

IX. Europe a Third Time

1952: The official log for the first day of 1952 was written by LTJG E. C. Wilson, USNR and reads as follows:

00-04

*Moored in a nest of DesLants best
In Norfolk we will spend the first
Staying aboard dying of thirst.
Alongside Grand Canyon AD twenty-eight
Tender to fighting four, boy does she rate.
With standard destroyer lines in use
None too tight, none to loose.
Orders of ships from the tenders side
We find the Gearing and Greene outside
In between Gyatt and Dyess get the call
Oh I almost forgot the "Wilson that's all"
Receiving power and steam from the tender near
While our shipmates are out soping up beer.
We also get water from the pier
My what I would do for a little drink near.
SOPA is ComAirLant
Tried to find a rhyme but can't.
Ships present are units of the U. S. Fleet
There are various yardboats stowed away neat
Also district craft are tied to the pier
All join in piping in a Happy New Year.*

Signed/ Edward C. Wilson LTJG. USNR

It was the first weekend of the New Year, stores and ammunition were taken aboard and stowed in preparation for another European deployment when Ted Carey, who was slated to be our next Gunnery Officer, came to the fire control room and advised that the main battery guns had to be aligned. At this time, the Fire Control group had only one petty officer and he was on liberty – so the duty fell to the strikers. None of the strikers had been to the Fire Control technical school, but with the appropriate manuals, the appropriate equipment and a full moon on a clear night they endeavored to "shoot the moon." The main battery on the Gyatt, until the missiles came along, was the five-inch gun. "Shooting the Moon" required the aligning of the gun barrels and the gun sights on a distant target – in this case the moon. The moon was to be set in the upper right hand of the bore scope with the left edge of the moon aligned on the vertical crosshair and the base of the moon on the horizontal crosshair. Alignment in this fashion virtually eliminates deviation from sight to target or parallax as it is referred too. The group of novices took two full nights to perform this task, which we were to understand had to be done before we left for Europe.

The Gyatt left two days after the guns were aligned and after the standard ten-day Atlantic crossing tied-up in Oran, Algeria. While in Oran and tied to the seawall a severe storm set upon the area and all hands manned the lines securing the ship to the wall. For more than a day the crew manned the mooring lines, slacking off the lines when the huge waves broke over the seawall and hauling in the lines as the water receded. The carrier, USS Wright (CVL-49), which was moored astern, encountered major difficulties when a number of her lines parted including the steel cables she had out ahead and astern that secured her position next to the seawall. This was one of the very few times that one could recall liquor being given as part of a ration - for it was on a cold January day that this was occurring and every one was very, very wet. This was also a day for outstanding deeds; for one, C. W. Carter SN, without hesitation, jumped into the icy water to retrieve a shipmate, who had been washed off the seawall. The seaman along with three or four others were attempting to replace mooring lines that were badly strained and to the point of parting. At the end of the pier a group of sailors from the engine room were returning from liberty and found the ship's jeep stalled out; they got it started and all ten white hats rode it back to the ship. The leader, one Scotty McCulley, was called before the XO, where he anticipated a reprimand but was actually praised for his initiative in getting the jeep back to the ship. I understand that the jeep was to be used by the Shore Patrol. I don't ever recall seeing the Shore Patrol using the jeep. In retrospect, it was an exciting day in Oran and produced some exciting memories.

After Oran the ship headed to Catania, Sicily and continued the month of February visiting the ports of Augusta and Palermo, also in Sicily. It was in one of the Sicilian ports that two quartermaster strikers decided that they enjoyed wine and thought that they could make some of their own. The two strikers got together with a cook striker and implemented a plan. The cook striker said he would get the appropriate ingredients – and he did. The QM strikers said they would find a location – and they did. The location was a magazine directly below the QM strikers sleeping quarters, which was the compartment directly below the crew's mess hall. The three strikers setup their equipment and proceeded with the necessary steps to get fermentation in place; everything seemed to be going well – until the third day. On the third day one of the QM strikers heard a muffled "thunk" while laying in his bunk – it sounded like it came from the magazine, where the wine was being made. The striker got out his bunk peered around the compartment and finding no one around headed to the magazine. When he opened the hatch, that gave him access to the magazine, his nostrils were hit by the aroma of partially fermented wine and the juice of the grapes and cherries used in the wine making were all over the magazine. The striker got his compatriots and an unscheduled cleaning party was put into their duty schedule as they worked to clean the mess and remove the odor from the area. My question is the daily entry in the Deck Log that reads: "Made daily inspection of magazines and smokeless powder samples. Conditions normal."

