied - nothing - but kept looking. The XO inferred an order to reply to the question - “What are you looking for?” Barata somewhat chagrined answered - “the Prudential sign, sir” and Mr. Symons went in a hearty laughter. I guess it was no worse than sending a seaman or midshipman for water line or looking for the mail buoy or other such things generated for laughter.

It was also in Gibraltar that the crew found out that their XO, Mr. Symons, was a deep-sea diver. It seems that one of the hands, a stewards mate striker, after returning from liberty elected to drop one of the 300-pound (K-Gun) depth charges over the side. Since it had to be retrieved and finding that there were no qualified divers aboard ship and since we did not want an incident in a foreign port, Mr. Symons went about the business of diving and retrieving the depth charge. Mr. Symons was more than a diver was - he was a legendary diver. As a Boatswains Mate First Class (BM1) aboard the rescue ship USS Falcon, Mr. Symons was awarded the Navy Cross, by

President Franklin DeLano Roosevelt, for his participation in the rescue of personnel and the subsequent recovery of the sunken submarine Squalus, using the then experimental helium-oxygen techniques. This technique was developed by a Navy officer, Charles Swede Momsen, who was described as a visionary, a scientist and a man of action. As usual life with its small twists had the Gyatt Executive Officer William D. Taylor, who followed LCDR Symons as the XO on the Gyatt, serving with Mr. Momsen during their submarine days.

For those not aware the USS Squalus (SS-193) was commissioned on the 1st day of March 1939 and on her ninth trial run on the 23rd day of May 1939, sank near Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 240 feet of water. Her sister ship the USS Sculpin (SS-192) was also on a trial run and was ordered to search for the Squalus. As the Sculpin neared the area they spotted a trail of red smoke and a telephone buoy with the marking on top: "Submarine sunk here. Telephone inside." The buoy was brought aboard - but before the Sculpin could get all the details the phone cable was lost. However, in the short conversation, the skipper of the Sculpin had learned from the skipper of the Squalus that the main induction valve, which supplied air to the diesel engines had failed to close and that entire space aft of the control area was flooded. The thirty-three men in the forward compartments were safe and the fate of the twenty-six men in the after compartments was unknown.

The rescue ship Falcon, with the McCann rescue chamber aboard, was contacted and headed full speed to join the Sculpin who remained on site and the destroyer Semmes also heading to the site under a full head of steam. Also contacted were a master diver, three specialist divers and a dozen navy divers from Norfolk. The divers headed north by plane only to be forced down by fog near Newport, Rhode Island but they continued racing north by car, reaching Portsmouth around midnight.

The divers wasted little time getting the ten ton, ten foot high, eight foot round McCann rescue chamber over the side of the Falcon and into its operating position over the forward torpedo-room hatch of the Squalus. The first three trips went without incident and twenty-five cold, weary, hungry men were saved. However, at about 1930, when the last eight men in the forward compartment, including the Captain, were being brought to the surface on this fourth and final trip the downhaul wire jammed on the winch. After more than four hours of resourceful effort, which included slowly blowing the ballast tanks, while hauling in the rescue chamber, so as to minimize the strain on the remaining strand of the retriever cable, the thirty-three men in the forward area were safe. Three men received the highest honor for their efforts, the Medal of Honor. It was for Mr. Symons efforts in helping to resurface the Squalus that he received the Navy Cross

It is also interesting to note that Chief Machinists Mate William Badders was one of the recipients of the Medal of Honor. Chief Badders made the second dive on the Squalus and was responsible for increasing the number of men taken in the bell on the remaining dives. Chief Badders was also the lead man on the hazardous fourth and final dive. A point of interest is that Alfred M. Carey, who served aboard the Gyatt from 1951 until 1954 in a number of positions including Gunnery Officer, is indirectly related to Chief Badders. Mr. Carey's granddaughter is also the great granddaughter of Chief Badders. Mr. Carey, also served under LCDR. Symons,

who as mentioned earlier received the Navy Cross from President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a result of the Squalus incident. It is a small world.

After sixteen weeks, with many long days, the Squalus was floated to the surface on the 13th day of September 1939. The ship was repaired and commissioned, as the USS Sailfish, eight months later on the 15th day of May the following year. The Sailfish was deployed to the Pacific theatre where it performed with honor, with nine confirmed kills and the third largest tonnage total in the Pacific theatre.

