



# MOTOR POOL MESSENGER

the official monthly newsletter of the **MILITARY TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION**  
visit us online at [www.MTAofNJ.org](http://www.MTAofNJ.org)

Issue: October 2023

Editor: David Steinert



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## ON THE COVER...



A Cleveland Tractor Co., Medium M2 High-Speed U.S. Army Tractor, popularly known as a "Cletrac" is an example of one type of vehicle used at Army Air Force bases during WWII for moving aircraft and heavy trailers.

The smallest high-speed tractor in the Army's inventory was the M2 7-ton tractor developed by the Cleveland Tractor Co. referred to as the "Cletrac". It is an example of one type of vehicle used at Army Air Force bases during WWII for moving aircraft and heavy trailers. The Cletrac was particularly effective for moving vehicles or aircraft that had become bogged down in mud. Also referred to as the "bomber nurse" because it contained a high-pressure air compressor, a 24-volt generator, a nitrogen bottle, a winch, and a center-mount drawbar for maximum traction that allowed it to tow B-17s around soggy English airfields with relative ease.

These vehicles were produced not only by Cleveland, but also by John Deere. As many as 8,510 M2s were built and used at Allied airfields during WWII.



A U.S. Army M2 High Speed tractor being used as a "tug" in WWII

The M2 high-speed tractor was powered by a 404cid Hercules WXL3 engine driving a 4-speed transmission, the vehicle is capable of attaining speeds up to 22mph when the high rpm range is unlocked on the governor, allowing the engine to achieve 3,250 rpm. With the governor set at 2,500rpm, speeds up to 15 mph can be attained. Steering is accomplished through a Cletrac

controlled differential that uses planetary gear sets to "downshift" one track when the corresponding steering lever is pulled. In this way, power is always being transmitted to both tracks making the steering action smoother and improving safety on steep slopes. Compared to the traditional "clutch and brake" steering found on most other crawlers of this vintage, the Cletrac differential has the disadvantage that it is not possible to lock one track and spot-turn around the braked track. Instead, the minimum turning radius is 10.5 ft. While this was a disadvantage for bulldozers, the controlled differential did prevent the tractor from tearing up pavement and turf, keeping the surface smooth for aircraft operations.



A M2 tractor towing a fuel tank trailer for refueling aircraft

The M2 is equipped with a swinging drawbar designed for use in towing aircraft, as well as a second, swiveling pintle hook for towing ammunition, maintenance, & other types of trailers. Some testing was done to determine the suitability of the M2 as a gun-towing tractor, but it was quickly determined that it lacked the space to support the gun crews and carriage of ammunition and, as a 7-ton class machine, it was too light to pull the heavier howitzers and was eclipsed in this role by the M4 13-ton HST, M5 18-ton HST, and the M6 38-ton HST. However, with rubber tracks that were suitable for use on paved surfaces as well as grass and mud, the tractor performed well on the primitive airfields that were common in forward areas during the war.

The Cletrac, Inc., a manufacturer of tractors for military and civilian use, was organized by Rollen H. White as the Cleveland Motor Plow Co. in 1916, with capital of \$6 million. White, a founder of the White Motor Co., had 10 years earlier formed this

new firm to produce the crawler-type tractor he had developed for general farm use. First located at Euclid Ave. and Lamb in Cleveland, Ohio, the plant later moved to 19300 Euclid Ave. Renamed Cleveland Tractor Co. in 1917, the company sold 40,000 tractors in the U.S. and 70 foreign countries during its first decade.

In the early 1930s, the needs of the Civilian Conservation Corps and public works projects kept the plant open and by 1937 the firm, which employed 1,500 workers, enjoyed record tractor sales here and abroad. Two years later, the company introduced 3 new lower-priced tractors with 4-cylinder engines for use by the small farmer.