The second week of the month the ship journeyed to Piraeus, the Port of Athens and Leros, Greece and then went on to Izmir, Turkey and Istanbul, formerly Constantinople, Turkey. In Izmir the Gyatt produced a pretty fair basketball team; a team that won the squadron championship in 1952 and did well against university teams they had the opportunity to play when in port. Stalwarts of the basketball team were Fox, Geiger and Keister and the coach was initially LTJG Boden and later one of the crew took over the coaching responsibility. The

photograph to the left shows Geiger (14) and Keister (16) battling for a rebound against a Turkish University basketball team. The Gyatt bench is in the background.

After a brief stay in Piraeus the Gyatt's second stop in March was the Isle of Rhodes, an ancient city with interesting architecture and a beautiful beach. The ship departed Rhodes early - it was anchored here, as it was at many of the ports in Europe and when the area was hit by a severe storm the fear of dragging anchor and running aground prompted the early departure. The night before departure a ship of the British Navy hosted a dinner for the officers of the Gyatt. The British ship like the Gyatt was also anchored out and consequently, anyone returning to the Gyatt had to ride the motor whaleboat. The sea was very choppy; probably a precursor to the next day's storm, and everyone tried to get beneath the canopy in the forward section of the whaleboat. It was about nine in the evening and the whaleboat had made a stop at the jetty in Rhodes and picked up a few enlisted men and then went to the British ship and picked up a contingent of junior officers. The whaleboat had a fair distance to travel to get to the Gyatt and spray was coming over the canopy and those alongside the engine and in the rear of the whaleboat were getting wet. One of the junior officers, asked of those under the canopy, the date of their commissions and finding that he was senior to some requested that they take his place in the stern. The comment that was heard from under the canopy was; "forget it, seniority amongst Ensigns is like virginity amongst whores." No one spoke or moved after the comment and except for the sound of the engine and the sound of the boat moving through the choppy water the return to the Gyatt was made in silence. Because we left Rhodes early the following morning no one had a chance to recuperate from liberty and get their stomachs settled prior to heading to sea; consequently the extremely severe weather had many a hand seasick.

The remainder of the month found the ship returning to Pireaus and then visiting the Greek ports of Volos, Lemnos and Thessalonika (also called Salonika). Lemnos and Leros another small island that we had frequented served as bases for the Nazi U-boats during World War II. Thessalonika with its white buildings sitting in the dolomite hills around the port is the winter vacation spot for many Europeans and the Gyatt crew was getting a free visit.

March found the 712 in Irakalion, Crete. Men who had sent there dress blue uniforms ashore to be cleaned were appalled when on liberty they observed; while walking to town and looking over the bridge they were crossing, that their uniforms were being washed by women beating them with stones over rocks in the stream bed and then rinsing them in the stream. It may seem strange now; but in the 50s many people still took their baths in a tub in the kitchen of their homes with the water being supplied by what was referred to as a "double boiler" which sat atop a coal fired stove. So cleaning clothes with rocks may not have been out of line - especially for the small town and country boys.

This was a cruise with inspections every Saturday, whether in port or underway. The inspections underway of the crew, quarters and operating areas ceased as a result of a warm Saturday in the Mediterranean. The topside inspection went fairly well and the Ensign responsible for the Second Division brought a little levity to the action when he commanded the group to prepare for haircut inspection. The Captain and his entourage approached the division and the Ensign gave the word for the men to remove their hats with commands that were totally different from the standards, which were "uncover - too" to remove the hat and "cover" to

replace it. The word given by the Ensign to remove their hats was “take off - hats” and to replace their hats was “put on – hats” – needless to say the preciseness of removing and replacing the hats left a lot to be desired. It was the below deck inspection of the after engine room that brought everything to a head. The Captain and his group came out of the after engine room with their uniforms soaked in sweat. The boiler rooms and engine rooms when underway have very high temperatures – generally in the ninety degree range and that is if the blowers are all working. It seems that on this particular Saturday the blowers in the aft end of the ship were not functioning and the temperature within the after boiler room and after engine room exceeded 100 degrees. We do not know that these high temperatures were the cause of discontinuing the underway inspections – but there were none afterward. It was during this same period of inspections that the fire control officer put the inspection of the fire control gang’s coffeepot under inspection. During the first inspection the coffeepot was hot with a freshly made pot at the ready and the inspecting officer directed that the coffee be dumped so that the pot could be inspected. The coffee was dumped and the pot was inspected. The pot failed and the fire control gang was directed to have it spotless for the next inspection. The pot, like all good coffeepots in the Navy, had been rinsed and never washed and this pot was more two years old – anyway the pot was washed – but not scoured and the inspecting officer was not pleased with the results. The inspecting officer directed it be cleaned properly and it be as shiny inside as it was outside or liberty would be lost until it was acceptable. The fire control strikers used Brillo pads, cleanser and a number of other detergents that not only removed the buildup within the pot but also removed the taste of good coffee. Needless to say the pot passed inspection but the coffee tasted awful. Well – from that day forward the fire control gang had two coffee pots – one for drinking and one for inspection.