In 1942, Japanese destroyers sank the Sculpin, sister ship of the Sailfish, formerly Squalus. The Sculpin had been damaged in a depth charge attack and surfaced, but its gun battery, of one four-inch gun and two 20-millimeter guns, was no match for the destroyer and it was sunk. A major portion of the Sculpin crew was captured and taken aboard one of the Japanese destroyers and the men were later transferred to a Japanese carrier. The carrier was eventually sunk by an American submarine, the USS Sailfish – once known as the USS Squalus.

It seems that Gyatt sailors were directly or indirectly involved with submarine related tragedies. On the 10th day of April 1963 the USS Thresher SSN-593, the first of its class was making a test dive with 108 enlisted men, four officers and 17 civilians about 200 miles east of Boston when it went down in 8400 feet of water. The Chief Machinist Mate, Frank DeStefano, had reported aboard the Gyatt as a machinist mate striker eleven years earlier and after a little more than two years left the ship as a Machinist Mate Second Class. After a period of shore duty DeStefano volunteered for the submarine service, rose to the rank of Chief, and was eventually assigned to the Thresher. The day the Thresher left port for diving tests DeStefano was on his way to Washington DC on temporary assignment (TAD). DeStefano testified at the “Court of Inquiry” and along with a former Captain of the Thresher were given access to a sister submarine to explore piping, electrical and machinery configurations. The two men were instrumental in finding what may have been the “trigger” in the sinking of the Thresher and DeStefano found it to be a most humbling experience. DeStefano subsequently made the Navy a career and retired as a Lieutenant Commander after twenty-one years of serving his country.

Another shipmate who served aboard the Gyatt and escaped this tragedy aboard the “Thresher” was Ensign Randolph Zelov. Zelov, had served aboard the Gyatt in 1948 and 1949, transferred to submarines when he left the destroyer. On The 8th day of April 1963 Lieutenant Zelov was asked to report temporarily to the “Thresher” to relieve the Engineering Officer, who was suffering from stomach cramps. When Zelov arrived, to assume this temporary duty, he was met the Engineering Officer, who told him that he was not needed on this test run and that he (the Engineering Officer) was feeling better. One must wonder about these changes that affect one’s life – even those that are listed as temporary.

But let us get back to Mr. Symons and some additional notes on him. Mr. Symons retired as a Captain, going from Seaman Recruit to his retiring rank during his Navy tenure. In the early days of World War II Mr. Symons, as a Warrant Officer, received a Silver Star for his actions in towing a submarine to safety and clearing the docks of naval vessels at Cavite after the Japanese raid on the Naval Base. Mr. Symons was one of the dozen or so men extracted with General MacArthur when Bataan and Corregidor fell. Mr. Symons also received the Meritorious Service

Medal, two Presidential Unit Citations, the Army Unit Citation with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces Meritorious Unit Citation with Gallantry Cross and others.

At the age of fifty-one Mr. Symons was given command of the Naval Special Warfare (Seal) Training Center near Virginia Beach and remained in that capacity for three years. Mr. Symons felt, that as the Commanding Officer, he should be able to do everything that those under his command could do. Mr. Symons was already familiar with all aspects of diving, from shallow water to deep sea, but he was unfamiliar with sky diving. Shortly after taking command Mr. Symons went to Lakehurst, New Jersey where he received his Silver Parachute Wings after training and five successful dry land jumps. Upon returning to the training center Mr. Symons went through training for water jumps and when the five water jumps were completed he received his Golden Parachute Wings. Although in his early fifties Mr. Symons was not deterred by the rigors of seal training and participated in all phases of said training and the related maneuvers during his command.

While in the United Kingdom the Gyatt's sister ship was the USS Glennon (DD 840). Rarely was the Gyatt with ships of the Sixth Fleet, for it had special radio equipment and a group of men with top secret clearance who operated in a highly restricted area aboard ship, continuously listening to radio transmissions on their highly sensitive equipment. The room, in which these technicians operated, generated wads of paper and every night baskets of this generated paper resulted in a burn party on the fantail.

Those required to know were surprised when the Gyatt arrived in Plymouth; the tender, USS Hamul (AD-20), that had previously provided logistic support had been transferred to the Pacific Fleet to support Korea area operations. Consequently, the Royal Navy was looked upon as the provider of Gyatt provisions. The Gyatt commissary personnel accepted the challenge of turning the Australian beef, the Argentine chicken, the Polish ham and the French canned turnips supplied by His Majesties Victualing Yard into recognizable fare for Americans. The ship's log showed that all hands survived – but the English coffee was terrible.