This picture shows the versatility of the M2 high speed tractor

The military application of Cleveland Tractor's products became dominant during WWII when the firm manufactured a new, high-speed tractor for hauling artillery. Although the company received a steady flow of orders, the low profit in defense work and the research costs for new products convinced President White to sell the company to the 96-year-old Oliver Corp. of Chicago in 1944.

Oliver invested \$3.5 million in the aging plant to develop new products. However, Cleveland Tractor remained unprofitable until the Korean War revived its business. When White Motor Corp. took a 2-year option to buy the tractor plant and acquired exclusive rights to the Oliver name in 1959, Oliver renamed its Cleveland facilities Cletrac Inc. In 1961

White Motor bought the local Cletrac inventories, engineering designs, and machine tools and closed the plant, consolidating all production at a second plant in Charles City, IA.

Like the U.S. Army WWII Jeep, it was a small vehicle that was very versatile for its size and was a huge contributor to the war effort.

Also, like the jeep it was sold to farmers after the war as surplus for continued use on farms and ranches across the United States.



**ATTENTION MEMBERS!**  
**THE NEXT MTA MEETING WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5th 2023... MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE WHIPPANY AMERICAN LEGION IN THE MEETING ROOM IN BASEMENT**  
**Food at 6:00PM...Meeting starts at 7:00PM**

### MTA Meeting Minutes

**Thursday, September 7, 2023 at the American Legion Hall in Whippany, NJ**  
*Submitted by Jean Swanick*

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by **Andy Salzano** and opened with the *Pledge of Allegiance*, followed by a moment of silence. A motion to approve last month's minutes was made by **Ken Gardner** and seconded by **Andy Salzano**. *Motion carried!*

The monthly financial report presented by **Al Mellini** is as follows:

#### Financial Report – Ending August 31, 2023

Beginning balance	\$ 47,486.00
Income	\$ 661.00
Expenditures	<u>\$ 1,284.00</u>
Closing balance	\$ 46,863.00

A motion to approve the Financial Report was made by **Andrea Antonelli** and seconded by **Anita Roberts**. *Motion carried!*

**President's Message-** John Sobotka unable to attend tonight.

**Membership-** Dues have been caught up and there are 150 members in good standing.

**Newsletter-** Thank you to Walt Kierrzkowski for the 458 BPR article in the September newsletter. Show flyers for the 2024 Swap Meet are ready for pick up from **Dave Steinert**.



**Parades-** Andrea Antonelli announced the two parades upcoming; Columbus Day on Sunday 10/8 in East Hanover. The line-up time for East Hanover is 1pm...start time is 12pm. The other parade is the long-standing Veterans Day parade in Clifton on Sunday 11/5. These parades will close out our parade season for the year and we are hoping to have a strong showing. Please check your availability and sign up with Andrea

**Quartermaster-** Gary Schultz unable to attend tonight.

**Donations-** Tim Swanick made a motion that the club donate \$500 to the Picatinny Historical Society to help them continue their archival and preservation work on base which is then shared with the public. The group does not receive any funding from the government. The motion was seconded by Kevin Tremble. Motion carried!

**Swap Meet-** Jim Mescher will be meeting in November with the fairgrounds to discuss the new contract and the committee will meet again in October to start the ball rolling.

**Website-** Sometimes no news is good news!

**Operation Toy Train-** Angie Farrell brought some additional merchandise to showcase tonight. Sales will help support continued equipment repairs. The tentative OTT December schedule has been placed on their website and Facebook.

**Old Business-** Ken Gardner spoke of the need for nominations starting tonight for the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer positions which expire in December.

The nominees will be announced at the October meeting and placed in the Newsletter. Ballots will be counted by November 16<sup>th</sup> and the new officers will be announced at the December meeting.

