

# U.S.S. Askari Association

U.S.S. Askari Web Site  
<http://ar130.vze.com>

July 2006 Issue



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## Message from President Max Hoover

Hi to you all. Maybe I should have said Ahoy Mates but, after so many years, that seems like a line from a movie like *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

The 2006 Askari in Branson Gathering is coming up fast. I hope you have sent or are ready to send your registration. I know September 6<sup>th</sup> seems like we have a lot of time left but we are inside the 60 day window now. I talked to Gatherings Plus today and they wanted me to tell you to not let the deadline keep you from sending in your registration.

I'm really looking forward to this get-together. Marcia and I have already stayed at the Grand Plaza Hotel to check it out and it's great. Also the shows are great, the food will be great, and I know the shopping will be great. But the greatest part will be getting together with our Askari ship mates.

I did a little research to compare the Branson Belle to the Askari and here is what I found. The Belle is 278 ft long, 78 ft wide, 2,300 tons, 7.5 ft draft, and a top speed of 11 mph. The Askari was 328 ft long, 50 ft wide, 3,960 tons, 11 ft draft, and a top speed of 11.6 knots.

Come along and take a ride with us. It's a great feeling when they cast off the lines and get under way. It brought back a lot of forgotten feelings when I rode it the first time.

I hope this sounds like a sales pitch because it is. We want to see each and every one of you at the Askari get together.

To close this letter I want you to remember your time aboard the Askari and the men you served with. There probably will never be any more ARL sailors so pass on some memories.

God bless America and God bless all who sailed on the Askari. See you in Branson!

## Reunion in Branson



Pam Brown from Gatherings Plus sent each member a schedule of events along with a registration form. We are attaching a copy of the registration form in case you lost yours.

The reunion is September 6-10, and you can register for the full reunion or part of it. There is a lot of free time built into the schedule to allow Askari members to socialize and/or schedule shows they would like to see.

If you arrive on Wednesday (September 6) and participate in all of the activities, the cost is \$239 per person plus \$87 per night for accommodations. If you cannot attend for the entire time or want to plan other things while in Branson, you can call Pam Brown at 417-338-4048 or email her at [pamb@interlinc.net](mailto:pamb@interlinc.net) for help.

In addition to visiting with Askari shipmates, planned activities include:



Weds: Check in at the Grand Plaza Hotel  
 1200 - Hospitality Room - light snacks  
 1730 - "Welcome Aboard" reception in the hospitality room

Thurs: Continental Breakfast

0900 - Branson & Lakes Area Guided tour & Lunch  
 Hospitality room open all day  
 Afternoon free  
 1800 - Dinner at Charlie's Steak Ribs & Ale  
 2000 - Lost in the Fifties Show

Fri: Continental Breakfast

Morning free  
 Hospitality room open all day  
 1600 - Memorial Service & showboat  
 Branson Belle dinner, cruise, & show on beautiful Table Rock Lake

Sat: Continental Breakfast

Morning free  
 Hospitality room open all day  
 Afternoon free  
 1830 - Group Photo  
 1900 - Final evening banquet at hotel

Sun: Continental Breakfast

Depart

Hotel pricing: \$87 per room per night (includes tax, continental breakfast and hospitality room).

Activity package: \$239 per person (includes: registration, meetings, welcome packet, welcome reception, Charlie's dinner, Lost in the 50s show, area tour and lunch, memorial service, Showboat Branson Belle dinner, show, and cruise, group photo, final banquet, transportation to group activities, all taxes and gratuities.)

## The Baker's Corner by Lee Daley



It looks like the reunion in Branson will be a good one. I regret that Joan and I will not be able to make this get together but, all of you who will be there, we hope you have a great time!

### Peach Upside Down Cake (6 servings)

1/3 cup butter, melted  
 1/2 cup packed brown sugar  
 2 cups sliced, peeled fresh peaches  
 1/3 cup shortening  
 1 cup sugar  
 1 egg  
 1/2 teaspoon lemon juice  
 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
 1 1/3 cups all purpose flour  
 2 teaspoons baking powder  
 1/2 teaspoon salt  
 2/3 cup milk  
 whipped cream, optional

Pour batter into an ungreased 9 inch square baking pan. Sprinkle with brown sugar. Arrange peach slices in a single layer over brown sugar. In a small mixing bowl cream shortening and sugar. Beat in eggs, lemon juice, and vanilla. Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt. Add to cream mixture. Alternate with milk. Spoon over peaches. Bake at 350 degrees for 45-50 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool for ten minutes before inverting onto a serving plate. Serve warm with whipped cream if desired.