The coffee problem was compounded by the fact that the British Navy misconstrued the ship's order for one thousand pounds by sending one thousand kilograms. This misunderstanding resulted in 2200 pounds of coffee coming aboard in lieu of the 1000 pounds ordered. Since the crew was directed to use all of the British coffee for individual coffee messes even after American coffee became available the crew held a "Coffee Party" similar to the "Boston Tea Party" and the British supply was almost immediately depleted, including the 20-pound cans.

When the Gyatt arrived in Plymouth it moored forward and aft to mooring buoys anchored in the harbor. After mooring detail was secured and the quarterdeck watch set; the boat davits were swung out and the motor whaleboat dropped into the water. The whaleboat was manned by three men; the coxswain, who controlled the boat; a motorman, responsible for the motor and a seaman who was responsible for holding the boat alongside its mooring station with his trusty boat hook. The time of year and the choppy water had the whaleboat crew in foul weather gear and life jackets. The life jackets, in conjunction with the uniform of the day, were standard wear for the whaleboat crew. The whaleboat came along the starboard side and sat at the base of the gangway, motor idling – waiting. The Officer of the Day, a Lieutenant JG, looked over the side

and asked the coxswain when he was going for the mail, it was more than two weeks since the ship left Norfolk and mail was looked for with great anticipation. The coxswain replied; "I'm waiting for the Ensign, Sir." A junior officer standing near the quarterdeck had misconstrued the comment and advised that he had nothing to do and would be glad to accompany the whaleboat. The Officer of the Day smiled and advised the young officer, an Ensign, that the coxswain was referring to the flag required for the whaleboat.

During our time in Plymouth the ship hosted a retired Royal Navy Officer who was the technical advisor for a naval action film being shot in Britain. The film was based on the exploits of a U.S. Navy destroyer that was transferred to Britain under the World War II lend lease program. The film advisor wanted a feel for U.S. Navy destroyer life. The film was released in 1952 in Britain as "Glory at Sea" and in the United States as "The Gift Horse." The cast included well-known British actors Richard Attenborough and Trevor Howard. Sonny Tufts, a well-known American actor of the period, played an American sailor.

It was somewhere around this time that some junior officers shared this wardroom story. It appears that three of the junior officers were in a local pub partaking of some Guinness when they were approached by a well dressed older woman who asked if they were from the seven-twelve. When they advised that they were, she advised that she would see them for dinner tomorrow evening aboard their ship. The young officers thought nothing about this comment until the next afternoon when they were eating lunch in the wardroom with the officers not on duty. As the various officers talked of their previous day ashore one of the junior officers commented that an older woman had approached them while they were drinking at a pub and told them that she was to be a guest of a senior officer for dinner that evening. No comment was made at the table – but the senior officer named by the lady was on the next liberty boat ashore. The senior officer returned to the ship with the last liberty boat of the night (about midnight).

Food aboard the Gyatt was generally good, although at times it could be considered routine. For example, with the exception of holidays, you knew what day it was by the meal served; Saturday breakfast was baked beans and corn bread, which also meant that the soup for the mid-watch (midnight to four in the morning) was bean soup (I never experienced such a breakfast prior to the Gyatt but I still like baked beans and corn bread); Sundays were great, real eggs with ham or sausage, on other days there were powdered eggs. Tuesday breakfast was chipped beef on toast, or "F---skins on Toast" as the crew called it; Wednesday was chili (meat only) on toast or "S--- on a Shingle" as referred to by the crew. Cereal and milk (albeit powdered, when we were out of the country) was always available.