**New Business-** Nothing tonight!



The MTA Toys for Tots crew at the Lead East Classic Car Show

**For the Good of the Club-** The club's Toys for Tots season kicked off last weekend at the Lead East Classic Car Show in Parsippany. Pat Dolan thanked all those who were able to participate over the Labor Day weekend with their vehicles, man the table and walk the lots collecting funds including Terry Weaver, Bill Decker and Dennis Vecchiarelli whose jeep

became Rudolph, the Red Nose Reindeer. Also, Tom Weber, Pat Dolan, John Sobotka, Tim and Jean Swanick and Ed and Agnes Kohler (Santa and Elf). The collection totaled over \$2,000 by Saturday afternoon.

Jean Swanick thanked members who were available to make the car show in Towaco, including Ken Lesoine, Matt Ziegler, Andrea Antonelli, Pat Dolan and Tim Swanick at Diane's Dairy on August 26<sup>th</sup> in honor of Montville resident Gerry Gemain, a



WWII Veteran Jerry Gemain (Center) who turned 101 years old in August at the car show at Diane's Dairy in Towaco, NJ.

WWII vet who turned 101. Gerry served in the Central Pacific Theater and remains very proud of his country and service. If you google him, you can find the CBS news interview with John Elliot who celebrated with him on his 100<sup>th</sup> last August. You can read of



MTA Members at the August 26th Car Show at Diane's Dairy in Towaco, NJ

the units he was attached to and more of his service in the Morris County.gov article "Morris County Honors 100-Year-Old WWII Veteran" published 10/12/22

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 by Jean Swanick and seconded by Jim Mescher.

**NEXT MEETING  
OCTOBER 5<sup>th</sup>  
Whippany Legion Hall  
Food- 6:00pm  
Meeting 7:00pm**

Respectfully submitted,  
Jean Swanick, Secretary



Matt Ziegler at the car show



# THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE SERIES- PART III

## Phantoms, Tigers, and Screaming Eagles: First Contact at Bastogne

Jim Swanick

Brig. Gen. Anthony McAuliffe's 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division reached Bastogne around midnight on the night of 18-19 December. It would take time for the troopers to create a perimeter around the town and dig in, and in the meantime *XLVII Panzer Corps* would have to be held at bay. This task would fall to Col. William Roberts' Combat Command B (CCB) of the 10<sup>th</sup> Armored Division, which had arrived late in the afternoon of the 18<sup>th</sup>, and to a handful of engineers that Maj. Gen. Troy Middleton, the VIII Corps commander, had placed in a thin screen around the town.

CCB moved into position on the evening of the 18<sup>th</sup>. Lt. Col. James O'Hara's Task Force (TF) took up positions south of Wardin, while covering the road to Wiltz. At the same time, Maj. William Desobry's TF set up around Noville.

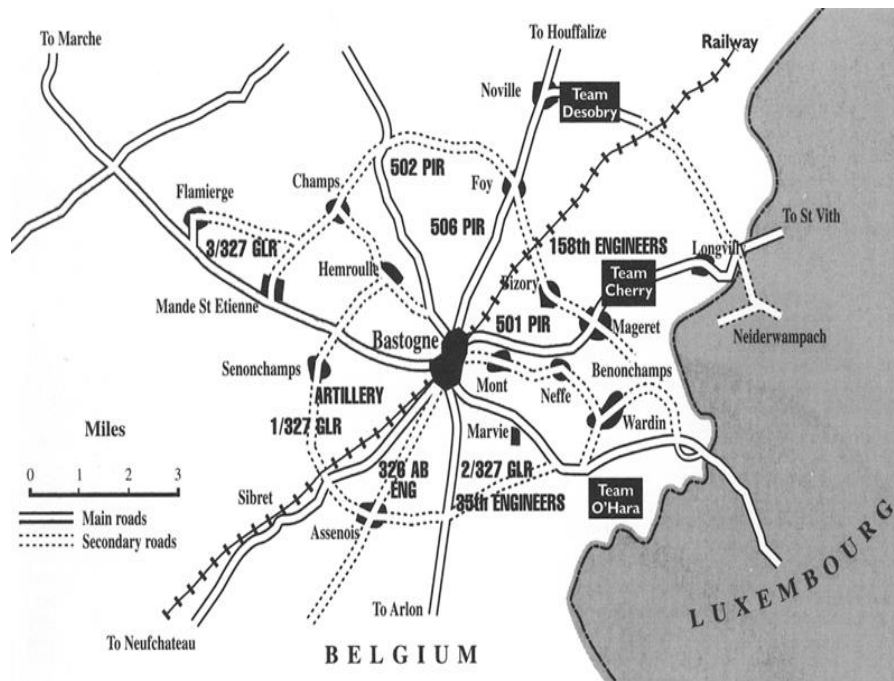
Task Force Cherry, with Lieut. Col. Henry Cherry as commander, made for Longvilly, where it found Col. Joseph Gilbreth's CCR of the 9<sup>th</sup> Armored Division. There, Cherry learned that Gilbreth had no plan but to hold his position (Gilbreth soon after decided to withdraw), so he ordered his advance guard, Team Hyduke, to set up defenses around Longvilly while he returned to Bastogne to brief Roberts. Cherry made it through Magaret just as troops of Maj. Gen. Fritz Bayerlein's *Panzer Lehr Division* entered the town, and on discovering he had been cut off from his task force ordered his main body, Team Ryerson, to scout the village.

