

# ARMY MOTORS

Journal of the Military Vehicle Preservation Association

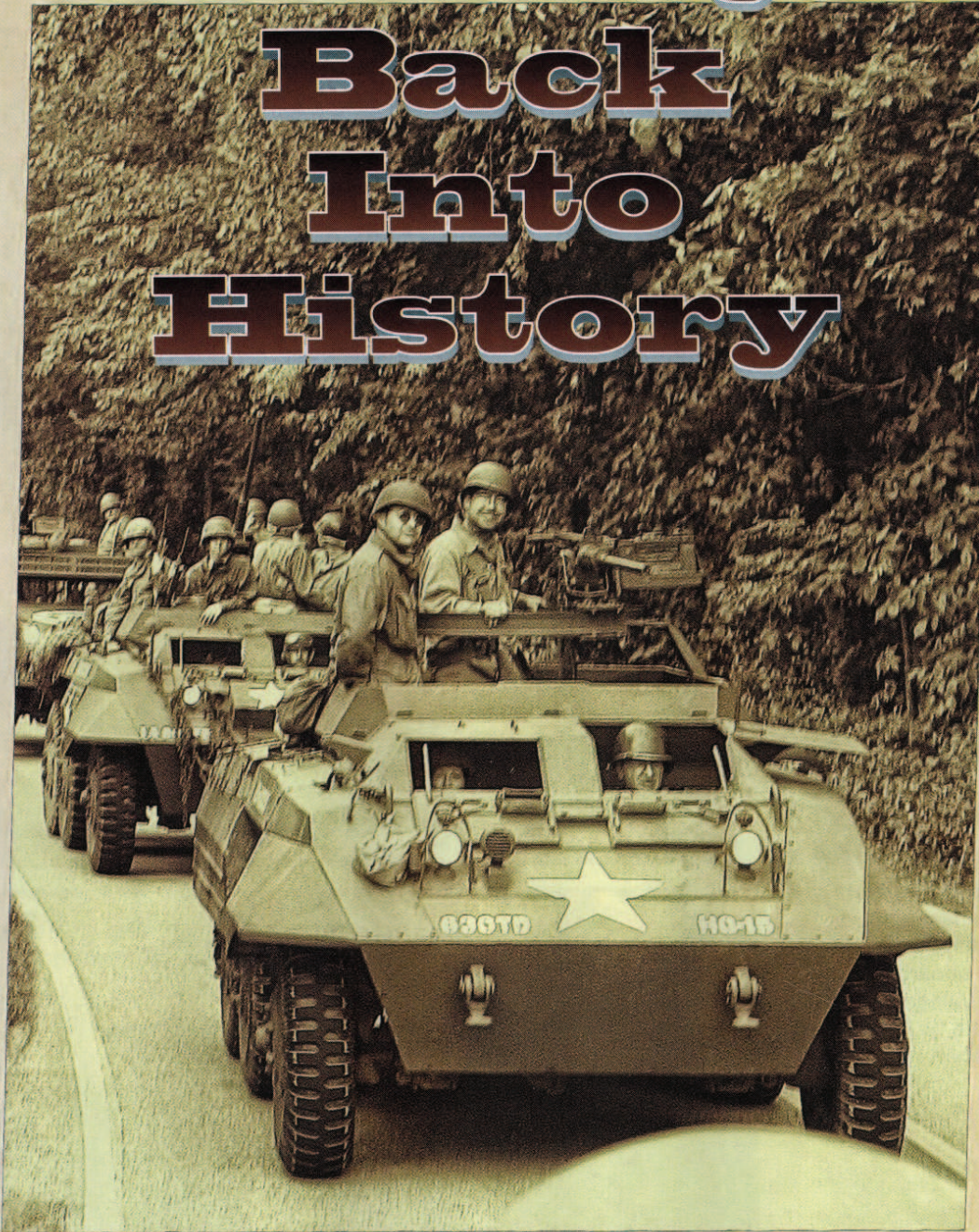
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Bastogne 2014*



Alain Henry de Frahan

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# Convoy Back Into History



By Patrick Henry Nicholson #23605, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

If you want to really enjoy your Historic Military Vehicle you need to convoy. I have heard this said by more than one MVPA member and I totally agree. One of the best things about owning an HMV is driving it. Now, I do not mean just steering over to the local hardware store and back. I mean actually convoy driving it, and putting some serious road behind you. Feel the wind and hear the surroundings, it's just you and your machine proving that you can keep up with the pack.

Through the years I have been fortunate to drive many convoys, both overseas and here in the United States, particularly a recent one that gathers yearly in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It's one of my favorites.

During the long weekend of September 19 to 21, 2014, MVPA members and other HMV owners and reenactors gathered for the *8th Annual World War II Weekend*. Why is this event so special? When Bob Buker, of Catonsville, Maryland established the original convoy event in 2007, reenactors camped overnight in Thurmont, Maryland. Then they convoyed to the small village of Emmitsburg, Maryland, simulated a short but sweet liberation, and convoyed on to the Eisenhower Farm National Historic Site and former home of President Eisenhower, located adjacent to the Gettysburg Battlefield in Pennsylvania.