## **Plan to attend 2007 reunion ...**

Our 2007 Askari reunion will be held jointly with the MRFA reunion at the Adam's Mark Hotel in Indianapolis, Indiana (August 30- September 2).



The information below was taken from the MRFA website ([www.mrfa.org/2007.Reunion.htm](http://www.mrfa.org/2007.Reunion.htm)).

A few [MRFA] officers and board members visited the *Adam's Mark Hotel* a few months back and thought it would be a great place for a *Gathering of Troops* in 2006 and a Reunion in 2007. There will be no registration fee, buffet, or dance this year. If you live in the area and don't want to use the *Adam's Mark Hotel* that's your call. All Members and guests are welcome no matter where they stay.

**Where:** Adam's Mark Hotel  
2544 Executive Dr.  
Indianapolis, IN 46241

**When:** Thursday August 30 until check-out on Sunday September 2.

**Registration:** Members can make reservations now. Room rates will be \$79 a night. To make your own reservations, call the hotel at (317) 248-2481. Be sure to mention you're making your reservations under the Mobile Riverine Force Association.

For more information on the hotel, you may call Angela Jordan, Convention Service Manager (317) 381-6107 or Email [ajordan@adamsmark.com](mailto:ajordan@adamsmark.com)  
Website: <http://www.adamsmark.com> (Click on the Indianapolis Adam's Mark Hotel)

**Hospitality Room:** USS Askari Association will

**Shuttle:** Adam's Mark offers a free airport shuttle service. Phone the hotel for the shuttle at the bank of phones in the baggage area. They also have a free downtown shuttle daily.

## **Schedule of Events**

**Registration:** Starts at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, August 30th to 9:30 am Friday August 31st.

**Golf:** First Bi-Annual MRFA Golf Tournament will be held on Friday Morning, August 31. [See next page for details on the golf tournament.]

**Dean Ayers "Pig Out":** Fri., August 31 @ 1700.

**Guest Speakers:** Will follow the "Pig Out".

--- Vice Admiral Emmett H. Tidd (USN Ret.) - In May 1969, then Captain Tidd, reported as Chief of Staff and Aide to then Vice Admiral Zumwalt who was Commander United States Naval Forces, Vietnam and Chief, Naval Advisory Group, Military Assistant Command, Vietnam

--- Lieutenant General George A. Crocker (USA, Ret.) LTG Crocker's military career includes two combat tours in Vietnam, first as a rifle platoon leader with 3d Platoon, "C" Company, 3rd Battalion, 47th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division, (Mobile Riverine Force/1967-68) and second tour, with the RVN 42d Ranger Battalion, Can Tho.

--- Emily Strange (Red Cross Volunteer) Dong Tam 1968-69 - Back by popular demand.

**Memorial Service:** Will be held at 9:00 a.m. on September 1.

**From the Delta to the DMZ Dance:** Complete with a D/J - September 1 - 2000 hours till ???

**Raffles:** Daily

**Additional Events:** Will be published in future issues of "River Currents".

**Indianapolis Convention Bureau:** For more info on the Indianapolis area, contact Paul Williams, Meeting and Sales Manager at the Indianapolis Convention and Visitor's Bureau by calling (800) 956-INDY or Email [pwilliams@indianapolis.org](mailto:pwilliams@indianapolis.org), or visit [www.indy.org](http://www.indy.org).

## 1<sup>st</sup> Bi-Annual MRFA Golf Tournament



Our own Orville "Lee" Daley has worked with David McCann to set up the first bi-annual MRFA Golf Tournament to be held during our joint reunion with MRFA. It will be an Army/Navy tournament to be held on August 31, 2007.

The information below about the golf tournament is from [www.mrfa.org/2007.ReunionGolf.htm](http://www.mrfa.org/2007.ReunionGolf.htm).

**What:** 18 holes of golf.

**When:** Friday morning, August 31, 2007

**Where:** Winding River Golf Course  
8400 South Mann Rd, (highway 31 South)  
(317) 856-7257

**Who:** All members and guests

The event should take about 5 hours and have everyone back at the Adams Mark Hotel in plenty of time for other reunion planned events. A shuttle service can be arranged, for a small fee, from the Adams Mark Hotel, to and from the course. The shuttle can hold up to 12 people at a time and the current price per shuttle is \$50.00 (divided 12 ways, that's a good deal.)

