



MOTOR POOL MESSENGER

the official monthly newsletter of the
MILITARY TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION

visit us online at www.MTAofNJ.org

Issue: JUNE 2020

Editor: Dave Steinert



In This
Issue...

The American Tank-Infantry Team in WWII



On the Cover...



THEN- Showing a M4 Sherman named “Fury” of the 2nd Armored Division on the move with its supporting infantry on board during Operation Cobra in Europe during WWII. Note rifle grenade and BAR, standard weapons of the rifle squad turned into key components of an assault team. One rifleman stands with his bayonet fixed- fighting within the *bocage* was done so in close quarters.

The American tank-infantry team was the key maneuver element that led to the overwhelming number of tactical successes enjoyed by the United States in the Second World War. However, this winning combination of men and machines had developed throughout the course of the war, and included a number of variations based on the theater and areas within each theater. Original development came from training and lessons learned in the decades between the two world wars by infantry tank and cavalry combat car units.



When General Marshall was made Army Chief of Staff on 1 September 1939 (the day of Germany’s attack on Poland), he began a major reorganization

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of the service in order to put it on a wartime footing more like that of its European counterparts. One of the changes was the creation of the Armored Force, a combination of the armored elements of the infantry and cavalry branches, as well as mobile components of artillery, communications, and other services.

NOW-A photo of a tank crew and its infantry support from the movie *Fury*. This movie is a 2014 American war film written and directed by David Ayer, and starring Brad Pitt, Shia LaBeouf, Logan Lerman, Michael Peña, Jon Bernthal, Jason Isaacs and Scott Eastwood. The film portrays U.S. tank crews fighting in Nazi Germany during the final weeks of the European theater of World War II. Ayer was influenced by the service of veterans in his family and by reading books, such as Belton Y. Cooper’s *Death Traps*, about American armored units in World War II and the high casualty rates suffered by tank crews in Europe.

The starring tank platoon is ordered to capture and hold a vital crossroads to protect the division’s rear echelon. En route, they are ambushed by a SS Tiger tank, which wipes out the entire platoon except for *Fury*. *Fury* eventually destroys the Tiger by outmaneuvering it and firing into its thinner rear armor. Unable to notify his

superiors because the radio has been damaged, Don decides to try to complete their mission. Upon arriving at the crossroads, the tank is immobilized by a landmine. Don sends Norman to scout a nearby hill; from there, he eventually spots a battalion of Waffen-SS infantry approaching. The rest of the crew wants to flee, but Don decides to stay, eventually convincing the others to stand and fight.

THE JUNE MTA MEETING HAS BEEN CANCELLED!

Military Transport Association

Confucius says:..."No Meeting..No Minutes!"

President's Message
(Not Donald Trump)

"Members, I hope this issue of Motor Pool Messenger finds you healthy and eager to resume Club events. While we unfortunately couldn't honor our lost warriors this Memorial Day, I am hopeful that we can have a full roster of parades on July 4. During this challenging time, your Executive Board has been working. Over the last 2 months, the team updated and refreshed the Club's By-Laws and you will see them shortly for review. We are also planning a Spring Trail Ride in Sussex County so get your oil checked, inflate the tires, put the engine back in, make a lunch and stay tuned. I think our Family Picnic looks better all the time. I hope the summer will allow us to re-start our events. Most importantly, don't think this pandemic is over. Practice distancing, wear masks outdoor and sanitize your hands frequently. Stay well!"

Best regards,
Al
Albert Mellini
President



Military Transport Association, Inc.
Summary of Funds Activity
For the Month Ending April 30, 2020

	All Funds
Beginning balance from last month	\$ 48,825.63
Income	317.09
Expenditures	(490.50)
Closing balance	<u>\$ 48,652.22</u>

The American Tank-Infantry Team in Northwestern Europe: The Men, the Means, and the Enemy-Part I

