



MOTOR POOL MESSENGER

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

Issue: February 2024

Editor: David Steinert



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ON THE COVER...



A **“Slick” of Bell UH1 “Huey”** helicopters flying quickly with a deployment of U.S. troops to a targeted area in Vietnam.

Some historians like to refer to the Vietnam War **as the “Helicopter War.”** Helicopters were still in development during WWII and saw very limited action. During the Korean War they were used mostly for evacuating the wounded out of combat areas. But during the Vietnam War, helicopters were used by the U.S. military in almost every aspect of the war: troop transport, scouting, equipment hauling, search and rescue, and providing high-caliber air support for ground troops.



Troops unload from a CH-47 Chinook in the Cay Giép Mountains, Vietnam, 1967

The United States military utilized several iconic models of helicopters during the Vietnam War, each having its own purpose, each having its own strengths and weaknesses.

Every branch of the U.S. military employed helicopters in Vietnam. In total, nearly 12,000 helicopters saw action in the war and more than 5,000 were destroyed. These numbers include all the different models of helicopters used by the U.S. military.

“The Army went through helicopters at a ferocious pace during the Vietnam War,” says Robert Mitchell, director of the United States Army Aviation Museum at Fort Novosel. The young men who flew those helicopters—many of them only 19 or 20 years

old—had **“absolutely the most dangerous jobs in the war,”** he adds.

In Vietnam, the strategy of a large-scale transport of troops to the battlefield using World War II-style fixed wing cargo planes, where paratroopers parachuted into hostile areas, became almost obsolete—only one major parachute assault was conducted during the war in Vietnam.

The Army centered its airmobile operations around the use of Vertol CH-47 Chinooks and Hueys, **referred to as “slicks” because they lacked external armament.** Arriving in formations so tight that the rotors of neighboring helicopters overlapped, the slicks moved troops and equipment to the battlefield with extraordinary speed.

Being a fairly new strategy, the casualty rates were tremendously high. Tragically, 2,002 pilots and 2,704 crew chiefs and gunners were killed in the **“helicopter war.”** They account for a disproportionate 7 percent of the names etched in black granite on the Vietnam memorial wall in Washington, D.C.



A crashed Huey in Vietnam 1967

So why was U.S. helicopter casualties so high in Vietnam? Obvious reasons can be explained by those that served there...**the** amount of ground-fire against aircraft of all shapes and sizes in Vietnam was staggering. The prevalence of automatic weapons of various calibers among the Vietnamese alone created an extremely hostile environment for ALL aircraft, especially for helicopters. In addition, the employment of helicopter tactics was very new – Vietnam presented the opportunity for the true birth

of **the “air-cavalry”**. This, compounded by extremely intense resistance from the ground, would stand to create massive losses.

Additionally, not every loss of a helicopter was due to enemy fire. In fact, many losses would have been to accidents in country due to heightened stress and the abbreviation or rush of training to fill a sudden need.

In retrospect, the helicopter was a relatively new creation. It's **conception** only came about in the 1940s, with some usage in Korea, but it **didn't** really show its versatility until being used in large numbers in Vietnam. Unfortunately, it still had a lot of issues that still needed to be evaluated and corrected.

Over 10% of Vietnam's casualties were helicopter crew members and for most of them, 10% were door gunners. The average lifespan of a door gunner on a huey in Vietnam was only 2 weeks.

In the next few issues of the newsletter, I would like to present the different models of helicopters that were used during the war in Vietnam. Hopefully I can capture what it was like to pilot, fight and travel into a war zone in these flying contraptions called helicopters or as they were fondly called **“choppers”**.



ATTENTION MEMBERS!

THE NEXT MTA MEETING WILL BE HELD ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1st 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, January 4, 2024 at the American Legion Hall in Whippany, NJ
Submitted by Michele Heusel

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by MTA President **Gary Schultz** and opened with the *Pledge of Allegiance* and a *“moment of silence”*. A motion to approve last

month's minutes was made by **Jean Swanick** and seconded by **Anita Roberts**. *Motion carried!*

President's Message- **Gary Schultz** announced he's President for the first time in his 44th year in the club. *“Let's get back to trail rides”*. Gary proposed a ride to High Point State Park in the spring. Let's use our vehicles as much as we can. **Tim Swanick** spoke about the possibility of another Picatinny Arsenal visit with our vehicles.