Foursome Teams will be randomly drawn at the hotel before the event, and you can sign up at registration. If at all possible, the teams will be made up of two players from each branch of the service. A point system will determine the winning branch of service, Army or Navy, at the end of play. Winners to be announced at the reunion.

The course is very reasonable in price to play. Currently, 18 holes of golf, without a cart, is just \$18.00. Food and drinks at the turn can be arranged, but that will depend on how many players sign up in advance and want the service. There is no registration fee and the tournament is open to all levels of players. Since it is a public course, and we will be somewhat limited in our time, it is advisable that players have some experience at playing, but all "Duffers" are welcome.

Contacts for the event are:

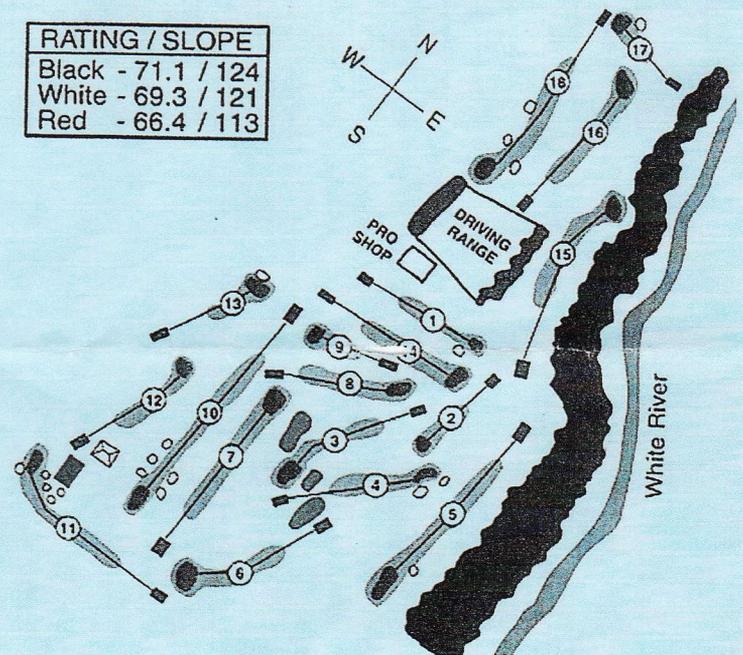
■ David G. McCann (M-6)- [bdalmcc@bresnan.net](mailto:bdalmcc@bresnan.net)  
(406) 442-8168

■ Orville L. Daley (USS Askari)-[lecowboy@aol.com](mailto:lecowboy@aol.com)  
(407)-275-0314

Please let one of them know if you want to play and if you would be interested in burgers and a beverage for lunch.

Tee Times will depend on how many members play. We hope for at least 50 players to show interest in the event so we can reserve time at the course. If less than 50 member's show interest, we will still golf at Winding River on Friday morning, August 31st. Currently, our Tee Times, will be between 0900 and 1000 hrs.

RATING / SLOPE	
Black	- 71.1 / 124
White	- 69.3 / 121
Red	- 66.4 / 113



### *We need your remembrances*

We all enjoy reading stories about the Askari. Our many thanks to Hans and Larry for their remembrances in this issue and to all other members who have previously shared their experiences. We welcome additional memories from any and all members. Whether you've previously shared or will be a first-timer, we need your story. You can either mail it to our secretary (Merrill Davis 3405 Ashwood Drive, Bloomington, IN 47401) or email it to him at [mfdavis33@insightbb.com](mailto:mfdavis33@insightbb.com). Please take a few minutes to search your memory bank and share with your shipmates.



Branson Reunion Attendees: Standing: Hans Fredericks, Ed Toth, Max Hoover, Norm Neuleib, Marvin Marks, and B. J. (Joe) Hayes. Sitting: Virgene Toth, Marcia Hoover, and Betty Hayes.

### *Hans Fredericks remembers ...*



The original crew and plank owners were assembled in Camp Bradford, Va. Where we lived as the Wild West, mud streets or paths, six man tents, when you were a salt you got to live in a Quonset hut. Big mess how things got done don't know but the crew finally was assembled and received the number "4854."

Most of us at the time were GREEN, I mean like the apple on the tree. Officers were not appointed at that time or they were someplace else. The crew at that time consisted of 78 enlisted men. Breaking us in was something else; some of us were sent to "Little Creek, Va" to bring LCVP's alongside this poor LST. Why it stayed afloat is something -- we banged that thing, rammed it, dented it until we come alongside without any major problems, and so it went.