April and the ship was back in Crete for a couple of days and then on to Trieste, where the crew had liberty on the pier. This was considered part of Marshall Tito’s Yugoslavia and it was a Communist government.

Easter week found the ship anchored in Venice, the city of canals and Saint Mark’s Square and Cathedral. Many of the crew attended Easter services at Saint Mark’s Cathedral and some had the opportunity to ride the ship’s motor whaleboat through the many canals, that served as roadways in Venice, while others rode through the canals in rented gondolas. The days leading to Easter were gray and rainy – but Easter brought sunshine and the square was a sight to behold. Then as now large ships were a concern as the turning of their propellers accelerated the erosion of the foundations upon which the many buildings were built.

As the month closed the ship arrived on the southern coast of France and visited the French Riviera and the ports of Cannes, Nice and Golfe Juan. It was along the Riviera that a young George Klotz had Shore Patrol, it was late April, cold and raining, with most of the crews anticipating their journey home and electing to stay aboard. But a night ashore is a night ashore and a number of men went on liberty. The count of shore patrol party to liberty party was very, very low - three enlisted men to one shore patrol. As the night moved along Klotz and his partner took refuge in the busiest of the hangouts – observing the men drinking and fraternizing – generally having a good time. Klotz and his partner had been within the confines of the hangout for a period of roughly twenty minutes when they noticed this tall, statuesque female entertainer mingling with the crowd as she sang and danced. She moved very

provocatively along the dance floor – dancing – singing – eyes searching as she extended her hands to one of the Chief Petty Officers and brought him on to the dance floor to join her. The chief – an old salt - at least through the eyes of a twenty-year-old, was all smiles as he joined the entertainer, who was gliding, across the floor. The chief moved gracefully along the dance floor with his attractive companion and his expression was – well it was hard to describe – maybe like he had it made as he moved excitedly with the music. As the music came to an end the entertainer moved away from the chief and with one hand tore her blouse and brassiere from her body and removed the wig from her head with her other hand – revealing a man. After a moment of stunned silence the room erupted into laughter – except for the chief – who wasn't sure he should murder the guy or run and hide. But it wasn't the only time that something like this happened as our next tale illustrates.

It was at this same port that and maybe at the same time that Joseph Landry and about seven white hats from E-Division boarded the whaleboat and headed for the beach. The weather was somewhat pleasant this particular day and the men in their dress blues were walking along the beach enjoying the warm sun on a rather cool windy day - when from the opposite direction came two tall attractive women walking arm in arm. One of this group of white hats, a good looking blond electrician who fancied himself a ladies man, stepped up to the two women and asked if they would join the group for a drink. The women accepted and everyone headed for the nearest bar. When they arrived at the bar the blond haired electrician took one of the ladies and headed for a darkened booth in the far corner of the establishment. The other women and the rest of the guys went to the bar. They no sooner got to the bar and Landry heard one of the group say “watch this” as a loud “you dirty rotten S-- of a B----” erupted from the direction of the booth. Within moments three of the group erupted into a hearty laughter and because they were laughing so hard they started falling off the barstools. Seeing this Landry and the rest of the men joined in the laughter. Landry laughing at the three men who fell off the barstools - asked one of them what he had found so funny - as he helped him to his feet. The shipmate said that “Lover Boy,” as the blond haired electrician was referred to, had just grabbed a handful of someone's “family jewels” as a certain part of the male anatomy is sometimes referred to. It appears the “Lover Boy” did not talk to his shipmates until they were on their way home, crossing the Atlantic.

Although the south of France is supposed to be a place of relaxation it was not so for the Gyatt. For the second year in a row, while anchored in virtually the same area, the Gyatt caught in a squall, drug anchor and got fouled in the starboard anchor chain of USS Hardy DE-20 and damaged the portside screw (propeller). The damage to the screw was not as severe as in the previous year but was severe enough that it could not be used effectively. The previous year the Gyatt met the Gearing on its portside aft (the Second Division compartment). This year the Gyatt and the Hardy met on the starboard side aft, almost directly across from where the Gearing and the Gyatt had met. As a result of this second get together, the Gyatt traveled at reduced speed and the helmsman had to compensate for course. It is hard to believe that the same ship could be involved in two different collisions two years in a row in the same general area.