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

Financial Report – Ending December 31, 2023

Beginning balance	\$ 44,712.93
Income	\$ 2,133.68
Expenditures	-\$ 1,627.68
Closing balance	\$ 45,218.93

Treasurer Report – Al reported the December Financial report is preliminary pending year end audit. A motion to approve the Financial Report was made by **Jim Mescher** and seconded by **Jean Swanick**. *Motion carried!*

Additionally, Al reported that net revenue at the close of 2023 showed a drop from 2022 of \$5,400. Mostly attributed to the poor SWAP Meet attendance. Dues, income and parades generate income for the club. Movie productions were down last year, but parades were up.

Membership- DUES ARE NOW DUE FOR 2024, BY JANUARY 31st. IF YOU HAVE NOT PAID 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.

Membership News - Currently we have 150 members, 20 are Life members, 60 have paid their dues so far for 2024.

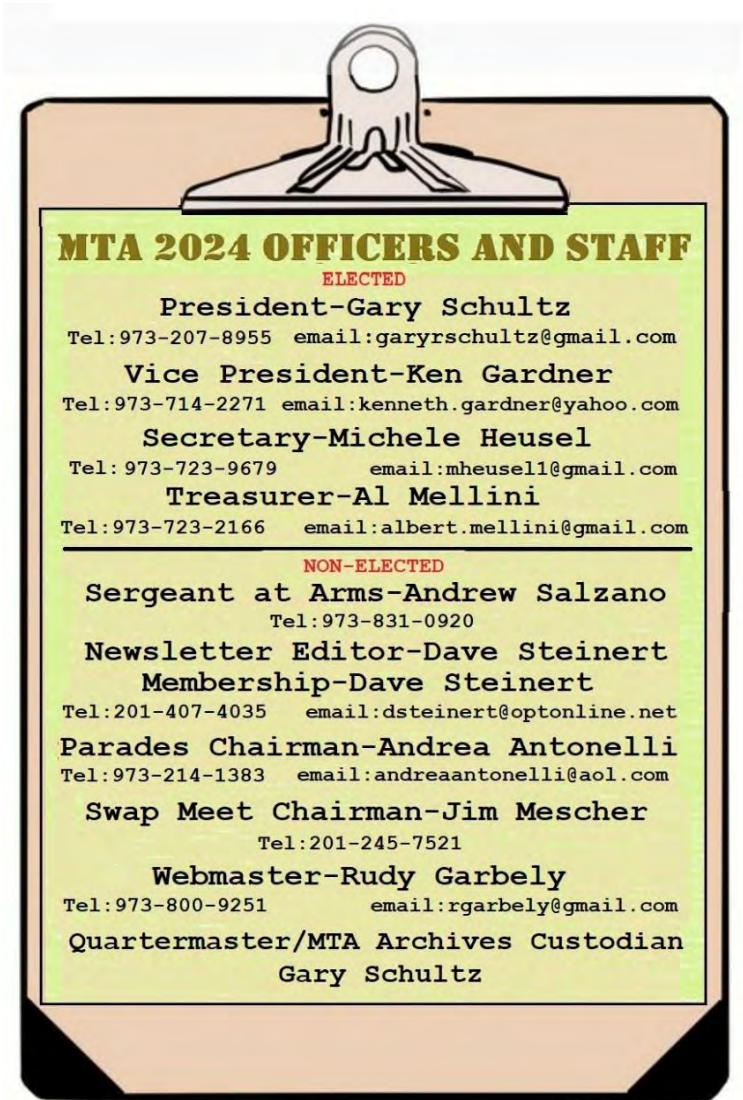
Parades - Three vehicles were able to participate in the Sussex Salute to Veterans parade for Veteran's Day. Future discussion about possibly adding this and the parade in Paterson/Totowa to our agenda sheet.

Andy Salzano is getting more info about participating in Whippany American Legion Memorial Day parade. It will be held on the morning of Monday, May 27, 2024. We would need to work out the 3 vehicle per parade minimum. Currently we participate in 10 parades for Memorial Day Weekend.

Quartermaster- **Jim Mescher** had on the MTA brown hooded fleece. Also available is the camo fleece pullover and 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. Jim is currently taking orders and it will be ongoing. Payment must be made in cash up front. Gary has a few green T-shirts with the yellow logo leftover from last spring at \$5 each.