The first event began with thirteen HMVs, thirty-one Allied riders and no Axis vehicles.



Convoy invasion reenactment troops mount their WWII vehicles at the assembly point near the entrance of the Eisenhower Farm. Recon jeeps and MP motorcycles moved out ahead of the six armored vehicles leading the column comprised of fifty-one allied vehicles.



On the back roads to New Oxford, PA this lengthy convoy made its way through an array of country farm areas and small villages and towns. Fascinated folks came out from their homes or stopped their vehicles to wave and enjoy this annual sight.



Eight short years later, it is one of the largest convoy and living history weekends in the country.

Following the second year, the convoy and the liberation was moved to the larger town of New Oxford, Pennsylvania, at the request of the area's historical society, and as they say, "the rest is history."

Increasing interest brought more troops and more vehicles. The Axis powers got involved, and both vehicle owners and living history reenactors spread the good word. This *World War II Weekend* has steadily expanded, and last fall it drew over five hundred camp reenactors, representing fifty reenactors groups.

The convoy part of the weekend started early Saturday morning at the Eisenhower Farm. The drivers and troops traveled many twisted miles through the local Pennsylvania (French) countryside, and were attacked by a German patrol. They eventually arrived at New Oxford, prepared for the town's mock invasion.

The convoy consisted of one hundred seventy Allied troops on fifty-one WWII Allied HMs, not including the towed artillery. To give an idea of the scope, the convoy included 2-1/2 ton 6x6s, wreckers, motorcycles, scout cars, half-tracks, M20 armored cars, weapon carriers and thirty-two jeeps.

The Germans forces consisted of twenty-two WWII vehicles, comprising VWs, cargo trucks, armored vehicles, motorcycles, and artillery pieces.

Before the reenactment began, the Germans occupied the town center, where many of the New Oxford residents were dressed as 1944 French townspeople. Other locals attended, behind the roped-off streets, to watch and learn. The town of New Oxford covered much of its modern signage with period French or German road signs.

For that morning's liberation, an impressive seventy-three WWII vehicles, two hundred and sixty-five Allied reenactor troops and French partisans, as well as two hundred and forty-five

Axis reenactors, battled it out on the narrow 'French' streets.

When the reenactment was over the church on the square rang its bells to announce the Allied liberation, which was followed by a large town celebration. The French welcomed their liberators with non-alcoholic champagne, French bread, and kisses from the ladies.

A Canadian embassy representative and the Commandant of the US Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania each gave inspiring speeches while the actual WWII veterans present were honored. It was a good time for all to reflect on and remember all the sacrifices of their generation. After this eventful morning, the Axis troops returned to their encampment in New Oxford and the Allied troops convoyed back to the Eisenhower Farm.

Since camping was permitted at the Eisenhower Farm, the Allied living-history troops set up a great international military camp that was open to the public on both Saturday and Sunday. Veteran speakers were available during the weekend with their real-life stories that dealt with actual history. Through the years, the Park Supervisor and Rangers have graciously helped the growth of the event with their continuing support. The Eisenhower farm not only offers the encampment area but, affords the opportunity for all to visit the former president's home, farm, and of course, the Gettysburg Civil War Battlefields.

The town of Gettysburg offers many great restaurants, historic museums, and a large historic colonial shopping village. Two World War II USO dances were available on the weekend. On Friday night New Oxford offered a '40s dance band with refreshments, and on Saturday night there was a great Big Band/Swing dance, that took place at the Gettysburg Visitor's Center. Both were swell times and were packed with vintage uniformed troops, zoot-suited swingers, and well-dressed lovely ladies, wanting to dance.



Once the convoy arrived at New Oxford, the Allied armor and troops immediately moved in for the village invasion. The Axis troops put up a valiant defense but in the end the Allied troops boldly overwhelmed them and liberated the town.





With New Oxford now liberated, the Allied troops enjoyed their victory with the local 'French' townspeople.



A German bike crew on Main Street raced away from the advancing Allied forces.

This annual *World War II Weekend* is actually made up of three events; the HMMV vehicle convoy, the liberation of New Oxford, and the living history WWII encampment at the Eisenhower National Historic Site. The entire experience is open to the general public and is so well-known that many HMMV owners from Canada, the American mid-west and the northeast, haul their vehicles long distances on trucks and trailers, just to enjoy three action packed days.

For more information on the Eisenhower Farm, check out their website at: [www.nps.gov/eise/planyourvisit/2014-wwii-weekend.htm](http://www.nps.gov/eise/planyourvisit/2014-wwii-weekend.htm)

Next year Bob Buker, the event's organizer, is hoping to have a C-47 drop British Commonwealth paratroopers. Contact him for more information at: [arbuker@verizon.net](mailto:arbuker@verizon.net)

The following article written about this event by the Patriot News also offers many more liberation photographs. [www.pennlive.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2014/09/liberation\\_of\\_new\\_oxford.html#incart\\_related\\_stories](http://www.pennlive.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2014/09/liberation_of_new_oxford.html#incart_related_stories)



At the Eisenhower Farm, the Allied living-history troops set up a large international military encampment that was open to the public on both Saturday and Sunday. The Park Supervisor and Rangers have enthusiastically helped the growth of this weekend.

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