It was during this period, the 26th day of April while at Cannes in the south of France, that the Gyatt received word that the carrier USS Midway collided with the destroyer USS Hobson and

that the destroyer and all of her hands were lost. The crew was dismayed when they heard the news; first, because of the loss of the ship and her hands and secondly, because they were under the impression that the Hobson was to relieve the Gyatt. The damage to the propeller had negated the second reason – but the crew was not aware of the decision. The Gyatt left Cannes on the 28th day of April with a stop in Gibraltar prior to crossing the Atlantic. The ship arrived in Norfolk on the 19th day of May 1952.

The Gyatt remained in Norfolk until it departed for the Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth in late July. Prior to moving to the shipyard the Gyatt and the Gearing participated in a “sneak-attack” exercise. Both ships were anchored in Lynnhaven Roads in about six fathoms of water and about three and one-half miles from shore. The normal peacetime security watches were used but those on watch were instructed in the proper action to be taken in the event of an attack. The visibility at sunset on the 2nd day of July was good, but choppy seas made early detection of swimmers extremely difficult. Gearing class destroyers did not have searchlights and the signal lights were totally inadequate for the task of locating swimmers even under the most favorable conditions. The UDT (Underwater Demolition Teams) personnel, the forerunner of the SEALs, had little problem in completing a successful “sneak-attack” and the Commandant for the Atlantic Fleet considered the attacks successful. These attacks were also successful in WWII and most recently in Guantanamo Bay and other ports that still remain classified. Because these attacks were so successful; preventative training measures were added to future destroyer refresher training exercises.

Since it was summer and the ship was not underway it was hot in navy yard in Portsmouth. “Doc” Edwards, HM2 and the lead medical man aboard ship slept in the after quarters, specifically the E-Division quarters. Each night when the lights went out and “Doc” lay in his rack the sweat rolled off as he lay there sweating and scratching and each morning, when the lights were turned on he wiped his face and looked at his body covered with little welts. After the third or fourth night “Doc” went to bed with a flashlight and when the scratching began he turned on his flashlight and found little critters upon his person. Being the good corpsman that he was he snatched a few and headed to sickbay and found that the critters were the everyday variety – bedbug. When reveille sounded and the lights came on “Doc” thoroughly checked the compartment and found it to be infested with the critters. “Doc” went to the Captain and obtained permission to bomb the compartment with the premier bug killer of the day “DDT.” The compartment was sealed and four bombs set off and four hours later the FNs were on the cleanup committee. Fortunately – it was the only place on the ship that the little critters were in residence.

The Gyatt remained in the shipyard until October and then repeated shakedown and training exercises in the Caribbean while operating out of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

It was in dry dock that a BuShips representative visited the Gyatt for possible modifications to Gearing class destroyers so that they would be more habitable. The modifications were to be made using standard Navy furnishings and equipment. Mr. Taylor, the XO, objected to the changes to be made and suggested changes that would be more beneficial. The BuShips representative listened, departed and returned a month later advising that the changes suggested were accepted but time was not available for making such changes. The XO initiated the

changes. The principal change, which benefited the crew, was the welding of the mess hall benches to the mess hall tables allowing the crew to eat at the table during rough weather without fear of ending on the deck. Another significant change was converting the after Chief's quarters to a First Class Chief's Lounge.

It was the 26th day of July and the Gyatt received a new Captain, the sixth since the ship was commissioned, Commander Alan B. Register, USN (26 July 1952 to 29 October 1953) replaced Commander Vincent P. Healey, USN. During WWII Commander Register served aboard the USS Hogan (DMS 6), a minesweeper, as its Executive Officer although having graduated from the Academy just two years earlier. The Hogan in the early months of the war served as a convoy escort in the Atlantic and in late 1942 participated in the invasion of North Africa where she captured a steamship that had fired upon her and attempted to ram her. Commander Register was transferred to the USS Conner (DD 582) in April 1943, again serving as Executive Officer. The Conner served in the Pacific Theater screening for carriers during early air strikes on Saipan, Tinian and Guam. In May 1944 Commander Register received yet another assignment as Executive Officer, this time aboard the newly launched USS John W. Weeks (DD 701). The Weeks was also assigned to the Pacific Theater and served with the carriers at Lingayen Gulf, Luzon, Leyte Gulf, the South China Sea, Iwo Jima, Okinawa and the Japanese homeland. The Weeks participated in the sinking of the Japanese battleship Yamato and during this operation when the carrier USS Hancock (CV 19) was hit by a Kamikaze heroically rescued 23 of the carrier's crew. In June 1945 not yet thirty years of age Commander Register became the Captain of the USS Beale (DD 471) taking part in the Third Fleet's air strikes against the Japanese home islands that were instrumental in bringing an end to WWII. Commander Register retired as a Captain in the Navy.