One day we were assembled and shipped off to Navy Pier, Chicago for gunnery and tempered ships company and pulled port and starboard liberty, IN CHICAGO. I have to admit I had a NICE time in Chicago. Can't remember how long we were there, but long enough. Sorry but the dates do not come to mind (past 80 now). So good things must end and one morning they loaded us into Cattle Cars and off we went to Seneca, Ill. On the way we passed the fruited fields and low and behold, German POW'S working the fields burned tan and singing and I mean a huge group. They gave us a wave!! We arrived in Seneca a bit late, looked at the ship with 1131 on the bow, and said to the other guy, "What the hell is that?" Went aboard and was told to find a place to rack out, so we all went in different directions and sacked out. Next morning, mustered on deck and were introduced to our various division officers, also assigned to our quarters.

Underway down the Chicago River, our sponsor met us at every bridge and showers us with flowers.

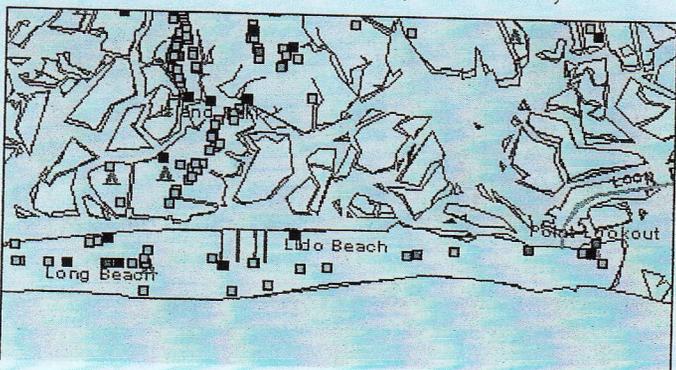
1131 at that time had no mast, no con, and no deck house except for the galley. We had two river boat pilots USCG, LTC. Rivers were flooding at this time and they would not operate at night, so we tied up at various points in the evening. By the way the pilots had two wooden shacks that looked like outhouses mounted atop the galley house.

Thought comes to mind, this was the OLD Navy had right and left arm rates, also Amphibs were entitled to wear our patch on our right sleeve...since has been rescinded by the Navy.

Well we are working our way down the Mississippi which is muddy and racing like mad. We had both LCVP's rigged out in the event someone went over the side -- really we would never have recovered them, much less trying to start them VP's. We proceeded down the river to St Louis, where the Green Crew is to take a 150' patrol cutter in tow. WOW. The cutter is moored with the bow upstream, tons upon tons of trees, logs, and what not jammed at the bow. Three attempts to get her broadside no luck -- gunners mate good; he got his line gun over to them but they did not shake their butts fast enough and secure the line which by the way went to the stern winch,. Ever see that cable smoke at the winch. We did get her out to mid stream then broadside for the tow to New Orleans. Remember the 1131 is not at this time a commissioned ship, we are all ferry crew.

At New Orleans, Algiers the base installed a mast temporary then supplies. Next an Admiral comes aboard and commissions the ship. We get underway out into the Gulf of Mexico, thru the Florida straights, up the coast into the St. Johns River, where we took off everything we had put on in New Orleans.

There were about 6 men who stayed with the ship, rest of the crew to Camp Bradford, then transferred to LIDO BEACH, Long Island, New York,

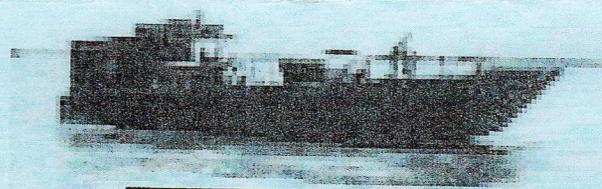


(guess where I lived at the time). The crew spent the time at Lido until the ship was complete, no longer the 1131 but the USS ASKARI.

There is more to this stuff not too much, she was a lucky ship, my congratulations to the crews who took her into harms way and brought her back, a great record to a great girl.

### ***Larry Ethridge remembers ...***

I think we need to make a correction to "Love Story" that appeared in the last newsletter about Askari's role in the Cambodian excursion of May 1970. I was the gun boss at that time, and to my best recollection, none of the ships in that flotilla actually went into Cambodia. A lot of the small river boats did, and I was in command of a Mike Boat that went to the 13.1 mile mark (the Neak Leong Ferry landing), which was supposedly the furthest we went up the Mekong.



