

MOTOR POOL MESSENGER

the official monthly newsletter of the MILITARY TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION visit us online at www.MTAofNJ.org

Issue: January 2024

Editor: David Steinert



INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

The U.S. Army M60 Armored Vehicle Launched BridgePage	2
The December 7, 2023 MTA Meeting MinutesPage	3
The Battle of the Bulge Series Part VIPage	5
ClassifiedsPage	7

ON THE COVER...



A U.S. Marine M60 Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge (AVLB) makes its way to assist in a convoy river crossing.

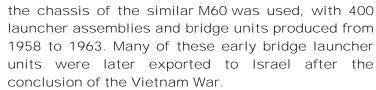
In the early 1960s, the versatile M60 Patton tank hull provided the

prototype for the

design of an Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge (AVLB) used for the launching and retrieval of a 60-foot scissors-type bridge. The consists of three major sections: the launcher, the vehicle hull, and the bridge. The M60 AVLB or Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge introduced in 1963. This combat engineer vehicle was developed by the US Army Engineer Research & Development Laboratories contract with General Dynamics to

replace the previous M48 AVLB. It was designed to launch bridge for tanks and other wheeled combat vehicles across trenches and water obstacles in combat conditions. A total of 400 armored bridge launchers and bridges were built. 125 M60 AVLBs of all variants were constructed.

In the early 1950s, the prototypes for US military Armored Vehicle-Launched Bridge (AVLB) were based on the M48A2 hull. This AVLB prototype launcher assembly used an M48 tank with its turret



Most of the hulls for the M60A1 AVLB were former M60A2 Pattons converted to AVLBs from 1987



to 1996. All AVLBs were constructed at the Anniston Army Depot, Alabama under contract with General Dynamics Land Systems. The driver and commander are seated side by side in what would normally be the turret ring. Instead of a turret, launching equipment for a scissor bridge is fitted. The scissor bridge is carried in folded position on top of the chassis and the hydraulics for the launcher installed in the former driver's compartment. It is launched towards the front by means of a hydraulic launching arm. The driver has controls to launch and retrieve the bridge.



removed from the chassis, fitted with a launching system for the scissors bridge carried on top of the hull. This AVLB bridge launching system was designed and tested by the US Army Engineer Research & Development Laboratories at Ft. Belvoir, Virginia. After the 1959 end of production of the M48,

The launching arm features a large bar that features as an outrigger during emplacement. After assault force vehicles have passed over the bridge, the AVLB can cross over, pick up the bridge on the far bank and continue along in support of assault forces.

It can produce a limited smokescreen by

dumping raw diesel fuel into the exhaust system to visually obscure the area around the vehicle. The smokescreen does not provide protection against infrared, thermal or laser detection.

The vehicle itself is unarmed; however, the crewmembers are typically armed with assault rifles

(M16 or M4), pistols, flares, and/or colored smoke grenades. The M60 AVLM carries up to two M58 Mine Clearing Line Charges mounted on the vehicle. The system consists of an M147 firing kit, an M58A3 line charge and a 5-inch MK22 Mod 4 rocket. The line charge is 350 feet long and contains five pounds per linear foot of C-4 explosive.



In the event a MICLIC fails to detonate normally, it can be manually activated by time-delay fuses every few feet along its length. The modification of the AVLB into an AVLM is a temporary expedient, to employ the system the vehicle cannot be carrying a bridge. The M60 Armored Vehicle Launched Mine Clearing Line Charge (MICLIC) [AVLM] is an M60 Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge (AVLB) with the bridge downloaded.



There were two bridge configurations, formally referred to as a Bridge, Armored-Vehicle Launched: Scissoring Type that were to be carried on the Patton chassis. The scissors-type bridge weights close to 15-tons, is made of aluminum and can be

deployed under armor protection in 3 to 10 minutes, and retrieved and stowed in 10 minutes to an hour depending on terrain. The Military Load Classification (MLC) 60 bridge has sufficient capacity to support the M48 and M60 families of armored vehicles.

