

Motor Pool Messenger

NORTH JERSEY CHAPTER INC.

MILITARY VEHICLE COLLECTOR'S CLUB

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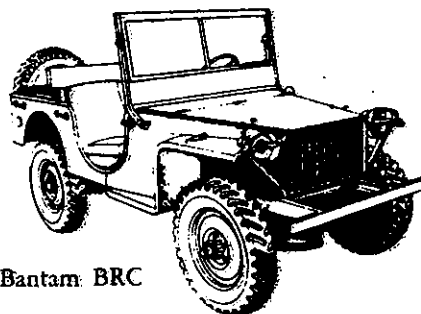
March 1981

Editors: Harry & Marilyn Rimmer

From the Driver's Seat: There's not a whole lot to talk about in the month of March. Everything is kind of socked in by cold weather, household chores, and general preparations for the spring parades and rallies. One thing we can plan in this slow time is which MVCC outings we can schedule our entire families to participate in. Though it's been slow in coming we finally are printing our East Coast Calendar of Events. The days of all the major events are listed so that members can plan ahead for which events that they and their families wish to attend. We've talked a lot in meetings and in print about getting our families involved in our club activities. Well, now is the best time to plan for it.

Probably the single best activity to plan a family outing for is the South Jersey Picnic. This is the one MVCC event that doesn't seem like "just a bunch of guys standing around talking about Jeeps." For the hearty souls there's two nights of camping, with lots of trail riding on Saturday. For those who just want a Sunday outing with the family there is the Picnic itself with lots of good food and good friends. After the picnic there is the usual calm South Jersey demolition derby, ah, trail ride through the Lebanon State Forest. The Oakham and G.P.A. (Hackenburg's) Rallies are excellent alternates with much the same atmosphere but with a little more MVCC emphasis.

We all tend to let our hobby, at times, dominate our lives. The upcoming meet or parade is all we can think of. Everything revolves around getting the old MV ready to be seen in public. Well, for the South Jersey Picnic it doesn't have to be clean or all original, it only has to function safely. And this will give us an opportunity to enjoy our hobby with our families. Our honorable intentions are all well and good, but the South Jersey Picnic is a one day event that we can put these good intentions into action.



Bantam BRC

Calendar of Events

April 24-26	South Jersey Picnic	Lebanon State Forest
May 11	N.J.C. Meeting	Florham Park 8:00 P.M.
May 15-17	East Coast Rally	Middletown, Delaware
May 24	East Brunswick Parade	1:00 P.M.
May 25	West Caldwell Parade	9:30 A.M.
May 25	Cedar Grove Parade	12:00 Noon
June 19-21	Connecticut Chapter Rally	
July 10-12	Berkshire Rally	Dalton, Mass.
July 17-19	MVCC 6th International Convention	MacCarther, Calif.
Aug. 7-9	N.E.C. Oakham Rally	Oakham, Mass.
Sept. 18-20	G.P.A. Rally in the Mountains	Mountoursville, Pa.
October ?	Long Island Trail Ride	Long Island, N.Y.

Ronkonkoma collector says "please and thank you" to friends

By Kim Greer Verzyl

Most people adorn their backyards with rose gardens, redwood tables or swings. But William Gasser of Ronkonkoma has a more unusual addition.

A tank.

Gasser, 29, you see, collects military things. He has done so since he was four, when he bought one military metal button for a nickel. He considers the 16-ton World War II tank, which cost more than \$10,000, somewhat of a culmination.

The tank — an M-5 Stuart Light Tank — is named after Civil War General Stuart. It sits on railroad ties in Gasser's backyard. He bought it from another tank collector in Florida. While Gasser would not say exactly how much he paid for it, he said similar, unrestored tanks cost between \$10,000 and \$35,000. Gasser only knows of 30 tanks in private collections.

The tank would just fit in a large dining room. It is 7'6" high, 7'6" wide and 14' long. Gasser paid \$3,000 to ship it from Florida by flatbed truck last August. A bulldozer pushed it off the truck and into place in the backyard.