Picture of a Mike Boat

We delivered C-rats to the Vietnamese Marines along the way, and they'd just take out the cigarettes and go back to fishing in the river! Several of the boats went all the way to Penom Penh although no one "officially" went that far.

We went ashore at the Ferry Landing and wandered around for a while. I was approached by a banty rooster Marine Corp general who berated me for not wearing cover while on shore (I'd taken off my helmet and flack jacket and left my cap on the Mike boat!). After he took my name, rank, serial number and ship's name, I calmly asked him the following question -- "Gee General, what are you going to do, send me to Vietnam?" One of my best lines of the war!

See y'all at the next reunion!

## Save the U.S.S. Sphinx



Two of our members, Brian Mahoney and Don Reeder, served on board the U.S.S. Sphinx ARL-24

in Vietnam. The Sphinx is the only surviving ARL in the United States.

A few years ago, a small group of U.S. Navy veterans formed a non-profit organization to create a museum and park to honor veterans of all wars and all branches of our military services. An Act of Congress in 2000 declared the Dunkirk Historical Lighthouse and grounds to be surplus federal property so it could be deeded into private ownership of this group of veterans now known as the "Dunkirk Historical Lighthouse and Veterans Park Museum Association." The Dunkirk Lighthouse has been transformed into a small Armed Forces Museum, but the Association wanted to go further and acquire a retired U.S. Navy ship to turn into a larger Armed Forces Museum.

On December 2, 2002, ownership of the U.S.S. Sphinx was transferred from the United States Navy to the Dunkirk Historical Lighthouse and Veterans Park Museum.

More than just an exhibit, the U.S.S. Sphinx will provide home and training facilities to U.S. Navy Sea Cadet Units, U.S. Army Junior ROTC Units, and U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Units. Members of these units will also serve as tour guides aboard the U.S.S. Sphinx and participate in her restoration activities. The U.S.S. Sphinx will be open to public tours, host reunions from all branches of our armed forces, and be available for public meetings and ceremonies. The goal of the Association is to provide the general public with an education on what life was like in an early American lighthouse and to live and serve aboard a U.S. Navy ship.

The U.S.S. Sphinx is currently at Little Creek Naval Base in Virginia. Efforts are underway to raise funds for engineering studies, towing, yard work, and permanent docking facilities on Lake Erie at Dunkirk, New York. Donations are needed to save our last ARL, the U.S.S. Sphinx.

All donations are tax deductible under the "501 C-3 Not for Profit Organizations Act." Please make all checks payable to "Save the USS Sphinx Memorial Fund." Write and send donations, Armed Forces memorabilia, and artifacts to Dunkirk Historical Lighthouse and Veterans Park Museum, P.O. Box 69, One Lighthouse Point Drive, Dunkirk, NY 14048. For more information and answers to questions, you can contact the "Save the USS Sphinx" crew via telephone (716-366-5050), via internet ([www.usssphinxarl24memorial.com](http://www.usssphinxarl24memorial.com)), or via email ([atsphinxarl24@juno.com](mailto:atsphinxarl24@juno.com)).

### *Merrill Davis remembers ...*

Sometime during our navigating the inner harbor of Yokosuka Bay in 1952-53, our executive officer, Mr. Thompson, noticed a CPO wearing a foul weather jacket that was much nicer than his own. In an attempt to gain possession of the jacket, Mr. Thompson ordered everyone to turn in their foul weather jacket. Much to his chagrin, the jacket he had his eye on was nowhere to be found.

Mr. Thompson went to the Chief and asked him why he had not turned in his foul weather jacket as directed. The Chief produced a bill of sale from a store in San Diego to demonstrate that the jacket was not government property, but his own personal property. Sorry about that Mr. Thompson.

### *Time to pay 2006-2007 dues*

Treasurer Al Wolfe is ready and waiting to begin recording dues payments for the 2006-2007 membership year. Please prepare that check or money order now while you have the newsletter in hand and mail the payment and form below to Al Wolfe.

#### July 2006-June 2007 Dues Payment

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

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

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

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

Send \$10.00 to  
Al Wolfe, Askari Treasurer  
148 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
LaSalle, IL 61301

Darrell Nelson is a new member of the Association and shared a copy of this article from the *Hai Quan* newspaper of August 11, 1971 regarding the ending of the Askari's career in the U.S. Navy. Darrell was a crew member at the time of the Askari's decommissioning.

