

## **XXV. 1968 - Scientists and Reservists**

*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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 28<sup>th</sup> 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.*

*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.*

*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.*