Jim Swanick

Ground forces of the United States Army fought in four major theatres of war during the Second World War: the Mediterranean Theatre of Operations, the Pacific Theatre of Operations, the China-Burma-India Theatre of Operations, and the European Theatre of Operations. The Army raised 89 divisions of the infantry, armored, airborne, and mountain types during the war. Of these, 21 fought in the Pacific, plus the prewar Philippine Division that was destroyed in 1942; fourteen fought in the Mediterranean, which included the North African, Sicilian, and Italian campaigns; and 61, of which seven were veterans of fighting in the Mediterranean, fought in Europe. Europe was the Army's primary war. The Army was built for mobile warfare at the operational level on the European continent, but when it made its debut into the theatre in June of 1944 its performance was mixed. Many lessons learned in other theatres did not apply to the much more open and traversable battlefields of Western Europe, and several of the Army's conceptions about different types of warfare were yet to be tested. In a war where combined arms teams had come to the forefront as the premier combat task unit, how to employ tank-infantry teams was one of these unknown quantities. By examining the development of tank-infantry tactics in 12th US Army Group from 6 June to December of 1944 it is possible to trace how the primary American formations in the theatre learned to wield these potent combat elements, and how they performed when confronted with varying types of terrain and enemy defensive postures. In focusing on the six months between the invasion of France and the German offensive in the Ardennes, the most crucial period of learning is covered, and an accurate impression of the state of the American tank-infantry team on the eve of the invasion of Germany is presented.



The American troops that arrived in France in the summer of 1944 varied in quality and training. Of the eleven divisions initially assigned to First Army only four had prior combat experience; of these only two were slated to enter combat on D-Day. The base effectiveness of the other seven and those that followed depended largely on the quality of



leadership at the division, regimental, and battalion levels; mandated training in the States focused primarily on operational maneuver, which prepared the untested formations well for mobile warfare at the divisional and corps level, but came at the expense of small unit training. Thus the quality of a division's leadership, which had a major impact on the cohesion of the outfit and the training regimens it pursued internally, proved critical. The creation of new divisions in 1942-43 and the infantry replacement crisis of mid-1944 complicated matters for many formations, as some outfits were subjected to a constant withdrawal and integration of large numbers of men with varying levels of training. This reduced their cohesion and base effectiveness, and these divisions were generally unable to train extensively enough to achieve peak effectiveness prior to entering combat. Although most infantry divisions overcame the hurdles presented to them and arrived on the front lines in a condition considered acceptable for combat, few would be considered crack outfits from the outset of their service in the lines.



A 95th Division tank-infantry team advances into Metz. Unlike Brest and Aachen, little fighting was necessary to secure the city. The same concept to isolate it was utilized, however, as it was encircled by XX and XII Corps.

Because of the difficulties involved in getting squared away with the basics, most formations arrived overseas lacking sufficient training in tank-infantry coordination. Infantry divisions staging in England for the invasion of France were given little opportunity to rectify the issue as their training was focused on amphibious assault and overcoming beach defenses; the fact that their armored elements were not attached until a few weeks prior to D-Day further complicated the matter. The late assignment of the independent tank battalions, themselves lacking in tank-infantry training, made building a rapport between armor and infantry all but impossible. These problems were not nearly as prevalent in the armored divisions, which were properly structured and trained as combined arms teams.

On the most basic level the tank-infantry team generally consisted of one tank and one rifle squad; in armored divisions the rifle squad rode in a halftrack. In both the standard and armored squads the primary long arm was the M1 rifle,

which had been acquired by the Army in 1936 in part because it was believed it would render the squad automatic weapon unnecessary. Although the M1 was an outstanding weapon this concept was an outright failure, and in 1942 the Browning Automatic Rifle was added to the standard squad. Unfortunately, the BAR, though like the M1 a fine weapon in its own right, proved inadequate in the squad automatic weapon role. Depending on the model its practical rate of fire ranged from 40-60 rounds per minute due to problems with overheating, and it lacked quick-change barrels, which prevented it from delivering the sustained, effective fire that the role required. Armored squads did not carry BAR's; instead each platoon included a machine gun squad boasting two light machine guns for fire support, which could be augmented by the removable light, heavy, or .50 caliber machine guns mounted on their halftracks. Both the light (air-cooled) and heavy (water-cooled) machine guns fired .30 caliber rounds; as the latter was expensive it was often replaced by the former. The .50 caliber machine gun was capable of taking on light vehicles and aircraft as well as infantry and was prized for its destructive capabilities. Standard rifle companies carried two light machine guns in the weapons platoon, and both types of rifle company possessed three 60mm mortars. Although this weapon was too light to neutralize pillboxes, it was man-portable, useful in the attack, and capable of providing high explosive, white phosphorous, and illumination fires. For antitank capabilities the rifle company carried five 2.36-inch "bazooka" rocket launchers, while the armored rifle company possessed three 57mm antitank guns and 18 bazookas.