An upgraded MLC70 bridge was developed for the AVLB during the 1990s at Anniston Army Depot (ANAD). The bridge conversion added stronger materials. After a round of testing in 2012, the MLC 70 was reclassified to the MLC 85. 217 of these bridges were in U.S. inventory as of 2017.

Since its introduction in service in 1963, the M60 AVLB has supported the armored forces of the US Army and Marine Corps in many conflicts and military exercises. It was also exported to a handful of nations that also used the Patton series of tanks. Both the M48 AVLB and the M60 AVLB variants were deployed to Vietnam.



ATTENTION MEMBERS!

THE NEXT MTA MEETING WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 4th 2024... MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE WHIPPANY AMERICAN LEGION IN THE MEETING ROOM IN THE BASEMENT

Food at 6:00PM...Meeting starts at 7:00PM

MTA Meeting Minutes

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm by President **John Sobotka** and opened with the *Pledge of Allegiance* and *a moment of silence*. A motion to approve last month's minutes was made by **Jim Mescher** and seconded by **Anita Roberts**. *Motion carried!*

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

Financial Report - Ending November 30, 2023

 Beginning balance
 \$ 45,489.51

 Income
 \$ 835.00

 Expenditures
 \$ 1,611.58

 Closing balance
 \$ 44,712.93

A motion to approve the Financial Report was made by Anita Roberts and seconded by Carolyn Hoffman. Motion carried.

<u>President's Message</u>- John Sobotka reflected on the anniversary of Pearl Harbor with a short account of the events of that day.

Membership- MTA MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE BY JANUARY 31, 2024. AFTER JANUARY 31ST, IT WILL BE ASSUMED YOU ARE NO LONGER INTERESTED IN BEING A MEMBER OF THE MTA AND YOU WILL BE REMOVED FROM THE ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP LIST AND WILL NO LONGER RECEIVE A NEWSLETTER. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was included in last month's newsletter for everyone's convenience.

<u>Newsletter-</u> A continued thank you to all of our contributors throughout the year that help make the newsletter a success! Show fliers also available now from Dave Steinert.

<u>Parades</u>-Three vehicles were able to participate in the Sussex Salute to Veterans parade. Future discussion possible about adding this and the parade in Paterson/Totowa to our agenda sheet.

Quartermaster- Jim Mescher had the camo fleece pullover and the brown hooded, zipped sweatshirts for display tonight. The hooded is also available in forest green. Pricing is \$26, or \$31 if flag and name are applied. The camo fleece cost is \$41 and includes flag and name. Pricing on both types of apparel increases by \$4 if XXL or larger. He will start taking orders next month and it will be an ongoing order. Payment must be cash up front. Gary Schultz does have a few green T-shirts left from the spring at \$5 each.

<u>Donations</u>- Honor Flight South Jersey sent a thank you for the club's support for Veterans Day as did the Wycoff YMCA for the donation to their Veterans Day luncheon. A donation was received by the club from the Manchester Community Theatre in memory of **Anneilese Ratzburg**.

<u>Swap Meet</u>- Jim Mescher reported he will be meeting with the fairgrounds staff about the April 2024 Swap. The website is now open to take ticket orders. To date, the vending spots in the Richards building is approximately half sold, 1/3 of the covered outdoor spots are sold. Returning vendors have the option to wait until February 1st, then unsold spots open up to anyone.

<u>Website-</u> Gary Schultz advised the group that the old MTA Email exchange will be completely discontinued on 12/31/23. If you haven't signed up for MTA GroupiO, please do so soon.

