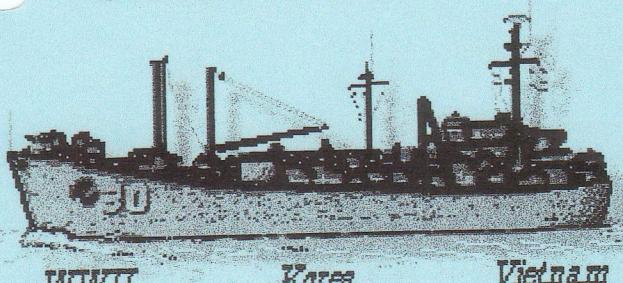


# U.S.S. Askari Association

October 2004 Issue



U.S.S. Askari Web Site  
<http://arl30.vze.com>

## Association Officers

President: Edward J. Toth (419-693-9567)  
Vice President: Lee Daley (407-275-0314) lecowboy@aol.com  
Secretary: Merrill F. Davis (812-331-1641) mfdavis33@insightbb.com  
Treasurer: Albert E. Wolfe (815-223-1823)  
Webmaster: Tom Willoughby (734)429-5470 wllghbytom@comcast.net



## A Message from President Ed Toth

Hi Shipmates,

I hope that those of you living in the southeastern part of the country made it through the hurricanes unscathed and that our other members survived tornadoes, floods, fires, and whatever else Mother Nature had in store this year. Our home suffered damage in a fire recently, but thankfully no one was injured. We only had smoke damage, but the damage was so great, they had to tear out walls to make the repairs. Renovation is underway and eventually we will be able to return to our home.

I am looking forward to our upcoming reunion and hope that many members can join me there. The reunion will be held in conjunction with the MRFA reunion as has been done in the past. We will again meet at the Drawbridge Inn in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky. Our 2005 reunion dates include the Labor Day weekend, so this is a great opportunity to combine a vacation with a chance to catch up on old and new times with Navy buddies. We'd love to see you for even a day or two if you are unable to stay for the full reunion. We will again have a hospitality room and will give you details about its location in a later newsletter.

This is the last newsletter before the holidays, so Virgene and I want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a joyous holiday season and health and happiness in the New Year.

## 2005 Askari Reunion

### Dates

August 31 (Weds.) thru September 4 (Sun.), 2005

### Place

Drawbridge Inn  
I-75 at Buttermilk Pike  
Fort Mitchell, Kentucky 41017  
1-800-354-9793 or 1-606-341-2800

### Room Rates and Check in/Check out Times

\$77 for main building ; \$67 for Garrison building  
Check in - 3:00 p.m ; Check out - 12:00 p.m. (noon)

### Handicapped Facilities

The Drawbridge Inn is handicap accessible. If you have special needs, call 800-354-9795.

### Parking

Parking is available at no extra charge. Call 800-354-9793 for RV hook-up pricing.

### Room Reservations

Make a reservation by calling 800-354-9793 and asking for Jennifer Hesse, Teresa Gorman Seifert, or Ann Wilson in the Sales Department or by email ([www.drawbridgeinn.com/reservations/htm](http://www.drawbridgeinn.com/reservations/htm)). When making reservations, be sure to mention the MRFA and give the reunion dates.

### Registration Form and Fee

The MRFA reunion registration form and fee information are attached.

## **Remembrances**

Many years have passed since our members served on the U.S.S. Askari ARL-30, and we find that memories of the same incident sometimes vary. In our last issue, Max Hoover remembered an incident where a boat ran aground in Vietnam. His remembrance has sparked Dennis Miller and B.J. Freeman to comment on the same incident from their perspectives. Here are their remembrances.

### **Dennis Miller remembers...**

I was reading the May 2004 Askari newsletter. In the remembrances section, Max Hoover told about an incident with a Swift boat. This appears to be a time when two minds or remembrances get together.

It has been over 30 years and memories do get a little distorted, but I do remember the incident. The way I remember, it was on the Vam Co. During the night, at high tide, the Swift boat encountered a Sampan. To avoid the Swift, the Sampan cut across the paddy dike that was under water due to an unusually high tide. The Swift pursued and ran aground about 100 feet into the paddy. Screws and rudder stayed behind. There was talk about a crewman being on the bow when it went aground, who ended up a good distance inland from where the boat stopped.

Later that night and the next morning, an ATC tried to pull it off without success. There may have been a second ATC trying also at some time. Max is correct about how it was eventually removed from the rice paddy. It was floated off. I don't remember the ATC's number but we referred to it as the "Douche Boat." It had a 12V-71 (not a 16) in the well deck that ran a pump supplying two large water monitors mounted in the aft corners of the well deck that stood at least 4 feet above the main deck. The boat had a large pump suction that would pivot down off the stern. Its primary purpose was the removal of bunkers in the river and canal banks. The Askari did replace the pump engine sometime either just before or after this incident.