As CCB/10 entrenched itself on the roads leading into Bastogne, Lt. Gen. Heinrich Freiherr von Lüttwitz, the *XLVII Panzer Corps* commander, was planning a multi-pronged attack for 19 December. The 26<sup>th</sup> *Volksgrnadier (VG) Division* would drive through Longvilly, seizing Bizory and Foy to gain positions from which it could pivot and attack Bastogne from the north and northeast as *Panzer Lehr* pushed west from Magaret. The 2<sup>d</sup> *Panzer Division*, meanwhile, would bypass Bastogne, wheeling north and transiting through Noville as it advanced toward the Meuse. Lüttwitz had been told that two airborne divisions had been rushed to Bastogne, but that they would not be in place until noon; therefore, he was confident that his attack would carry the town.

The battle between CCB/10 and *XLVII Panzer Corps* opened in the predawn hours of 19 December. At Noville the 2<sup>d</sup> *Panzer Division* stumbled into TF Desobry, pushing in its outposts and throwing several waves of tanks and infantry at the GI's as it occupied the ridges around the town to ring the task force in on three sides. East of Bastogne packets of *Panzer Lehr* tanks and infantry attempted to move west out of Magaret but were largely stopped by Co. B of the 158<sup>th</sup> Engineer Combat Battalion and HQ elements of TF Cherry at Neffe, though a handful of troops made it through and set up a roadblock on the western side of town. Team Ryerson was ordered to retake Magaret, its patrols having uncovered the presence of tanks and infantry there, but this effort miscarried. Team Hyduke, finally, was struck by tanks and infantry of the 26<sup>th</sup> VG and 2<sup>d</sup> *Panzer Divisions*. By 1400 the team's armor had been wiped out, forcing it away from the town. Only TF O'Hara was able to escape the morning (and ultimately the day) without a serious engagement.

The pressure mounting against CCB did not go unnoticed, and a steady trickle of reinforcements began making their way forward. When in mid-morning Maj. Desobry, impressed by the superior strength and positioning of the forces arrayed against him, requested permission to withdraw he was instead given the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of Col. Robert Sink's 506<sup>th</sup> PIR (Parachute Infantry Regiment) by the assistant division commander of the 101<sup>st</sup>, Brig. Gen. Gerald Higgins. The rest of the 506<sup>th</sup> would later follow, with 3/506 occupying Foy and 2/506 going into assembly as a reserve at Luzery. Desobry was also given a platoon of M18 Hellcat tank destroyers of the 705<sup>th</sup> TD Battalion. Even as these movements were initiated, however, a major component of the airborne division was already in action.