Gasser's goal is to restore the tank so it is once again mobile. He also wants to get historic license plates for it so he can drive the rubber-treaded vehicle on the road. "I can prove to motor vehicle officials that it is as safe as any car," he said wryly. The tank is equipped with lights, horns and various hatches. Its top speed is 42 miles an hour. But it is not great on gas — two gallons to the mile.

To restore the tank, Gasser will buy original parts from arms dealers

throughout the U.S. and Europe, with its manual as a guide. He estimates the project will take him 15 years.

Gasser recently built a three-car garage to house tools and equipment for the planned restoration. Trouble is, the garage fences in the tank. Gasser, however, cleverly put doors in the front and back. The ceiling is extra high; the floor is re-inforced concrete. The tank will make its debut on the street by being driven from the back yard through the garage.

Once he gets the tank in shape, Gasser will need — you guessed it — a crew. Three able-bodied men. "Each person will have a rank and follow orders," said the man steeped in military history. "Otherwise you would crash into walls." The crew will have to complete a training program that includes study of the vehicle's operation, repairs and safety, he said.

His desire to make the tank mobile has no direct military tones, however. "I am infatuated with toys," he said. "The military just happen to make the finest toys in the world to play with."

Gasser describes himself as a "professional tinkerer." Part-owner along with his brother and cousin of Gasser and Sons, Inc., a Commack-machine parts manufacturing firm, he built his own custom Harley-Davidson motorcycle. The project took him five years. Although the motorcycle has been in various car shows, he says the metallic blue and chrome creation is still not finished. "I have new ideas for it all the time," he said.

Gasser also has other unusual collectibles. His living room is adorned with barbershop chairs, and a fish tank in the dining room houses a live pet tarantula. A human skeleton hangs in the garage. "I like anything unusual," he said. Gasser also owns a white, 1956 Thunderbird and a black, 1959 Fleetwood Cadillac.

Among his other military "toys" is a 6,000-pound Damier "Dingo" 1944 armored car, also parked in the backyard. The vehicle is licensed and Gasser has driven it to his office. "Everytime I have driven it, the police have stopped me," he said. "They can't believe I have a license to drive it."

He also owns a "half-track" — a vehicle with both tires and tracks. This he stores at his business. "I would have a thousand tanks," he said. Not in his backyard, however. That, Gasser maintains, would be "pushing the point." He someday wants to open a military museum to house his projects.

Gasser is a member of the Military Vehicles Collectors Club. Most of the members, he says, simply pay the \$15 annual dues and share memories. Gasser, however, follows not just the spirit, but also the letter of the club's charter.

Gasser's wife, Karen, 28, goes along with her husband's hobby. "I don't mind it at all," she said. "He has his thing and I have mine." Hers is a bit more typical — photography. Their one-year-old son, Douglas, however, plays with plastic toy tanks in his play-pen.

Gasser began collecting war memorabilia when he was not much older than his son. He went with his mother to the Nassau Farmer's Market on Fridays and always bought something — plastic military models, for example. One day, when he was about five, he held a plastic model of a jeep in one hand and an antique metal military button in the other. The difference in weight, he said, made him decide to start buying "the real thing."