On the Gyatt main meals always had one type of meat, one type of fowl or one type of fish. On holidays there were at least two types of meat or a combination of meat and fowl or meat and fish, there were more than two vegetables, a variety of desserts and fruit; there were also cigarettes and on occasion - cigars. There was no reason to be hungry aboard ship. I remember being in the Caribbean, where you could buy a stalk of bananas for fifty cents, bring them back to a friendly cook and get a gallon of fresh banana ice cream in return. I also remember the friendly bakers on the mid-watch who supplied us with miniature loaves of bread, a large pat of butter and thick slices of large Bermuda onions – what a sandwich. The sailors in the sixties say they set their own menu – I wonder? Enough on food – at least for now. I can taste the onion

sandwich on that freshly baked and buttered miniature loaf of bread. But before finishing I have to put in an admiration plug for the cooks, bakers and mess cooks – good weather and bad they had something hot for us to eat. On many occasions, in bad weather – when the ship pitched and rolled, they would hang on to the overhead handholds to maintain their balance at the kettles or grills to prepare a hot meal. When one looked in the galley they could always see a clean mop in a bucket of water, sitting where it was readily available – this was the cook's fire extinguisher – and in rough weather it put out many a fire caused by spilt cooking oils or grease.

February and the ship spent time in the English ports of Plymouth, Portsmouth and Weymouth and the Irish port of Londonderry. In and out of Londonderry was at high tide only and going between the green mountains with sheep on the slopes and the light fog was like looking at a painting; being a lookout at such a time was a bonus. March found the Gyatt visiting the ports of Golfe Juan, Nice and Cannes, France; as well as, the ports of Naples, Anconna and Taranto, Italy. Anconna and Taranto, like Plymouth, England still reflected the heavy bombings of World War II.

Anconna proved to be an exciting place; Anconna had a communist government and they did not like Americans and they did not hesitate to display their dislike. The people of Anconna had cornered a sailor, who had wandered down a side street while looking for a bank to exchange American Dollars for Italian Lira; as he was retreating a taxi driver pulled up and literally rescued him – it turned out that the cabby had lived in Brooklyn. However, that wasn't the most exciting thing that happened. The most exciting happening was when a BM3 stole a 45 pistol from the small arms locker and went ashore shooting up the town. This action resulted in his being confined to the ship for the rest of the cruise. This same boatswain's mate having returned from the cruise, became inebriate before returning to his home and inadvertently went to the wrong house and demanded to be let in. Not being allowed in, he went to his car, got out an axe and broke the door down and as a result, spent the night in confinement. He made restitution and returned to his home, which was one street over.

Talking about 45s, it was on this same cruise that a Gunners Mate Second (GM2), who had three ships shot out from beneath him during World War II, scared his ship mates half to death. We were at sea and the GM2, who was extremely eccentric, had the 2000 to midnight roving watch and was required to carry a sidearm. The GM2 happened upon a card game in the mess hall and was observing the game when he began cussing the Navy. The next thing those at the game knew was that the sidearm, a 45, was out and GM2 was jacking a round in the chamber. The GM2 put the gun to his head and pulled the trigger, when nothing happened he ejected the cartridge and it fell onto the table with the cards. The players and those watching the card game were mesmerized as the GM2 cussed the quality of the cartridge and the Navy and repeated what just happened. After the second cartridge failed to fire the GM2 ejected it also; he then picked up both cartridges and said that they must be faulty I going to return them to the small arms locker. What the players and observers did not know was that the GM2 had removed the firing pin when he was in the Fire Control Room, which was just beyond the mess hall hatch. This particular Gunners Mate was a good friend to shipmates, especially those in the deck division. It was just about that time that items were being packed in plastic containers. The Gillette razor was one particular item - it came in a plastic case with a top you could see through and a red base – this Gunners Mate would buy all the razors – throw away the contents and keep the case.

Those that knew the Gunners Mate well wondered if surviving the sinking of three destroyers during WWII was a reason for his eccentricities.

The ship's store was everything to every sailor and you could find all the everyday things including skivvies dungarees and chambray shirts. You could not always depend on the size – but what you needed was usually there. One time an order for dungarees was received at the ship's store and the guys rushed to the store to pay their buck and a quarter to replace their worn work pants. Well – it turned out that this particular lot of dungarees was made for WAVES or BASS (Big A-- Sailors) as the waves were sometimes referred too. Today we would call pants that were that loose in the seat “full fitted” or something similar.

When we pulled into the south of France the beaches of Nice and Cannes commanded the attention of almost everyone aboard the ship. The high powered spotting telescopes mounted on the bridge deck always seemed to be in use as the crew monitored the beach for topless beauties taking in the Mediterranean sun.

April and the ship was in Piraeus, Greece the port of Athens and many members of the crew took the tour of the Acropolis to see the century old temples and monuments.