During the night of 18 December Middleton had identified the Longvilly road as the path of the German main effort, and he and McAuliffe had accordingly sent Lt. Col. Julian Ewell's 501<sup>st</sup> PIR, the first of the division's units to enter Bastogne, up the road under orders to "make contact, attack, and clear up the situation." Ewell's regiment had subsequently been engulfed by elements of the 26<sup>th</sup> VG and *Panzer Lehr Divisions*. As it approached Neffe, the lead battalion, 1/501, was halted by the roadblock on the western side of town and Ewell reacted by sending 2/501 north to get at Magaret via Bizory while 3/501 moved south to Mont in attempt to flank Neffe. These attempts to affect a further advance eastward failed, however. 2/501 passed through Bizory but then ran into



the reconnaissance battalion of the 26<sup>th</sup> VG Division on the slopes of Hill 510, where it was fought to a standstill; to the south 3/501 found that the nature of the ground between Mont and Neffe made an attack on the latter out of the former ill-advised, while Co. I was smashed by tanks and infantry of *Panzer Lehr* in Wardin.

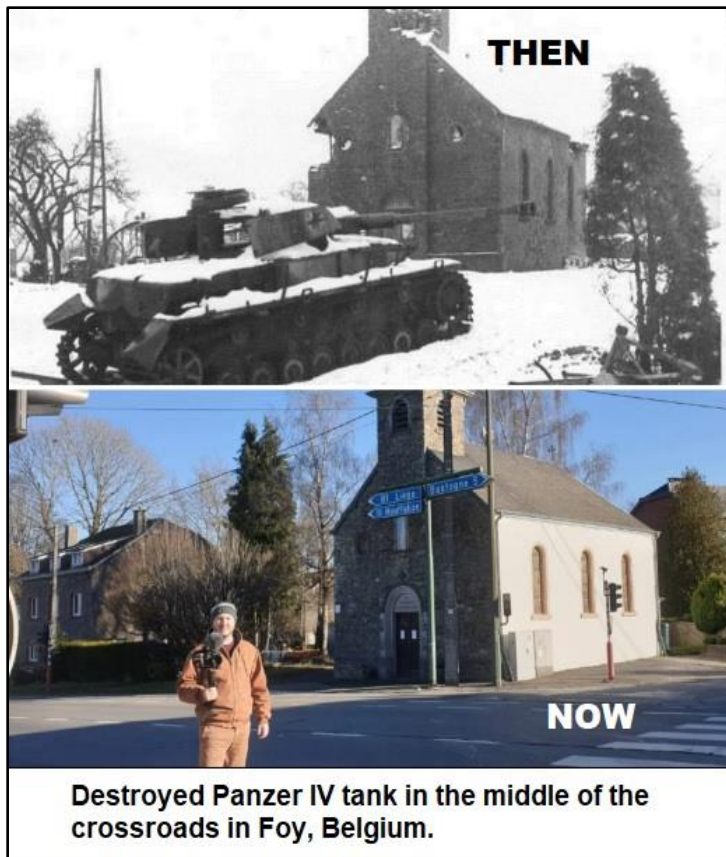
On the northern side of Bastogne Desobry, with Lt. Col. James LaPrade's 1/506 in hand, went over to the attack to try and solidify his position. LaPrade's troopers, supported by a contingent of tanks from the armored task force, drove against the ridges surrounding the town. As the two flank rifle companies gained the lower slopes they were met by a wave of German infantry conducting an attack of their own and stopped cold; at dusk they surrendered their gains and fell back on Noville.