Donations- **Al Mellini** reported *Toy for Tots* is reimbursing \$281 that the MTA laid out for food above our \$500 donation. Al also proposed a donation from the club in the amount \$500 to support **Nicholas Heusel's Donation Drive** to support Veterans of the VA Medical Center in Lyons, NJ. Please see

info about the drive listed under **FOR THE GOOD OF THE CLUB**. **Pat Dolan** made a motioned to approve. Second motion was made by **Andy Salzano**. *Motion carried!*



MTA 2024 OFFICERS AND STAFF
ELECTED

President-Gary Schultz
Tel: 973-207-8955 email: garyrschultz@gmail.com

Vice President-Ken Gardner
Tel: 973-714-2271 email: kenneth.gardner@yahoo.com

Secretary-Michele Heusel
Tel: 973-723-9679 email: mheusel1@gmail.com

Treasurer-Al Mellini
Tel: 973-723-2166 email: albert.mellini@gmail.com

NON-ELECTED

Sergeant at Arms-Andrew Salzano
Tel: 973-831-0920

Newsletter Editor-Dave Steinert

Membership-Dave Steinert
Tel: 201-407-4035 email: dsteinert@optonline.net

Parades Chairman-Andrea Antonelli
Tel: 973-214-1383 email: andreaantonelli@aol.com

Swap Meet Chairman-Jim Mescher
Tel: 201-245-7521

Webmaster-Rudy Garbely
Tel: 973-800-9251 email: rgarbely@gmail.com

Quartermaster/MTA Archives Custodian
Gary Schultz

Old Business- The MTA Terminated our old MTA-List member messaging service on December 28th. mta-mail@Groups.io is our new member messaging service.

New Business - Gary Shultz announced about Col. Dwyer is hosting an event titled: *The Life and Times of the Continental Soldier* at North Branch Library in Clinton, NJ to be held on Sunday, January 14th at 2pm

For the Good of the Club -Tim Swanick spoke about the annual Picnic at Rockaway Fireman's Field. We need to select a date as they are booking up.

Nicholas Heusel announced he will be running a donation drive to support the Veterans of the VA Medical Center in Lyons, NJ. The drive will run from Feb 1st – March 31st. An Amazon wish list will be made available soon and a flyer about the drive will be available to members via MTA Facebook page as well as email. A List of supplies needed can be dropped off at MTA meetings or ordered directly from Amazon. *More details to come!*

Kevin Trimmel asked if any members have interest in going to Normandy Beach, France for the 80th anniversary of D-Day? He personally is planning to attend, and any members interested can reach out to him to coordinate plans.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:03pm!

NEXT MEETING – THURSDAY FEBRUARY 1st – Legion Hall – Food 6:00pm, Meeting 7:00pm

Respectfully submitted by,
Michele Heusel
Secretary

Swap Meet - Jim Mescher reported that he started sign-ups for volunteers and plan layouts for military trucks in the works. **Pat Dolan** mentioned that re-enactments including the paratroopers from the 101st Airborne committed to attending this year. The *Salvation Army* is also planning to be there.

Tim Swanick reported on vendor tables and spaces for this year's SWAP Meet - 40% sold on vendors. He will be sending out second mass mailing soon. Returning vendors have the option to wait until February 1st, then spots will open up to the public.

Ken Gardner reported on food vendors for the SWAP meet – no signed contracts yet. Still needs to setup with food trucks and rotatory vendors.

Operation Toy Train (OTT) – Tim Farrell reported – thank you to all that supported and helped out with Toy Train. We set a new record of 37K + toys were collected. Already making plans to how we will operate next year. Thanks to MTA to with support for food and help for organization.



REDBALL WINTER SHOW
SATURDAY
MARCH 2ND, 2024

Mt. Bethel Volunteer Fire Company
2341 N Delaware Dr, Mount Bethel
Pennsylvania 18343

SWAP MEET
Saturday, March 2nd, 2024
(9 am - 4 pm)

VENDOR SETUP
Friday, March 1st, 2024
(10 am - 6 pm)

THE "HELICOPTER WAR" – VIETNAM

Part I

Wanted Helicopter Pilots: Qualifications: "Young and Crazy"

By David Steinert

"We were all young and crazy then," says Jim Messinger, who flew Hueys in Vietnam. "My first job as an adult was to fly around in a helicopter and let people shoot at me. I was 20 years old in flight school." That school was the Primary Helicopter Center at Fort Wolters, Texas. Of all the helicopter pilots who flew in Vietnam, 95 percent passed through the center at Wolters. Located about 20 miles west of Fort Worth, Texas, the school, which ran from 1956 until the end of the Vietnam War in 1973, was an essential part of the pressure cooker process that transformed anybody who qualified—from teenagers to seasoned combat officers—into world-class helicopter pilots.