April also took the ship to Izmir, Turkey where a side trip to the ancient Temple of Epheusus was possible and a number of the crew took the opportunity to visit this ancient site.. Our Turkish Navy host invited the crew on a wild boar hunt. Twenty hunters, armed with M1 rifles from the ship's armory, had the opportunity to participate in the hunt. The host provided drivers to drive the game in the direction of the hunters. So most of the hunting party, with their legs encased in leggings – which hadn't been worn since boot camp (except for Honor Guard) headed into the brush and waited for the boar to head in their direction. Fortunately, the score for the day was no drivers or hunters injured and one huge wild boar killed. Gunners Mate First Class (GM1) Hudson, was the successful hunter (should really say successful shooter – it wasn't really hunting) killed the boar. The boar, a handsome trophy, was hung near the quarterdeck as evidence of a satisfactory hunt and to prove that the hunt was not a “fish” story. The boar was butchered and roasted and was made available at the evening meal for those that wished to taste some wild meat. The remainder of the crew – the souvenir hunting crewmembers - visited the Izmir bazaar, in lieu of the boar hunting and many were rewarded with hand carved Meerschaum pipes.

At the end of April the ship returned to Villefranche, France. It was while anchored in this area that the Gyatt, caught in a sudden squall, drug anchor and got fouled in the anchor chain of the USS Gearing (DD-710), badly damaging the portside screw (propeller) and cutting a hole in the second division compartment just forward of the screw guard. The damage to the screw was severe enough that it could not be used effectively; consequently, the ship traveled at reduced speed and the helmsman had to compensate for the course being steered. The hole was approximately nine-feet by four feet and the damage control team were able to place a make shift waterproof patch out of sheet steel carried aboard for such emergencies. When rough weather was encountered and the ship pitched heavily, the single screw would come out of the water and when it dropped back into the water, the turning of the screw would throw the ship to the right resulting in men being dropped out of their bunks. In a short time the crew learned to

loosen the lashing that kept canvas tight and as a result turned the bunk into a hammock. The damage to the Gearing was negligible. It was a solemn dinner in the wardroom that evening as the career impact of the incident weighed heavily on the minds of all. Fortunately, Commander Sixth Fleet's inquiry into the incident absolved Gyatt command personnel of responsibility. It was found that the chart of the anchorage area was in error in its description of the ocean bottom anchorage characteristics.

It also appeared that the trip home brought religion to some, specifically those on the bridge. The Atlantic can at times be as smooth as glass and make one feel that they were on a cruise liner and not a Tin Can. However, this return to the States was not a cruise. We were a day or so out of Gibraltar when the Gyatt encountered rough seas and when night fell the seas became higher and higher. The quartermaster on watch observed waves coming over Mount One as he appeared on the bridge to start his watch. After an hour or so he observed the waves breaking over Mount Two which was roughly twenty-five feet higher than Mount One and before his watch was over waves were crashing into the pilot house – another ten or more feet above Mount Two. At this point the quartermaster turned to the captain and said; “Sir – if we make it through this I'm goin' ta join a church when we get back to Norfolk” and after making it back he did. The weather moderated a little – but generally the whole trip was rough – it was more like a mid-winter crossing than one in early summer.

May and the ship progressed slowly to Gibraltar and finally Norfolk. I believe it was on this trip to Gibraltar that the Gyatt was shooting for the gunnery championship of the squadron. The Gyatt had “zero” misses – but the championship went to the DesRon Four flagship, USS Gearing DD-710. It was ruled that the Gyatt did not take a sufficient number of shots at the targets (sleeves) to qualify for honors.