**Infantrymen of the 1st U.S. Army gather in Bastogne, Belgium, to regroup after being cut away from the regiment by Germans in the enemy drive in this area**

As TF Desobry and the airborne units were attempting offensive action TF Cherry and CCR/9, the latter of which was attempting to withdraw, were languishing on the Longvilly road. apped on the road by a steep bank on one side and marshy terrain on the other, the stalled columns were worked over by artillery and subjected to punishing attacks by tanks and infantry from multiple directions. Casualties and equipment losses within the mass were horrendous, but its presence delayed and fixed the 26<sup>th</sup> VG and *Panzer Lehr Divisions* in place, severely disrupting Lüttwitz's plan. The progress of *Panzer Lehr* in particular ground to a halt, largely due to an apparent lack of aggression and interest in driving west on Bayerlein's part but compounded by the diversion of significant forces to strike the columns on the road. These events in sum allowed the 501<sup>st</sup> to come up in time to bar the way into Bastogne from the east.

By the close of 19 December it was clear that all opportunities for American offensive action that day had passed. The 501<sup>st</sup> was pulled back to defensible ground along the line Bizory-Neffe-Mont and reinforced with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the 327<sup>th</sup> Glider Infantry Regiment (GIR) while the 502<sup>d</sup> PIR, under Lt. Col. Steve Chappuis, occupied the arc Champs-Longchamps-Recogne north and northwest of Bastogne. Both regiments tied in with 3/506, between them at Foy. TF O'Hara, at O'Hara's urging, was withdrawn to high ground west of Marvie, and the remnants of TF Cherry and CCR/9, which had gained a foothold at the edge of Magaret, were brought back into American lines through Bizory the following morning. At Noville, however, TF Desobry and 1/506 were ordered to hold, not by McAuliffe or Roberts but by Middleton, who insisted that the village be retained. The paratroopers took up an all-round defense while the armor became a mobile reserve and remained in the center of town



**Destroyed Panzer IV tank in the middle of the crossroads in Foy, Belgium.**

. XLVII *Panzer Corps*' failure to seize Bastogne on 19 December placed Lüttwitz in a difficult position. Bastogne was a crucial communications hub; without it, *Fifth Panzer Army*'s ability to quickly advance westward would be significantly hampered. The original plan for the corps had been for the 26<sup>th</sup> VG Division to seize the town while the armored divisions went on to the Meuse, but the speed and scale at which Bastogne had been reinforced would make its seizure a tall order for the division. Thus, Lüttwitz turned to *Fifth Panzer Army* HQ for advice- should he halt and mass all three of his divisions to subdue Bastogne, or stick to the original plan? The response was to meet halfway: the 2<sup>d</sup> *Panzer Division* was to continue



west with all possible speed while the 26<sup>th</sup> VG Division and Panzer Lehr subdued Bastogne.

By this point the last maneuver elements of the 26<sup>th</sup> VG and Panzer Lehr Divisions were making their way out of the Wiltz valley and approaching Bastogne from the southeast. As a result, Lüttwitz decided that on 20 December he would strike the town from both east and south. The American defensive line that had taken shape the day before had already hardened, however. During the day the 501<sup>st</sup> absorbed and repelled three separate attacks against Bizory, Mont, and Neffe, causing severe loss to the attackers; in these actions supporting M18's of the 705<sup>th</sup> TD Battalion played a crucial role in knocking out enemy armor, while massed fire from up to eleven FA battalions that had coalesced in the sector combined with the heavy machine guns of the infantry battalions to cut the infantry to pieces. On the right of the 501<sup>st</sup> 2/327, coming into position at Marvie, absorbed and crushed with relative ease an attempt by tanks and mechanized infantry of the to carry that town.

An opportunity to drive between the 501<sup>st</sup> and 506<sup>th</sup> and into Bastogne existed for most of 20 December, in the form of a major gap along the rail line that served as the unit boundary between the two regiments, but 26<sup>th</sup> VG Division elements failed to exploit it before being discovered and beaten back. Thus, it was only at Noville that XLVII Panzer Corps experienced success. Here 2<sup>d</sup> Panzer Division elements hit both Noville and Foy, placing extreme pressure on the former and ejecting 3/506 from the latter. 3/502 was ordered to come up on the left of the forces at Noville via Recogne, but McAuliffe and Roberts, the former of which now commanded the sector, concluded that it was time to pull out. At Sink's suggestion the forces at Noville withdrew toward Foy while 3/506 retook the town to cover their retreat. Aided by the fog the survivors punched through the crust of German tanks and infantry between the villages, and by 1700 were back within American lines. With Noville subdued Lüttwitz petitioned Fifth Panzer Army for permission to direct the division into Bastogne to try and capitalize on its success, but he was denied: the 2<sup>d</sup> Panzer Division was to break off from its efforts around Bastogne and make for the Meuse.