I can understand how the Swift didn't know where the paddy dike was in the dark. I'd bet money the only action against the Swift's crew was by their peers.

### **B. J. Freeman remembers...**

After reading Max Hoover's remembrance, B.J. wrote: This was a PCF Boat on the Mekong and it had been operating up and down the deeper parts of the Mekong when a small Vietnamese goonie boat took to the rice paddies where the water was hardly a foot deep and the Swift boat took off after it only it ran aground in about a second. When the Swift boat went aground, it was 1968 and the Douche Boat just happened to be handy. It was not a fire fighting system that washed the PC out and off the rice paddy bar on the edge of the Mighty Mekong ... No, it was the Douche Boat or Water Boat that did the job.

The Douche Boat could wash away a Viet Cong bunker whereas a 155 Howitzer could not! The program II Monitors had 155 Howitzers in them and where the only Program I Monitors only had a single barrel 40mm that was pretty effective, but not as much so as the 155.

So when the Program Monitors fired into a Viet Cong bunker, it was not at all effective so the Water Boat was sent in and it literally "washed" the bunker completely away! Very effective!!

Afterwards the PCF was towed to the U.S.S. Askari ARL-30 and washed off from the mud and mire that was all over her, and the propellers were replaced and the boat made shipshape and sent on her way! Just another ability of the Water Boat!

### **We need your remembrances!!**

Please send us your remembrances, so we can print them in the newsletter and share them with others. Take a few minutes to think back over the time you served on the Askari ARL-30. Did something funny happen? Something unusual? Something interesting?

Please send your remembrances to Secretary Merrill Davis by mail (3405 Ashwood Dr., Bloomington, IN 47401), by phone (812-331-1641), or by email ([mfdavis33@insightbb.com](mailto:mfdavis33@insightbb.com)). Please let us share your memories with the Askari membership.

## A Tale of Six Boys

When a group of over 100 eighth graders on a trip to Washington, D.C. got off the bus at the Iwo Jima Memorial, their chaperone noticed a solitary figure standing at the base of the statue. The man turned out to be James Bradley, son of one of the men who raised the American flag on the island of Iwo Jima during World War II. The chaperone video-taped Mr. Bradley as he told this story to the group.

"My name is James Bradley and I'm from Antigo, Wisconsin. My dad is on that statue, and I just wrote a book called *Flags of Our Fathers* which is the story of the six boys you see behind me."

Six boys raised the flag. The first guy putting the pole in the ground is Harlon Block. Harlon was an all-state football player. He enlisted in the Marine Corps with all the senior members of his football team. They were off to play another type of game -- a game called "War." But it didn't turn out to be a game.

Harlon, at the age of 21, died with his intestines in his hands. I don't say that to gross you out, I say that because there are generals who stand in front of this statue and talk about the glory of war. You guys need to know that most of the boys in Iwo Jima were 17, 18, and 19 years old.

(He pointed to the statue) "You see this next guy? That's Rene Gagnon from New Hampshire. If you took Rene's helmet off at the moment this photo was taken and looked in the webbing of that helmet, you would find a photograph ... a photograph of his girlfriend. Rene put that in there for protection because he was scared. He was 18 years old. Boys won the battle of Iwo Jima. Boys -- not old men."

The next guy here, the third guy in this tableau, was Sgt. Mike Strank. Mike is my hero. He was the hero of all these guys. They called him the "old man" because he was so old. He was already 24. When Mike would motivate his boys in training camp, he didn't say, "Let's go kill some Japanese" or "Let's die for our country." He knew he was talking to little boys. Instead he would say, "You do what I say, and I'll get you home to your mothers."

The last guy on this side of the statue is Ira Hayes, a Pima Indian from Arizona. Ira Hayes walked off

Iwo Jima. He went into the White House with my dad. President Truman told him, "You're a hero." He told reporters, "How can I feel like a hero when 250 of my buddies hit the island with me and only 27 of us walked off alive?" That was Ira Hayes. He had images of horror in his mind. Ira Hayes died dead drunk, face down at the age of 32 ... ten years after this picture was taken.

The next guy, going around the statue, is Franklin Sousley from Hilltop, Kentucky. A fun-lovin' hillbilly boy. Franklin died on Iwo Jima at the age of 19. When the telegram came to tell his mother that he was dead, it went to the Hilltop General Store. A barefoot boy ran that telegram up to his mother's farm. The neighbors could hear her scream all night and into the morning. The neighbors lived a quarter of a mile away.

The next guy, is my dad, John Bradley from Antigo, Wisconsin, where I was raised. My dad lived until 1994, but he would never give interviews. When Walter Cronkite's producers or the *New York Times* would call, we were trained as little kids to say, "No, I'm sorry, sir, my dad's not here. He is in Canada fishing. No, there is no phone there, sir. No, we don't know when he is coming back." My dad never fished or even went to Canada. Usually, he was sitting there right at the table. But we had to tell the press that he was out fishing. He didn't want to talk to the press.

