

The Nightmare of the Mekong

Excerpt from a book by Terry Sater -- 9th ID Veteran

Posted with his permission by Ken Kalish

May 2, 2018

1968—

"The monsoons were in full swing, by May 1st, adding to our daily misery. On combat missions during the day, we'd be in our gun mounts, wearing heavy, sweaty, stinking flak jackets, soaked to the skin, with rain blowing into the well deck, coxswain's flat and dripping into the gun mounts. During the night, it brought a wet chill.

Around dawn, on Wednesday, May 1st, the Viet Cong fired twenty-five rockets at the ships of the MRB. The Colleton, APL-26 "The Apple," "Tom Green County," and the repair ship, "Askari," all reported near misses. There were no casualties. The attack was launched minutes after Dong Tam was hit by five 180MM mortar and seventy-five recoilless rifle rounds, wounding six. The ships returned fire. A helo strafed the enemy positions.

Later that day, a five-man "Bushmaster" ambush team of the 3/47th Infantry was conducting operations, about four miles from My Tho. At 0145, they were approaching to board ASPB's, to return to the MRB. Suddenly, they were attacked by Viet Cong. As the soldiers hurried to get to the boats, wading diagonally from the bank, with their weapons, gear and ammo, the river bank suddenly dropped off and they disappeared into deep water. The body of one of the soldiers was found that morning, at 1028. The bodies of the remaining four brave men were recovered by PBR's, on May 3rd. Once again, the Mekong claimed the lives of our men. At times, it seemed the Mekong was more deadly than the River Styx, the river of Greek mythology, a deity that formed the boundary between Earth and the Underworld."