1st Division GI's look on as an M4 engages German positions in Aachen. Note that all riflemen are out of the street and watching from the safety of entryways and windows.

The tank-infantry team relied on the M4 medium tank and tank destroyers for its armored component. The M4 was built to be the backbone of American armored formations and combined some of the best firepower and armor of 1942-1943 with good mobility, ease of production, and unparalleled mechanical reliability. Tank destroyers, on the other hand, had been developed to counter massed armor formations like those utilized by the Germans early in the war. As a result, they emphasized firepower and speed over protection, with the M10 GMC mounting a 3-inch gun, the M18 GMC mounting a 76mm gun, and neither offering much in the way of armor, which made them light and fast. By 1944 the M4 was a double-edged sword:

nearly all variants found their armor and firepower to be obsolete, but the tank's simplistic and standardized construction made it easy to produce in large quantities and its reliability was such that it rarely broke down. Prior to the invasion of Normandy the tank's 75mm gun was identified as underpowered in the face of new German armor and as a result a 76mm gun was developed, but it was initially refused by many armored divisions as experience in Italy had done little to suggest the upgrade was needed.



An up-gunned M4A1 of the 2d Armored Division mounted by 22d RCT's doughs crushes a hedgerow using its hedgerow cutter at the beginning of Operation COBRA

Although most of the German formations stationed in the West were led by veteran officers and NCO's, they were rounded out by overage conscripts, foreign "volunteers" and ethnic Germans, and wounded veterans of the Eastern Front. Of the 58 divisions that made up *OB-West* only 24 were deemed to be suitable for employment in the East; approximately half of those in France were so-called static divisions, which lacked reconnaissance battalions as well as motor transport and featured a reduced allotment of artillery. Under new 1944 tables of organization the fighting strength of the infantry division was reduced to six infantry battalions, and in compensation the number of automatic weapons carried by the division was increased. The rifle squad lost a man but gained a second submachine gun, augmenting the fire of the squad's MG34 or MG42. Both machine guns were built with bipods and shoulder stocks to balance mobility and stability and boasted cyclic rates of fire of 900 and 1,200 rounds per minute respectively, twice that of the American lights. Although their practical rate of fire was only 150 rounds per minute, both

featured quick-change barrels that enabled them to put down a massive volume of fire over sustained periods when needed. All told the German rifle company carried sixteen machine guns, and its firepower was rounded out by two 8-cm mortars and 36 panzerfaust anti-tank rocket launchers, giving it a potent punch. In a one-to-one fight, the German rifle company's superiority in automatic weapons gave it a significant edge in firepower over the standard American rifle company.

Mark IV and V tanks and StuG III/IV assault guns constituted the bulk of German armor that American forces encountered in Europe. The Mark IV had originally been designed to tackle infantry and pillboxes, but following the invasion of the Soviet Union it had been fitted with a long barreled high-velocity 75 to combat Soviet armor. As a result, it had replaced the Mark III as the backbone of Germany's armored forces, a role it was still clinging to in 1944 when the Western Allies invaded France. Although the Mark V "Panther" had been intended as the Mark IV's successor its high cost and complex construction prevented it from being mass produced, guaranteeing that it would never fully replace the Mark IV. The Mark V mounted a long range 75mm gun and was very well protected from the front. The heavy armor of the tank had not been part of its original design; this contributed to its low durability, as neither the engine nor the transmission could handle the increased strain. The StuG III/IV had originally been designed as an assault gun, and like the Mark IV had been up-gunned in response to superior Soviet armor encountered in 1941. By 1944 it mounted the same gun as the Mark IV and thanks to its simple and inexpensive design (it lacked a turret) as well as its effectiveness as both an assault gun and a tank destroyer it had proliferated into both armored and infantry formations.



A 95th Division tank-infantry team advances into Metz. Unlike Brest and Aachen, little fighting was necessary to secure the city. The same concept to isolate it was utilized, however, as it was encircled by XX and XII Corps

In sum, American formations arrived in Normandy with small-unit training that ranged from superb to acceptable and were equipped with small arms that stood out individually but lacked firepower in concert. Nearly all lacked combat experience and infantry divisions had been given precious little

training in tank-infantry tactics. Many German formations, in contrast, were comprised of men lacking in fitness for duty and dependability but led by veterans and equipped with an abundance of automatic weapons that surpassed the firepower of American infantry on the small-scale. American armor was reliable, durable, and built for mass-production, but lagged in development; German armor featured more advanced weaponry, heavier armor, and complex construction, resulting in a lack of standardization and in some cases both reliability and durability. These aspects of German tank development as well as other outside influences prevented effective mass production, which in turn prevented German forces from fielding adequate numbers of tanks to effectively combat Allied formations.