Operation Toy Train (OTT)- Carolyn Hoffman updated the group on the *Toy for Tots* train runs. Trains are packed for this upcoming big weekend which includes an additional stop to the Saturday schedule this year. The Rockaway to Phillipsburg run netted over 6,000 toys while first time Kutztown station brought in 120. The Central Jersey run collected over 700. **John Sobotka** mentioned that the marines provided a generous amount of boxes and posters for this year's collections. Angie will be at each stop also selling merchandise. *Thank you all for your help!*

OMS7-Pat Dolan presented a display of some of the WWII Christmas Overseas posters he has collected and explained how Walt Disney would actually have character patches produced for servicemens' units at written request. He further explained the original red train *Toys for Tots* logo was drawn by Walt himself.

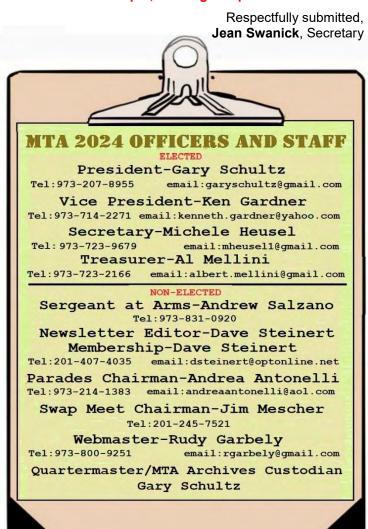
Old Business- Nothing tonight.

New Business- Nothing tonight.

For the Good of the Club- Bill McKelvey has donated for an auction a WWII uniform, size small private jacket with a Americal Division patch of the South Pacific. This patch signifies the areas of New Caledonia, New Guinea, Philippines and Solomon Islands. 50% goes to the club-Tim Swanick is the new owner. If anyone is interested in acquiring a M38A1, former member Tom Slockbower is looking to sell one-contact Tim for a phone number.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:02pm by **Jean Swanick** and seconded by Anita Roberts.

NEXT MEETING – JANUARY 4th – Legion Hall – Food 6:00pm, Meeting 7:00pm





DO YOU KNOW THIS GUY?

This high school photograph was submitted to the newsletter by Mike Szymanski. Clue: He has been a MTA Member for over 20 years.. Continue reading the Newsletter for other clues.

THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE SERIES PART VI

THE BREAKING POINT: WITHDRAWAL FROM ST. VITH
By Jim Swanick

The German victory at St. Vith devolved into an organizational nightmare as troops of the 18th and 62^d Volksgrenadier (VG) Divisions streamed into the town to soak in the warmth of its buildings. Officers and men hurtled through the streets in captured American vehicles while a massive traffic jam tied up elements of the Fifth and Sixth Panzer Armies as they tried to pass through. Lost in the confusion was any ability to press the attack beyond St. Vith, and by midnight on 22 December CCB/7th Armored Division had reformed along the high ground west of the town.

Maj. Gen. Matthew Ridgway, XVIII Airborne Corps commander, knew that First Army did not expect the troops in the



salient to fight to the bitter end. In the early hours of 22 December he authorized their commander, Brig. Gen. Bob Hasbrouck of the 7th Armored Division, to withdraw as he saw fit. Ridgway then muddied the waters, however; in the same message, in which he ordered Hasbrouck to ensure that what was left of Maj. Gen. 106th Jones' Alan Infantry Division conformed to movements, he placed Jones, the superior officer, in charge of

all forces in the salient. To compliment this "puzzling doubletalk," Ridgway sent a proposal that a "fortified goose egg" be established in front of Vielsalm, where St. Vith's defenders would be supplied by air and hold out until relieved by an attack by the 3^d Armored Division.

Ridgway's message created tension in the Allied camp. Though his order for Jones to assume command later created a stir among historians, its impact at the time it was issued ultimately was nil; both Hasbrouck and Jones had protested the (justified) First Army order placing the more competent former over the latter, on the grounds that Jones outranked Hasbrouck. Both had preferred their original command arrangement of "cooperating" with one another. The fortified goose egg was another matter, however. As a paratrooper that had led the 82^d Airborne Division in three campaigns, Ridgway was used to fighting surrounded, and like most American generals despised ceding ground by default. The fortified goose egg proposal was born from this background. In the minds of the men on the ground, however, Ridgway's proposal represented a death sentence; Brig. Gen. Bruce Clarke of CCB/7 went so far as to characterize it as "Custer's Last Stand."