Wolters trained future pilots on three models of small training helicopters. All three were powered by gasoline-fueled piston engines. These were cheaper to operate than the Hueys. In many respects the trainers were trickier to fly than Hueys, which better prepared the young pilots for the UH-1. None of the trainers came with instruments for flying in the clouds, such advanced training happened elsewhere, such as Fort Rucker, Alabama. Each instructor at Wolters, would be assigned three students at a time, where they could thoroughly train them and get to know them. "Every eight weeks we threw out the old bunch and took on a new one," says Jim Messinger.



The TH-55 Training Helicopter-One of three models used at Fort Wolters Flight School, TX

It didn't matter whether you were an entitled officer or a low-ranking Warrant Officer Candidate (WOC), all students faced the risk of failing. All trainees received a continuous pummeling of tests and emergency drills. One of the most terrifying flight maneuvers required students to recover from a complete engine failure. After the instructor would shut down the power while in flight, leaving the main rotor to slowly windmill. The students needed to quickly scan the instruments and adjust the controls and find a safe landing spot taking their unpowered machines to a screeching stop on the ground. This was called a touchdown autorotation.

When "mistakes" during autorotation practice did happen at Fort Wolters, there usually was aircraft damage, injuries and an occasional fatal crash. "But after 200 flight hours," Jim Messinger says of the whole trial by fire, from Fort



Terry Linn Weaver

November 13, 1943 - January 12 2024

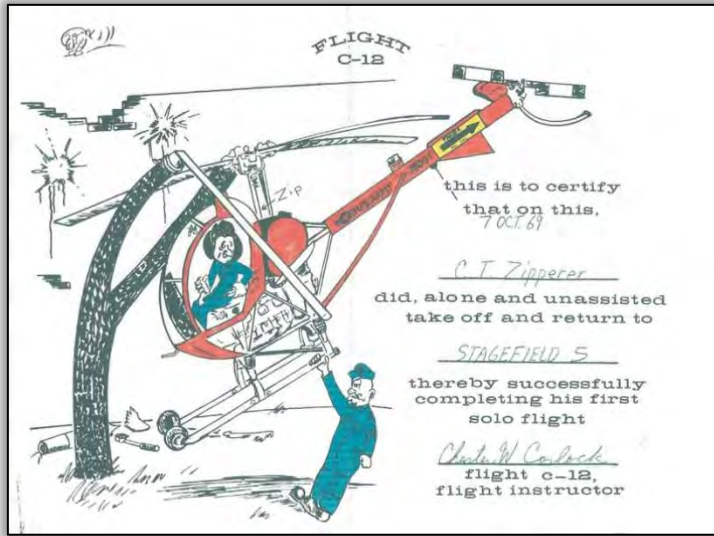
Terry L. Weaver passed away on Friday, January 12, 2024 at Morristown Medical Center. He was 80. Born in Pennsylvania, Terry served in the USMC as a Sergeant during the Viet Nam War. Terry settled in Morristown after the war, starting a family and working as a Police Officer for the Morristown Police Dept, retiring in 1989. He was a member of the Military Transport Association.

Terry is predeceased by his wife of 48 years, Karen. He is survived by his partner, Norma Kelley-Ruschell; his son, Brent and his wife, Laurie and their children Morgan, Nicholas and Michael; Son Scott and his wife Christine and their children Diana and Emma.

Terry has been a member of the MTA since 2011. He will always be remembered for constantly having a pipe in one hand and a piece of ordnance in the other hand. He was very active in the club with attending many sponsored club events with his M38A1 Jeep and with its trailer displaying many types of ordnance and equipment. He was especially present at the annual Lead East Classic Car Show at the Parsippany Hilton Hotel, where Terry supported the USMC Toys for Tots program. He will be sadly missed by the MTA and our deepest condolences to his family.

Semper Fi Terry!

Wolters through Fort Rucker, “we were super-highly trained by civilian standards.” Another pilot who flew in Vietnam recalls, “...training at Rucker ended with a few days at a forward helicopter base that simulated conditions students would find in Vietnam, during which students were awakened at night with big firecrackers and alert horns that ordered them to their ships at a flat run.”