You see, my dad didn't see himself as a hero. Everyone thinks these guys are heroes, because they are in a photo and a monument. My dad knew better. He was a medic. John Bradley was a caregiver. In Iwo Jima he probably held over 200 boys as they died. And when boys died in Iwo Jima, they writhed and screamed in pain.

When I was a little boy, my third grade teacher told me that my dad was a hero. When I went home and told my dad that, he looked at me and said, "I want you always to remember that the heroes of Iwo Jima are the guys who did not come back. Did NOT come back."

So that's the story about six nice young boys. Three died on Iwo Jima, and three came back as national heroes. Overall, 7,000 boys died on Iwo Jima in the worst battle in the history of the Marine Corps. My voice is giving out, so I will end here. Thank you for your time

Suddenly, the monument wasn't just a big old piece of metal with a flag sticking out of the top. It came to life before our eyes with the heartfelt words of a son who did indeed have a father who was a hero. Maybe not a hero for the reasons most people would believe, but a hero nonetheless.

We need to remember that God created this vast and glorious world for us to live in, freely, but also at great sacrifice. Let us never forget from the Revolutionary War to the Gulf War and all the wars in-between that sacrifice was made for our freedom.

Remember to pray praises for this great country of ours and also pray for those still in murderous unrest around the world. STOP and thank God for being alive and being free at someone else's sacrifice. God Bless.

### ***Get the medals you have coming***

Treasurer Al Wolfe has done some research about service medals and sent us the information below:

Many of you guys who were aboard the Askari received your ribbons while aboard the ship, but how many of you got your medals? All of us have these medals coming from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. You all deserve them. You can get them by writing to the Department of Navy to ask for the medals and sending a copy of your discharge papers Form DD214 with the letter. Send the letter to :

Department of the Navy  
Navy Personnel Command  
Retired Records Section (PERS 313E)  
9700 Page Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

It takes 5 to 6 weeks to get the medals.

The men who were aboard the Askari in the Korean War have another medal coming. It's the Republic of Korea War Service Medal (ROKWSM). This medal was offered by the government of South Korea nearly half a century ago, but American law at that time prevented members of the U.S. armed forces from wearing medals issued by foreign governments. The law was changed in 1954, but South Korea did not renew its offer of the service medal until 1998. In conjunction with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War, the South Korean government announced it would

again make the medal available to U.S. veterans or to their surviving next of kin. To get this medal, you must send a copy of your DD214 with a letter requesting the Republic of Korea War Service Medal (ROKWSM) be sent to

First, MI, Last name  
Street address  
City, State, and Zip Code

You must print the name and address information and sign and date the letter requesting the medal. Send the request for the Korean War Service Medal to

HQ AFPC / DPPPRA  
550 C Street West, Suite 12  
Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4714

For more information, call or write Al Wolfe (148 5<sup>th</sup> Street, LaSalle, IL 61301-2006).

### ***Time to pay 2004-2005 dues***

It's time for us to collect dues for the July 2004-June 2005 membership year. Please complete the form below and mail it to Al Wolfe with your \$15.00 dues payment.

#### **July 2004-June 2005 Dues Payment**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Dues: \$15.00

Send to: Al Wolfe  
148 5th St.  
LaSalle, IL 61301



**Be sure to vote  
on November 2!!**

# 2005 Reunion Registration Form

*Drawbridge Estates Inn in Ft. Mitchell, KY September 1-4, 2005*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit: U.S.S. Askari ARL-30

Name(s) wife & family/guest(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (      ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Be sure to enclose your check or money order with this form. Send to address below.

**Registration fee** (Member only, cost includes spouse or girlfriend)    x 35.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Family Members, Children, Friends                          Total \_\_\_\_\_ x 10.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Registration fee** (Non-Members)\*                                  Total \_\_\_\_\_ x 50.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Saturday Afternoon Buffet (All)**                                  Total \_\_\_\_\_ x 12.00 each = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Grand Total Enclosed**    \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\*Nonmember is defined as a person who is eligible to be a member of the MRFA by having served in the MRF: TF-117, TF-116, TF-115, the 9<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division or any Army/Navy supporting unit who has not joined the MRFA. The registration fee covers the member and/or guest girlfriend, etc. All other fees apply to friends and/or children. Please send your check or money order (payable to MRFA) and the top portion of this form before August 24, 2005 to: MRFA Reunion • 106 Belleview Dr. • Conover, NC 28613. There will be a \$20.00 charge for all returned checks. Cancellations prior to the reunion will be charged a \$10.00 processing fee.

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If you have any questions about reservations or need more information about the reunion, please contact

Registration Chairman Chet (Gunner) Stanley  
864-306-8400  
email: gunnerstan@aol.com