June and July saw the Gyatt operating out of Norfolk. On the 30th day of July Commander V. P. Healey, USN (30 July 1951 to 26 July 1952) took command of the Gyatt relieving Commander W. H. Cheney, Jr. USN. Commander Healey had served aboard the USS Astoria (CA 34), the USS Beale (DD 471) and the USS Ault (DD 698) during World War II and received the Bronze Star while serving aboard the Astoria. His time aboard the Astoria, from June 1940 until it was sunk on 9th day of August 1942 read like the Marine battles through the Pacific. Commander Healey participated in the battles of: Coral Sea, Midway, Guadalcanal, Philippines, Okinawa, Iwo Jima, Aleutians and the final attacks on Japan. Commander Healey was a survivor of the Astoria sinking on that 9th day of August 1942 at Savo Island. The Astoria had taken 65 hits from the Japanese force and the crew made a valiant effort to save her. The destroyer USS Bagley (DD 386) came alongside to remove the crew and the USS Wilson (DD 408) and the USS Hopkins (DMS 13) also came to the aid of the Astoria and were called off to be replaced by the USS Buchanan (DD 484) and The USS Alchiba (AK 23) but to no avail. As an interesting side note Lieutenant Commander Robert Bedwell who served aboard the Gyatt with Commander Healey also served aboard the USS Hopkins (DMS 13) during WWII – but not at the time of the aforementioned incident with the Astoria. I do not believe that Commander Healey or Lieutenant Commander Bedwell was ever aware of the Hopkins place in Astoria's history. Commander Healey retired from the Navy as a Rear Admiral.

June also saw the ship's executive officer, LCDR Symons, being temporarily transferred to the USS Bailey DD-713 as executive officer for a six-week period. The Bailey was enroute to Denmark on a midshipman cruise and its executive officer had taken ill, the Captain of the Bailey requested Mr. Symons on a temporary basis. Mr. Symons returned after the cruise and in the interim the Operations Officer, LCDR W. B. White, was the executive officer of the Gyatt.

From the end of July or the first week of August through the month of September the Gyatt along with the battleship Wisconsin; the cruiser, Newport News and ships of DESRON 4 went on a Midshipman Cruise to enlighten the future officers of the Navy and the Marines. Seventy-five midshipmen crowded aboard the Gyatt, endeavoring to become able-bodied seamen. In the two-month period and in addition to sea operations the ships found time to visit the ports of Halifax, Nova Scotia; Boston, Massachusetts; Newport, Rhode Island and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The battleship Wisconsin like its sister ship, Missouri did not disappoint the Gyatt, as it also ran aground. The Wisconsin ran aground off the Palisades of New Jersey. It seemed that the chronometer in the Gyatt pilothouse left the ship when the midshipmen did.

While anchored in Boston harbor the whaleboat on a routine trip to shore ran across a yacht floundering in the water. The whaleboat went alongside the yacht to lend assistance and after some discussion agreed to tow the yacht back to its base of operations. The yacht was located at a club upstream on the Charles River and the tow took more than an hour. The whaleboat crew, after receiving thanks from the yacht crew and the commodore of the club, returned to the 712. The crew was chastised by the Officer of the Day a Chief Machinist Mate for being gone way beyond there allotted time and then for performing an unauthorized operation. The following day all was forgiven when the Captain congratulated the whaleboat crew when a letter of thanks was received from the Commodore of the yacht club.

It was about this time that the Gunners Mate Chief thought he would enlighten some of the Gunners Mate Strikers on the proper care of a twin 40-mm gun. The chief took the four young men to the twin 40-mm mount on the starboard side of the weather deck and instructed them on the disassembly, the cleaning and reassembly of the barrels of the weapon. After completing the job, the chief believed a test fire was in order and directed the strikers to get two clips of ammunition and load the magazines. The strikers complied and loaded the weapon that was already trained out to sea. When the word was given to fire the strikers again complied and the two barrels not locked in place, gracefully followed the one and only salvo over the starboard gun shield and into Davy Jones's Locker. The Chief in a very somber voice said: "Now – that's what I call giving them both barrels."

Immediately upon returning to Norfolk the Gyatt took aboard a detachment of Marines and proceeding to the Caribbean provided sea and land support for amphibious operations. An extended time at sea taxed the ship's evaporators, which were used to turn sea water into potable water, to the point that rain showers saw a group of naked sailors and marines topside to shower, using what nature provided as fresh water. Interestingly enough a ferry with about 800 local citizens aboard was traveling between islands when the rains came and the men were taking the opportunity to bathe in unsalted water. The amphibious operation was completed in November and the 712 returned to Norfolk to prepare for another trip to Europe.

It was shortly after the Gyatt returned to Norfolk that a Fire Control Striker on liberty found that his combative attitude could get you into more trouble than you truly wanted. It could also get you in jail – which is really not news for sailors – we always had a few aboard ship that managed a stay – some short – some long. The striker remembers being lined up in front of a series of courtrooms and a guard pointing to each man and directing him to his day or days in court. He recalls asking some of the guys he was in jail with what they were “in for” and his responses were “murder – I stabbed the guy in bed with my wife” then “assault and battery – my girl friend was flirting with this guy at the bar, so I took dragged her outside and roughed her up, a little.” Other responses to his question included: DUI, burglary, robbery and a host of minor things. When they asked the striker, he shrugged his shoulders and said he really didn’t know. They knew he was in the Navy - he had on his dress blues and they were covered with a strange white powder.