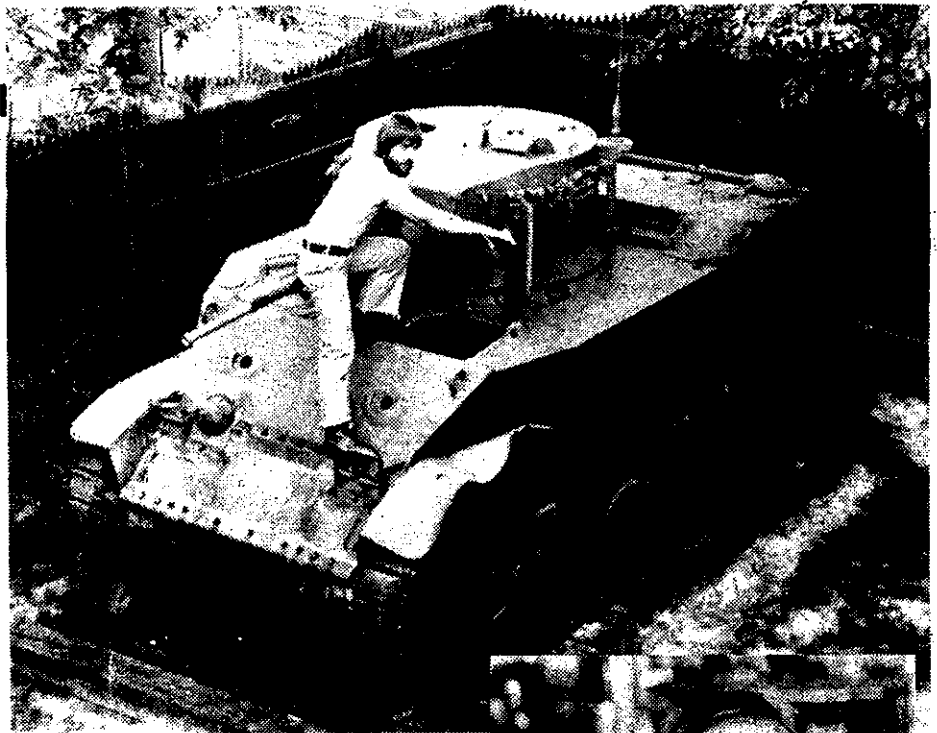
His collection of buttons soon grew into whole uniforms. He sold his collection of German World War II uniforms when he got married six years ago. He then started to collect military vehicles.

Discussion of his hobby brings a glow to Gasser's face. He smiles and walks quickly around his possessions, pointing to various features with pride, touting their qualities as a car lover might praise his old Studebaker. "Look at these wheels," he said, kicking a thick rubber wheel of the armored car. "Solid. You can't shoot 'em out." Gasser points out the small holes from machine gun fire and nicks from shrapnel as if they were medals. "This is 1/4" armor plate steel," he said, running his hand over the side of the gun-metal gray tank. "You can't beat it."

The tank has won the favor of most of the local residents, although the Gassers had to apply for a zoning variance to keep the tank on their back lawn. Gasser received a five-year variance from the Board of Appeals on Tuesday. "In a way, it makes me feel safer," said Maria Locassio, who lives next door and has a vegetable garden in her backyard.

"I want one too," said Wendy Maugham, 12, who lives across the street.

One of the Gasser's other neighbors, Mary Ann Mini, can see the tank from her kitchen window. She said the view did not bother her. In fact, she added, her guests love it. "I don't mind it at all," she said. "As long as he does not shoot it into my yard."



TANKS A LOT says William Gasser as he poses for a photo on top of his tank. His child, right, is showing an early interest in following in Dad's footsteps.



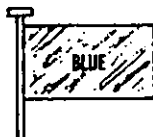
CONVOY FLAGS

The leading vehicle carries a blue flag—FSN 8345-543-6912, Flag distinguishing, convoy, leading vehicle, cotton bunting, blue, 12-in hoist, 18-in fly.

The rear vehicle carries a green flag—FSN 8345-543-6913, Flag, distinguishing, convoy, rear vehicle, cotton bunting, green, 12-in hoist, 18-in fly.

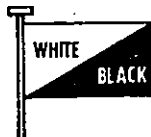
The vehicle of the serial's commander carries a white and black flag—FSN 8345-543-6911, Flag, distinguishing, convoy, commander of series vehicle, cotton bunting, flag bisected by line from lower left to upper right hand corner, upper triangle white, lower triangle black, 12-in hoist, 18-in fly.