## CLASSIFIEDS

To add or remove listings from the Classifieds, please email Dave Steinert at [dsteinert@mtaofnj.org](mailto:dsteinert@mtaofnj.org) or call 201-407-4035.

**For Sale:** Own the world's best tailgating/cooking trailer. MKT 95 in operational condition. Includes 2 M-59 Ranges and 4 MBU V3 burners, griddle, and V3 Power Converter with correct MBU Branch cabling. Asking \$5000. Call John at (973)600-9486.

**For Sale-** M38 Jeep 1951, 27,638 miles, Engine & Transmission Rebuilt, New Parking Brake System, Drive Shafts, Chassis Cleaned & Painted, All Parts Cleaned Primed & Painted, New Radiator & Water Pump, New Belts etc. Government Rebuilt Starter & Generator, 24 Volt System, All Military Parts, All New Dorman Hardware, All Military TM Books. Some assembly required to drive. Needs Brakes

**& Wiring Harness To Complete. Tow Bar & Beechwood Canvas Cover Included. Good Title & QQ plates NJ approved. \$10K. Bob (mobile) 201-663-1093 or Email: [rrobertleach59@aol.com](mailto:rrobertleach59@aol.com).**


**For Sale- CJ5 Jeep 1965, 31,678 miles, Complete Full Body Metal Cap (Meyers), Starts, Runs, Drives As Is, New Rear Leaf Springs, & Complete Brake Rebuild Parts For All Four Corners, Plow Frame, Hydraulics & Blade, Extra Set of Metal Doors. Good Title & Current Nj Paperwork, \$8K, Bob 201-663-1093 or Email: [rrobertleach59@aol.com](mailto:rrobertleach59@aol.com).**

**WANTED: Hello MTA Members, I Am In Search Of Garage Space To Rent. I have two antique vehicles and other items I need to store. Please contact me for any information / leads @ Bob Leach (mobile) 201-663-1093 or Email : [rrobertleach59@aol.com](mailto:rrobertleach59@aol.com).**

**For Sale: 1963 Dodge M43 B1 w/o winch in very good condition. Comes with a large amount of spare parts and accessories. If there is an interest, contact Michael Maglio at 973-697 9419.**

**For Sale- Military 500 Gallon Water Buffalo for sale; \$300 or BO. Call John Sobotka at (862)-266-6284.**

**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 : [Mattrziegler@gmail.com](mailto:Mattrziegler@gmail.com)**



**Gun and Military Show**  
**October 13th - 15th, 2023**  
FORKS OF THE DELAWARE  
HISTORICAL ARMS  
SOCIETY, INC.  
Allentown Fairgrounds  
302 N 17th St  
Allentown, PA 18104  
Saturday: 9:00am – 4:00pm  
Sunday: 9:00am – 1:00pm





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# Military Transport Association

P.O. Box 391  
Budd Lake, NJ 07828

**THE NEXT MTA MEETING WILL  
BE HELD ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5th  
AT THE WHIPPANY AMERICAN  
LEGION POST AT 7PM**



*"Let's try this one more time, soldier  
where's the other shoe?!"*



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](http://www.MTAofNJ.org)

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

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ (cell preferred)

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

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  
Budd Lake, NJ 07828

*Contributions, gifts, or membership dues made or paid to the Military Transport Association, a 501(c)(4) organization, are non-refundable or transferable, and are NOT deductible as charitable contributions for federal tax purposes.*