The striker was in jail – a big jail – and they were asking for the name of his parents – his father. The last person he wanted to know about his predicament was his father. His father knowing was worse than being in jail. The charge: Assault with a deadly weapon and a man in the hospital with broken ribs. What deadly weapon? He never had a deadly weapon – maybe the chip on his shoulder that he used to intimidate and start a brawl. He was twenty – a fast talker – liked poker – always had cash in his pocket and always looking for action. He had it made – he was in the Navy – he was seeing the world. He was not guilty and he pleaded “not guilty.”

What did the striker do that he hadn’t done before? Got into a fight – nothing new; someone got hurt – nothing new; someone in the hospital – that was different; jail – that – was new. And the white powder – what was that? The striker’s father arrived – someone had called him and between his father and his attorney he was allowed to return to the Gyatt – providing he paid back his father – the hospital – the damages. To the striker - all of this was no sweat a few good poker games and he would be back on top – no problem. It wasn’t until the striker returned to the ship that he learned what happened. Then as now this story, as with many stories that get you in jail, started in a bar and happened in the wee hours of the morning. The striker and his cohorts started drinking as soon as they hit East Main Street and by early morning, being satisfactorily inebriated, decided they needed some good, strong, hot coffee. The striker and his shipmates staggered into the closest donut shop where he demanded coffee. The shop attendant, apparently not to pleased with this noisy bunch uttered something under his breath. The striker – who believed that he “the customer” is always right – took immediate offense at what he thought he heard and what he “thought” he heard were fighting words. So – he jumped over the counter and reached for the attendant, who eluded him and darted to the back room. The striker was elated making the assumption that he would have more room to correct the injustice he had suffered. Based on his fellow party goers version of the events that led to the striker’s visit to the local jail; the striker grabbed the attendant and threw him atop the donut preparation table, got on top of him and began rolling him out like a piece of dough. In the process he broke a number of ribs – the rolling pin – the deadly weapon. The attendant, attempting to free himself, threw what ever was within reach at the striker – including a box of powdered sugar – the white powder. The striker felt he had the whole story as he accepted this version of events.

The striker’s father met his son’s division officer, Mr. John Rogeri. Mr. Rogeri, then as now, felt that he never did a proper job of mentoring the striker. The striker, who stood in front of the

Captain with his hat in his hand, for what was to be his last time (he completed his tour of duty a short time later), was surprised that after being lectured and receiving punishment he was told that the recent donation made to the high school he attended may have been wasted. It appeared that the Captain and the striker attended the same private high school. Mr. Rogeri must have done all right the striker raised a family and is as active as he was fifty years ago.

The “Korean Conflict” continued. Color television was introduced. The atomic bomb test in Nevada rattles everything in the southwest. The hydrogen bomb was tested at Eniwetok in the mid Pacific Ocean. The Hydrogen Bomb is hundreds of times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Japan in 1945. The 22nd amendment was passed by congress and limited the presidential office to no more than two terms

The Academy Award movie was “An American in Paris.” Other movies worth watching were: “The African Queen and The Enforcer” with Humphrey Bogart, “Viva Zapata” with Anthony Quinn, “Strangers on a Train” a Hitchcock thriller, “Miracle in Milan” and “A Street Car Named Desire” with Marlon Brando.”

It was also a great year for hit songs; “Too Young by Nat King Cole; “If” by Perry Como; “Be My Love” by Mario Lanza and “Cry” by Johnny Ray were just a few of the hits. Other good ones included: “Hello Young Lovers, Getting to Know You, Shrimp Boats, Come on-a My 7House, Cry and Kisses Sweeter Than Wine.”

The New York Yankees beat the New York Giants in the World Series after the Brooklyn Dodgers blew a thirteen game late August lead and Bob Feller threw his third no-hitter. The L. A. Rams turned the tables on the Cleveland Browns and took the NFL championship by a score of 24-17. The Rochester Royals beat the New York Knicks in seven games to win the NBA championship.