Hasbrouck formulated his reply to the proposal during the morning of 22 December. In it he voiced opposition to the fortified goose egg concept, pointing out that the position was covered entirely by German artillery and that the road net within it was too poor to support armored units in the defense. He also drew attention to supply concerns. He signed off with his view that if they did not pull out the 7th Armored would be destroyed. Jones endorsed the message before it was sent, and it was received at XVIII Airborne Corps HQ at 1150.

The pessimism of Hasbrouck's message infuriated Ridgway, but it also spurred him to action. At 1225 he radioed Jones and confirmed the order to withdraw, then hopped into a jeep that took him to Vielsalm. There he met with Jones and Hasbrouck, the latter of which he greeted angrily with "Did you read this before you signed it?" Hasbrouck stood his ground and replied that he had. Ridgway listened as the division commander made his case, and the two then went forward to speak with Clarke and Col. Alexander Reid of the 424th Infantry Regiment before meeting with Brig. Gen. Bill Hoge of CCB/9th Armored not far from the front line. Ridgway knew Hoge as "calm, courageous, [and] imperturbable," and came away from their interaction finally convinced that withdrawal was indeed the best decision. He returned to Vielsalm, where he fired Jones, placed Hasbrouck back in command, and ordered Hasbrouck to start pulling his men back as soon as possible. It was time to withdraw.



Tanks of the 9th Armored Division roll through an abandoned French village. During the defense of St. Vith, the 9th Armored and several other American units suffered heavy casualties.

The extrication of the exhausted forces from the salient would hinge on the ability of Maj. Gen. Jim Gavin's 82d Airborne Division to retain control of a narrow strip of land between Vielsalm and Salmchâteu, and more specifically, the road bridges over the Salm River in both villages. By 22 December the division had come into position on the line Cheneux-Vielsalm-Regne and was heavily engaged with the 1st SS Panzer Division's KG Hansen along the Salm. Under orders to relieve KG Peiper, which remained trapped to the north, on 21 December Hansen struck the 2^d Battalion of the 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) at Trois Ponts. 2/505 fought a chaotic fight on the eastern bank of the river and turned back a tank-infantry attack twice its size, but Hansen persisted. During 22 December he attempted to batter the rest of the regimental front, but interdiction fire prevented him from concentrating his remaining forces. Thus, no blow he could land did so with the strength necessary to punch through the sparse line of veteran paratroopers.

Hansen's battlegroup was not the only formation to strike the 505th on 22 December. Shortly after dusk an infantry battalion of the arriving *9th SS Panzer Division* surged against G/505 at Grand-Halleux, where a bridge across the Salm remained intact. Out of the darkness came two rifle companies, screaming wildly to try and unnerve the paratroopers. The All-Americans were not fooled, however, and blew the bridge as the first grenadiers began to cross. The company then tore into the onrushing enemy with fire of all calibers, stopping cold all attempts to wade the river. With the destroyed bridge and stalwart troopers preventing further movement to the west at Grand-Halleux, the SS men turned south toward Vielsalm, the northern post of the St. Vith salient escape route.



A disabled German tank lies abandoned along the edge of a slushy road as an American tank destrover rumbles past. The wintry conditions during the Battle of the Bulge temporarily hindered the employment of U.S. air power.

As the 505th grappled with *KG Hansen*, civilians passing through the lines along the division's southern face brought word of a German buildup in that direction. This was the 2^d SS Panzer Division, which had run out of gas on 21 December. On 22 December it was resupplied and sent *KG Krag* toward Joubiéval, where the battlegroup was struck heavily by artillery called in by elements of the 325th Glider Infantry Regiment (GIR). Later that evening Krag was ordered to turn east and drive on Salmchâteu, the southern post of the escape route leading out of the St. Vith salient.