A student who failed a key test during training, was washed out of helicopter school. Surprisingly, during the peak enrollment years, 1968 and 1969, only about 15 percent failed to graduate from Fort Wolters. While noncoms and officers could go back to work they had been doing, a newly arrived Warrant Officer Candidate who failed had no such fallback, and likely would end up humping a rifle through rice paddies in Vietnam.

Your reward for graduating flight school was an all expenses paid vacation to the beautiful country of Vietnam. So, if you were a newbie WOC, whether you were washed out or successfully graduated flight school, your final destination seemed to be Vietnam.

The moniker UH stands for “utility helicopter” and during the Vietnam War no piece of war equipment was more utilized than the Bell UH-1, the versatile workhorse known as the Huey.

Hueys first arrived in Vietnam in the late 1950s. They were primarily used to run medevac missions (called “dustoffs”) for American military advisors. The Army quickly saw the potential of the Huey as a new kind of war machine for a new kind of warfare. At Fort Benning, Georgia, Army tacticians developed the concept of the “air assault” or “slicks,” a helicopter squadron of troop transports and gunships that could bring the battle to even the most remote location.

“It was a solution born of its times. Modern adversaries are likely to be much better equipped than the Viet Cong—a few shoulder-fired missiles would stop a Vietnam-style air assault mission (flown at high altitude before spiraling into the

landing zone) very quickly,” says Robert Mason, who wrote *Chickenhawk*, a recollection of his experiences as a Huey pilot in Vietnam.

Remembering his first real action in Vietnam, Mason recalls, “I think this was my first as a command-ship pilot, and I was for survival, I would’ve been very happy flying the brigade commander up there at 5,000 feet, or [General William] Westmoreland to his apartment in Saigon. It’s amazing how many places I considered being besides there.”



“In assaults, we usually started drawing fire at 1,000 feet, sometimes at 500. This time we didn’t...”

“...At 500 feet, on a glide path to the clearing, smoke from the just completed prestrike by our artillery and gunships drifted straight up in the still air. There had to be one

time when the prep actually worked and everybody [the enemy] was killed in the LZ [landing zone]. I hoped this might be it...

“Fighting my feeling of dread, I went through the automatic routine of checking the smoke drift for wind direction. None. We approached from the east, three ships lined up in a trail, to land in the skinny LZ. But it was too quiet!

“At 100 feet above the trees, closing on the near end of the LZ, the door gunners in Yellow One started firing. They shot into the trees at the edge of the clearing, into the bushes, anywhere they suspected the enemy was hiding. There was no return fire. The two gunships on each side of our flight opened up with their flex guns. Smoke poured out of them as they crackled. My ears rang with the loud but muffled popping as my

UH-1 IROQUOIS “HUEY” HELICOPTER

Heavy lifter
In the UH-1D version of the Huey and later variants, including the UH-1H shown here, the blade was lengthened from 44 feet to 48 feet, enabling the chopper to handle heavier loads.

Power-packed
A stronger engine, introduced on the UH-1H, improved the Huey’s lift, particularly on days when hot and humid air could hurt a helicopter’s performance.

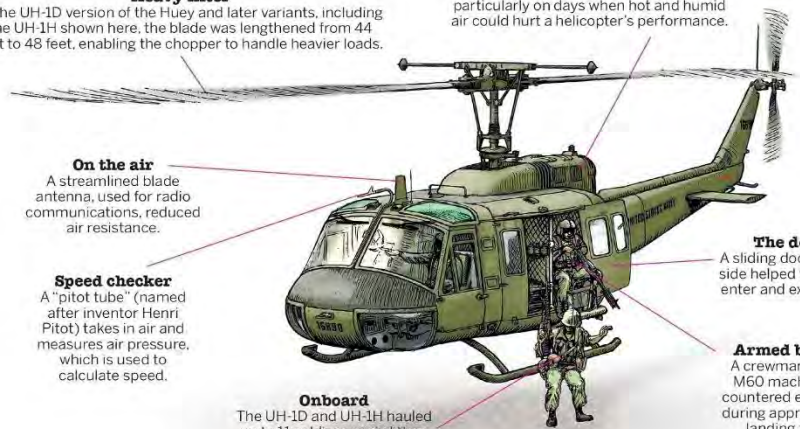
On the air
A streamlined blade antenna, used for radio communications, reduced air resistance.

Speed checker
A “pitot tube” (named after inventor Henri Pitot) takes in air and measures air pressure, which is used to calculate speed.

Onboard
The UH-1D and UH-1H hauled up to 11 soldiers or six litters holding wounded troops.