It was while on one of the many training exercises and during General Quarters, on the shakedown and training operation, a fire control striker while at his station had a severe appendicitis attack. After the striker was checked by the hospital corpsman and his condition relayed to the bridge the captain ordered the ship back to the Guantanamo Bay at full speed. A speedboat at the entrance to Guantanamo Bay met the ship and the sailor was lowered into the speedboat and taken to the base hospital, where he was immediately and successfully operated on. Liberty was minimal this trip and the only port recalled was Santiago, Cuba; where the ship spent two days. The ship returned to Norfolk in mid December after a firing exercise at Culebra.

On return from post overhaul training in Guantanamo the 712 was berthed alongside the prototype destroyer for a before after tour by a group of shipyard designers. It was a Friday afternoon and the ship was cleaned up with guides in each compartment where changes had been made. The prototype destroyer was not ship shape and had men preparing for liberty as the inspection party toured. On Saturday the designers were asked to evaluate the \$100,000 conversion of the prototype (1952 dollars) and to a man they preferred the Gyatt. This was another example of a ship's company at its best. As you read on it seems that it was a tradition with Gyatt crews.

On return from post overhaul training in Guantanamo the 712 was berthed alongside the prototype destroyer for a before after tour by a group of shipyard designers. It was a Friday

afternoon and the ship was cleaned up with guides in each compartment where changes had been made. The prototype destroyer was not ship shape and had men preparing for liberty as the inspection party toured. On Saturday the designers were asked to evaluate the \$100,000 conversion of the prototype (1952 dollars) and to a man they preferred the Gyatt. This was another example of a ship's company at its best. As you read on it seems that it was a tradition with Gyatt crews.

Many of the older members of the Gyatt crew were married and when the ship was to be in port for more than a month they would rent an apartment in or around Norfolk so they could be with their families. It was shortly before Christmas and one of the Chief Petty Officers was quite happy as he visited with members of his gang in the after engine room and laid out the day's duties. Joe Landry, one of the older Gyatt hands, asked the Chief why he was so happy – and the Chief replied: “When I got home last night my wife was not very happy with me and I didn't know why. Anyway, when we went to bed she didn't even want to cuddle. Well – as I always do when I'm ashore I open the window for a little fresh air. After I was back in bed and after a few minutes my wife mumbled that it was cold and that I should close the window – so I got out of bed and raised it a little. Well the room really cooled down and again she mumbled to me to turn up the heat and so when I got out of bed I tightened the valve on the radiator and reduced the flow of hot water through the radiator - cooling the room even further. When I woke up this morning we were spooned together as tightly cuddled as we could get and I can't wait to get home tonight.” Landry said that the Chief really enjoyed the next few months while the ship prepared itself with some short cruises in preparation for its next six-month deployment to Northern Europe and the Mediterranean.

In 1952 Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected 34th President of the United States. The first atomic submarine, Nautilus, was dedicated on the 14th day of June. In July General Motors offered air conditioning in automobiles for the first time. Also for the first time a mechanical heart was used in humans.

“The Greatest Show on Earth” was the Academy Award winning movie and “High Noon” was the western of the year. Other worthwhile movies were: “Ivanhoe, Moulin Rouge, Come Back Little Sheba, The Quiet Man and Othello.”

The songs that topped the lists in 1952 were: “Lady of Spain” by Eddie Fisher; “You Belong to Me” by Jo Stafford; “Kiss of Fire” by Georgia Gibbs; “Here Is My Heart” by Al Martino and “Wheel of Fortune” by Kay Starr – all good ones. There were some others like “Your Cheatin' Heart and Jambalaya” that made the 1952 list. I almost forgot a Christmas favorite that is still around, “I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus,” made its debut in 1952.

The Yankees beat the Dodgers in seven games. The Detroit Lions beat the Cleveland Browns by a score of 17 to seven to win the NFL championship. The Minneapolis Lakers beat the New York Knicks in six games to win the NBA championship. The Olympics were held in Helsinki, Finland with the United States gathering 43 gold medals, Russia was second with twenty-two. The big money winner in golf, with \$37,032, was Julius Boros.