With the stage thus set, 23 December became the day of decision. Hasbrouck put out his orders before dawn: the forces in the center would pull out first, with the units on the flanks turning in to follow them out. As this occurred a thin rear guard would keep pursuers at bay. A good omen came with the dawn, as it was discovered that a sudden cold snap had frozen solid ground that just the day before had been a muddy quicksand seriously impairing vehicular movement.

The withdrawal was scheduled to begin at 0300, with CCB/9th Armored leading the way, but heavy engagement with the 62^d VG Division prevented Hoge from breaking contact until 0700. The break was a clean one, however, and by 1200 CCB/9, with Gl's of the 424th Infantry piled high atop its tanks and halftracks, had crossed the bridge at Salmchâteu and reached its assembly area near Malempré without incident. CCB/7 also broke free under pressure and fell back through Vielsalm, where CCA/7 and CCR/7

later crossed despite attempts to interfere by troops of the 9th SS Panzer Division. Not everyone made it out so easily, however. Two of the three covering forces, TF Jones and 1/112th Infantry, were beaten to Salmchâteu by KG Krag and elements of the 62^d VG Division and Führer Begleit Brigade (FBB). The confused melee that followed forced the Americans to divert to a secondary road to bypass the town. It was 0300 before the last of the St. Vith defenders passed into the lines of the 82^d Airborne Division.

Getting the 7th Armored Division and its attachments out of the St. Vith salient was no small victory, considering especially that it occurred during daylight hours under pressure and had been conducted by troops that were in their sixth or seventh straight day of heavy fighting. Even as it came out of the line, however, the "Lucky Seventh" was sent back into the fight. There was trouble at a crossroads called Baraque de Fraiture.

Situated on a high plateau and consisting of three farmhouses surrounded by an open field, Baraque de Fraiture was one of those points in the Ardennes that in the course of battle took on a significance far beyond its humble appearance. It was here that the north-south N15 and east-west N28 highways met and crossed. On 19 December it had been taken over by Maj. Arthur Parker III of the 106th Division's 589th FA Battalion, who identified its strategic importance and began building a garrison with whatever transient units that filtered past. As XVIII Airborne Corps came into position the N15 highway became the unit boundary separating the zone of Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose's 3^d Armored Division from that of the 82^d Airborne Division, and when the 3^d Armored was transferred to VII Corps on the afternoon of 23 December, it became the corps boundary as well.



St. Vith lies a desolate ruin on February 7, 1945, days after the desperate fight for control of the key Belgian village was over. After several weeks of fighting, the Germans were forced to abandon their winter offensive and relinquish all the territory they had gained during the Battle of the Bulge.

Rose and Gavin identified that the lightly defended crossroads was vulnerable and took steps to reinforce it. CCA was returned to Rose during the night of 22-23 December, and Rose pulled a platoon of M4's, a platoon of armored infantry, and Co. C of the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion from TF Richardson to augment two assault guns that he had given Parker earlier. Gavin released 2/325 from its role as division reserve and returned it to the 325th GIR. Rose's infantry were held up by enemy resistance, but the tanks got through, as did the glidermen. The tanks and F/325 bolstered Parker's meager positions at the crossroads, while the remainder of 2/325 emplaced themselves along a ridgeline outside the village of Fraiture, which overlooked the crossroads.

As reinforcements were rushed to Parker the threat to the crossroads was growing. Due to *Sixth Panzer Army's* failure to break through V Corps' positions to the north it had been decided to reinforce the success of *Fifth Panzer Army*. Thus, *II SS Panzer*

Corps had been given to Fifth Panzer Army, with orders to protect the army's right flank by driving to the Meuse between Namur and Huy. To get there, the corps would have to pass through Manhay; and on 23 December the shortest route to Manhay for the 2^d SS Panzer Division was through Baraque de Fraiture.