LEADING VEHICLE



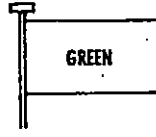
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COMMAND



FSN 8345-543-6911

REAR VEHICLE



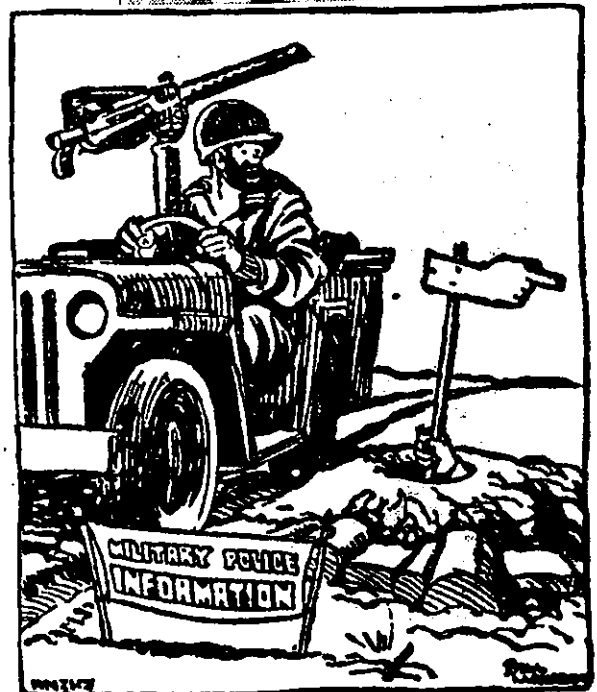
FSN 8345-543-6913

The flags are listed in Change 5 of SM 10-5-8345, and you order the flags from QM.

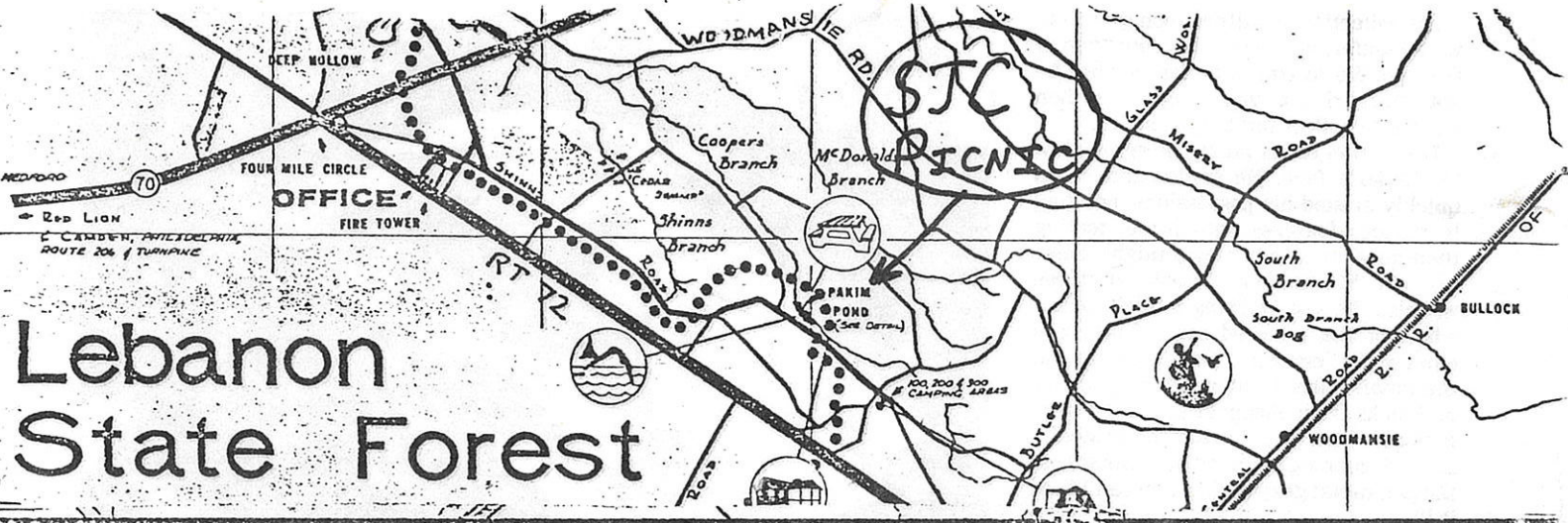
When you mount them on your vehicle they'll normally go on the left side of your vehicle except in places where vehicles are driven on the left side of the road, then you'll have to mount them on the right side.