# LOVE (USS Askari) STORY

*"Adjustable" means never having to say you're sorry. By Erich Seagull (as told to JO3 Joe Hudpeth.)*

What can you say about a 25-year-old girl who died? A girl who was both mistress and mother to literally tens of thousands of men and their machines? The USS Askari (ARL-30) has succumbed to hardening of the funds and softening of the hull, a combination of ailments that proved to be fatal.

Since March, 1945 the lady in green has cooked "home" meals for her boys, mended their broken boys [sic] of war and even given them a place to sleep.

She has traveled untold millions of miles across oceans and muddy rivers making sure she was always there when needed. Like so many sailors, San Diego sent her on her way to war in 1947. She stood by in the Pacific until 1950 when she was called upon to help in the Korean War. There she began to build her reputation as being "adjustable," ready, willing, and able to do anything for any of her men - Navy, Army, or Marines.

Her heart was as big as her interior machine shop. She took 8,000 Korean refugees under her "A" frame arms and took them to safety and freedom in that year.

Until 1953 she worked her heart out in Japan repairing smaller craft of her Navy, nestling as many as 46 beside her at one time.

After resting in San Diego briefly, she sailed again to Henreitte Pass, then French Indo China.

There she supported Navy operations for the Vietnamese "Passage to Freedom." Some 300,000 Vietnamese were transported south of the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel and into South Vietnam prior to the communist takeover of North Vietnam. Dr. Thomas Dooley in his book *Deliver Us from Evil* mentions the eagerness of the men of the Askari to help the Vietnamese and of the generous contributions of clothes they made to the refugees.

This led to another refugee aid campaign for her. In 1955, she assisted in the evacuation of the Tachen Islands by Chinese Nationalists. She then fell into more peaceful times and was left to sleep in San Diego for ten long years.

The roll of battle drums awakened her in 1966 and she ...back to Vietnam, perhaps a little slower this time.... Her men needed her. That was enough.

In 1967 Askari arrived in Vung Tau, Republic of Vietnam to serve the River Assault Flotilla One. For more than a year she gave them her all. Sometimes she would follow them right into the thick of it, going inland to places like Nha Be, Dong Tam, Sa Dec, Vinh Long, Ben Tre, and Ca Tho. She never slept or even rested during this time. Her work came first.

Not satisfied with just repairing and replacing worn and destroyed pieces of men and machinery, she devised better ways of fighting on the rivers of

Vietnam. Recognizing the fact that air power was important, she built helicopter landing pads on Armored Troop Carriers so they could receive supplies and men much faster....

Since 1967 Askari has spent only two yard overhaul periods out of country for a total of two months. Not only could she keep her boats running, she could take good care of herself.

Lately she found herself serving the Vietnamese Navy crews of the various River Assault Interdiction Divisions. Much of her work has been done on boats which have been caught up in the Accelerated Turnover of U.S. Navy Assets to the Vietnamese Navy (ACTOV) program.

Her last great adventure came in May of 1970 when she ventured up the Mekong River to support operations in Cambodia. She was the first repair ship in Cambodia, probably a lonely feeling. All those craft to repair and no one else to do it. But she did.

While in Cambodia, as many as 50 boats were tied up beside her waiting for repairs. They were repaired and on their way in record time.

Now in August of 1971, after five years of faithful service in Vietnam, the Askari can look back on a job that took her into dangerous waters of every major river in the delta region and out into the Gulf of Thailand.

During her tour in Vietnam, she won a reputation for her ability to repair boats, and for the hospitality offered to the crews of these boats. Since arriving in Vietnam, she has been awarded the Presidential Unit Citation and the Naval Unit Commendation as well as the Combat Action Ribbon.

Even now as she leaves Vietnam, her memory remains behind with the many men who came into contact with her. With allies who counted on her for support and comfort, with the enemy who came to realize that the boats they thought were out of combat returned to fight them the next day.

What can you say about a 25-year-old girl who died? Only that being "adjustable" means never having to say you're sorry.

We'll miss you Askari.

[The Spring 2001 *River Currents* from the Mobile Riverine Force Association shows, "In 1968 four more ARL's were added to the MRF; the USS Satyr ARL-23, USS Sphinx ARL-24, USS Krishna ARL-38 and the USS Indra ARL-37 as relief ship. It can also be noted that all four ships carried out the same tradition as the Askari. They were truly all workhorses of the brown water navy."

According to the October 6, 1971 issue of *Navy Times*, after her five years in Vietnam, the Askari made a brief visit to Subic Bay, R.P., then steamed to Guam where her colors were struck for the last time. She was then leased to the Indonesian Navy and renamed Djaja Widjaja]