The Germans attacked at dawn, with the opening blow falling on 2/325 along the Fraiture ridgeline. The attack caught the battalion by surprise; due to the extreme cold most of the glidermen had been permitted to shelter in the houses of the village, with a skeleton crew remaining on watch on the ridge. The sentries' attempts to fight back failed as the cold had frozen the bolts of their weapons, and a battalion's worth of panzergrenadiers spilled into the town, where they were met by the rest of 2/325 in a chaotic fight that saw the veteran glidermen eject them from the village by maneuver. With the Fraiture ridgeline remaining firmly in American hands, attention was turned to the crossroads.

Throughout the attack on the ridge a steady drumbeat of artillery fire had fallen on Baraque de Fraiture. This bombardment reached its crescendo at 1600 and continued until 1630, at which point the entire 4th SS Panzergrenadier Regiment, led by Panther and Tiger tanks, attacked from three sides. By 1700 every American vehicle in the crossroads position was on fire, and the garrison was quickly overwhelmed.

The loss of Baraque de Fraiture created a major crisis within XVIII Airborne Corps. The right flank of the 82d Airborne Division was now open and vulnerable, and the road to Liège controlled by the enemy. Reactions to the breakthrough cascaded up the chain of command. Gavin ordered a counterattack on the crossroads but thought better of sending his paratroopers headlong against massed German armor, and instead placed 2/504 north of Baraque de Fraiture to protect his open flank. TF Richardson put together a force consisting of a platoon each of M4's and armored infantry, A/509, and a rifle company from the newly arrived (and totally green) 75th Infantry Division and ordered it to advance to contact. These men dug in on the N15 during the night of 23 December. Ridgway, meanwhile, used the only resource he had: the 7th Armored Division. To Gavin went CCB/9th Armored; to Manhay went CCA/7th Armored. The "Lucky Seventh" had come out of the frying pan and back into the fire.

DO YOU KNOW THIS GUY?

In the fall of 1965 he received a letter from Uncle Sam asking him to report to the Selected Service Center. After basic training at Fort Hood, Texas and individual special training at Fort Bragg, NC, he was sent to Vietnam and assigned to Company A, 2nd Battalion, 12th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division. He would spend his tour of duty in the jungles of Vietnam on search and destroy missions.



CLASSIFIEDS

To add or remove listings from the Classifieds, please email Dave Steinert at 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: 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

WANTED: Hello MTA Members, I am in search qf a 1953 Dodge Power Giant D300 early two-whole Hydrovac brake unit. This unit can be found on many similar sized vehicles. Please contact me for any information / leads @ Bob Leach (mobile) 201-663-1093 or Email: rrobertleach59@aol.com.



DO YOU KNOW THIS GUY?

His name is Jack Pellington and he joined the MTA in 1994. Jack has been very involved in the club, especially the *Toys for Tots* campaign. At the MTA Swap Meets, he cruises around the show in his M274 Mule.



Military Transport Association

P.O. Box 391 Budd Lake, NJ 07828



THE NEXT MTA MEETING WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY, January 4th AT THE WHIPPANY AMERICAN LEGION POST AT 7PM



Name:

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.

Street:		
City:	State:	ZIP:
Phone: ()	- 0	(cell preferred)
Email:		
MTA Membership Level:	Single (\$3	30) Family (\$35)
Are you a member of MV	PA? Yes	No
Military vehicles owned:		
Return form with \$	annual dues and	d \$ donation to:
Military Transport Assoc	iation, Inc.	
P.O. Box 391		
Budd Lake, NJ 07828		
Contributions, gifts, or members Association, a 501(c)(4) organiz NOT deductible as charitable co	ation, are non-refunde	able or transferable, and are

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