The doors
A sliding door on each side helped the troops enter and exit quickly.

Armed backup
A crewman with an M60 machine gun countered enemy fire during approaches to landing zones.



door gunners joined in with the rest. I ached to have my own trigger. With so many bullets tearing into the LZ, it was hard to believe anyone on the ground could survive...

"The gunships had to stop firing as we flared close to the ground because we could be hit by ricocheting bullets. Still no return fire. Maybe they were all dead! Could this be the wrong spot?"

"My adrenaline was high, and I was keenly aware of every movement of the ship. I waited for the lurch of dismounting troopers as the skids neared the ground. They were growling and yelling behind me, psyched for battle. I could hear them yelling above all the noise. I still can....My landing was synchronized with the lead ship, and as our skids hit the ground, so did the boots of the growling troops..."



"At the same instant, the uniformed regulars from the North decided to spring their trap. From at least three different directions, they opened up on our three ships and the off-loading grunts with machine-gun crossfire....The LZ was suddenly alive with their screaming bullets. I tensed off the controls, involuntarily leaning forward, ready to take off. I had to fight the logical reaction to leave immediately. I was light on the skids, the troops were out. Let's go! [Dan] Farris [Mason's squad leader] yelled on the radio for Yellow One to go. They didn't move."

The grunts weren't even making it to the trees. They had leapt out, screaming murderously, but now they dropped all around us, dying and dead. The lead ship's rotors still turned, but the men inside did not answer. I saw the sand spurt up in front of me as bullets tore into the ground. My stomach tightened to stop them. Our door gunners were firing over the prone grunts at phantoms in the trees.

A strange quietness happened in my head. The scene around me seemed far away. With the noise of the guns, the cries of the gunners about everybody being dead and Farris calling for Yellow One to go, I thought about the bullets coming through the Plexiglas, through my bones and guts and through the ship and never stopping. A voice echoed in the silence. It was Farris yelling, "Go! Go! Go!..."

"I reacted so fast that our Huey snapped off the ground. My adrenaline seemed to power the ship as I nosed over hard to get moving fast. I veered to the right of the deadly quiet lead

ship, still sitting there. The door gunners fired continuously out both sides. The tracers coming at me now seemed as thick as raindrops. How could they miss? As a boy, I made a game of dodging raindrops in the summer showers. I always got hit eventually. But not this time. I slipped over the treetops and stayed low for cover, accelerating. I veered left and right fast, dodging, confounding...and when I was far enough away, I swooped up and away from the nightmare. My mind came back, and so did the sound..."

"What happened to Yellow Three?" a voice said. It was still on the ground. The radios had gone wild. I finally noticed Farris's voice saying, "Negative, White One. Veer left. Circle back." Farris had White One lead the rest of the company into an orbit a couple of miles away. Yellow One and Yellow Three were still in the LZ.

I looked down at the two ships sitting quietly on the ground. Their rotors were turning lazily as their turbines idled. The machines didn't care, only the delicate protoplasm inside them cared. Bodies littered the clearing, but some of the thirty grunts we had brought in were still alive. They had made it to cover at the edge of the clearing...

"Farris had his hands full. He had twelve more ships to get in and unloaded. Then the pilot of Yellow Three called. He was still alive, but he thought his partner was dead. His crew chief and gunner looked dead, too. He could still fly..."



"Two gunships immediately dove to escort him out, machine guns blazing. It was a wonderful sight to see from a distance. Only Yellow One remained on the ground. She sat, radios quiet, still running. There was room behind her to bring in the rest of the assault..."

"A grunt who found himself still alive got to a radio. He said that he and a few others could keep some cover fire going for the second wave..."

"Minutes later, the second group of three ships was on its way in, and Farris told me to return to the staging area. I flew back a couple of miles to a big field, where I landed and picked up another load of wild-eyed boys..."

"They also growled and yelled. This was more than just the result of training. They were motivated. We all thought that this was the big push that might end it all. By the time I made a second landing to the LZ, the enemy machine guns were silent. This load would at least live past the landing."

(Excerpt from the book *Chickenhawk*. Copyright (©) 1983 by Robert Mason)

Continued in the next issue of Motor Pool Messenger...

Military Transport Association

P.O. Box 391
Budd Lake, NJ 07828

**THE NEXT MTA MEETING WILL
BE HELD ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1st
AT THE WHIPPANY AMERICAN
LEGION POST AT 7PM**



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: _____

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

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