WHEN?
- it's up to us!

19th Annual
MILITARY VEHICLE SHOW & SWAP MEET
OCTOBER 17-18, 2020

CLASSIFIEDS

To add or remove listings from the Classifieds, please email Dave Steinert at dsteinert@mtaofnj.org or call 973-347-9091.

Parts For Sale- 230 CI M725 motor, ran when pulled, burns oil \$200, M725 litter racks-best offer, M725 Rear doors, some dents, no rust \$200 for the pair, M715 windshield frame, minor surface rust \$150, NOS in packing Southwind heater for M725 possible M-43 best offer, M37 windshield frame outer only \$75, M725-M715 rims with lock rings –make offer. Many more items available, too many to list. Call for more information. Call Matt Ziegler, cell 973-445-3890, email : Matrziegler@gmail.com

For Sale: 1964 Ford M151, current Odometer: 34252. Currently registered and inspected in New York State. Comes with Army radio, mounted machine gun (disabled firearm) w/ mount and cartridges, trailer, plastics to go over vehicle (no photo included, but available at request) as well as two large boxes of extra parts. Vehicle has always been garage kept. Buyer is responsible for pick-up or to arrange for shipment for out of town sales. This vehicle has not been cut. Asking \$18,000. Located in Pine Island NY. Please contact Lodzia - 845-258-4493 or Vince - 845-728-9191.

For Sale: Replica 81mm mortar. M1 tube and bi-pod. M4 sight. Has incorrect M23A1 two-piece base (Nam era?). The tube is original with 1 pin cross welded and a dummy cup welded on. Comes with one practice round (inert) in a newer tared tube. And a wooden ammo crate. Asking \$3000.00 . Will take a M35a2 ring mount in trade. Kirk Stinson 862-209-0933

For Sale: I have many Jeep and M37 parts for sale, call Tom Weaver @ 973-627-9448.

Military Vehicle Preservation Association
Since 1976

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Prayer for Memorial Day

Everlasting Lord,

We come to bow our heads in respect to you, and thank you for our great country.

Lord, we come before you today remembering our country's heroes both dead and alive. We purpose to make this day a time to show honor to the men and women whose sacrifice has helped to keep us safe and free. We acknowledge their bravery, and we want to recognize the sacrificial contributions of each one.

Stir our hearts, Lord, with patriotism and thankfulness as we think about our country's treasures lying in graves beneath our nation's soil and the soil of lands far away. May we be inspired to be more abundant in our giving as we commemorate their lives of service to others. They gave the ultimate sacrifice, and we respectfully remember them today.

Lord, we lift up the families and friends of those who gave their lives for their country. We ask you to minister to the deep longing of those who grieve. We ask you to bring your peace and supernatural comfort to each one as they recall their former happy times together.

As we observe this day, we want to again respectfully honor all the men and women who presently serve in our armed forces. May they feel appreciated, and may they be powerfully protected this day and every day.

We pray these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ,

Amen

Military Transport Association

P.O. Box 391

Budd Lake, NJ 07828

The next MTA monthly meeting
HAS BEEN CANCELLED!



a chapter of the Military Vehicle Preservation Association

The Military Transport Association is dedicated to the education and preservation of historic to present military vehicles. Members enjoy restoring, displaying, and operating military vehicles of all types, from bicycles to tanks.

But trucks and Jeeps aren't all we do! Join today and participate with us at our annual Toys for Tots train ride and toy drive, help at our annual Swap Meet at the Sussex County Fairgrounds, or attend our special events for veterans. Our lively, informative monthly meetings are held in Whippany, NJ.

You do not have to own a military vehicle to be part of this exciting and active hobby - you just need a desire to do your part in keeping our military history alive. All you need to join the MTA is to fill out the the form below, include your dues payment, and mail it to the address below. Alternately, you can give your form and dues to any MTA member you meet at any of our events.

for more information, visit our website at www.MTAofNJ.org

Name: _____

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MTA Membership Level: Single (\$30) Family (\$35)

Are you a member of MVPA? Yes No

Military vehicles owned: _____

Return form with \$____ annual dues and \$____ donation to:

Military Transport Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 391
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