You can mount the flags at the front

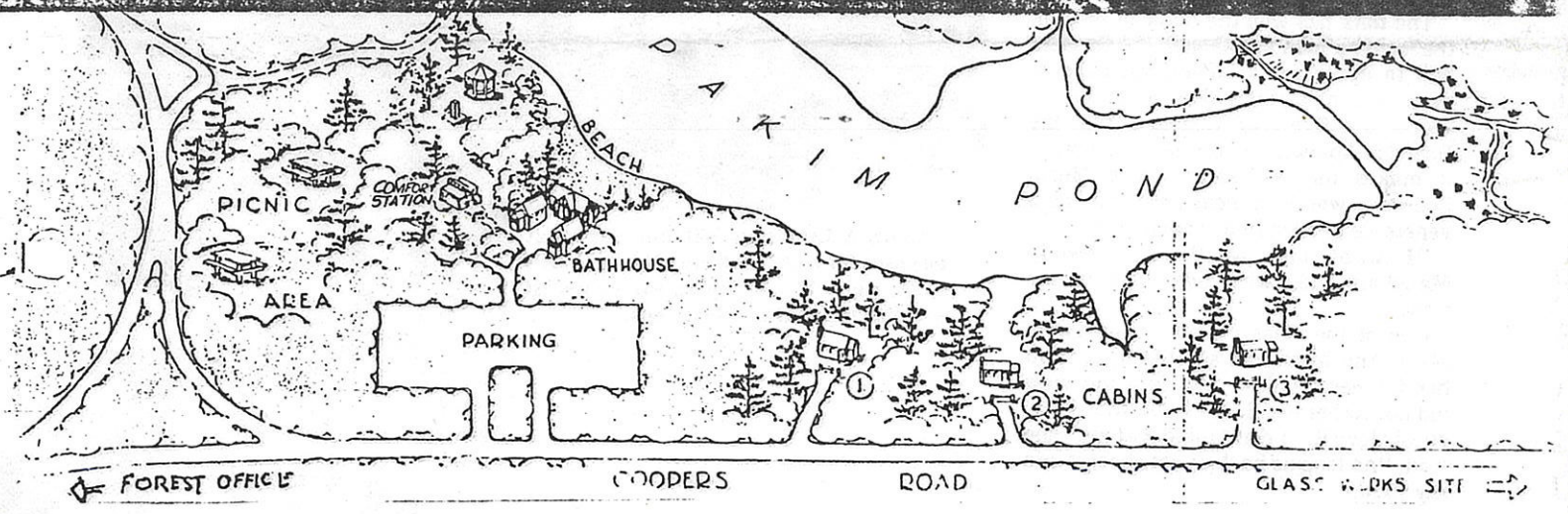
or at the rear of the vehicle but you'll have to place them so they won't interfere with the vision of the operator or crew. And they're not to cover up or be in the way of the lights or any other part of the vehicle that might be a safety hazard.



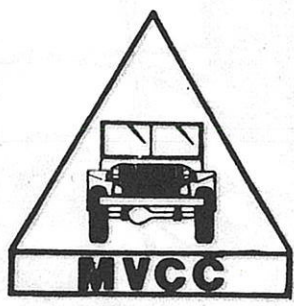
"Thanks."



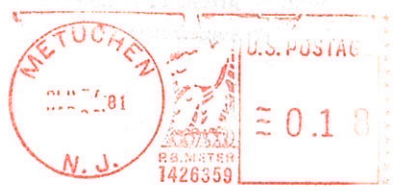
Lebanon State Forest



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Gary Schultz
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First Class