



MOTOR TRANSPORT MUSEUM NEWS

Volume XVI No. 4

31949 Highway 94, Campo, CA, 91906 - Ph. (619) 478-2492

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Web Site: www.motortransportmuseum.org ♦ E-mail: motortransportmuseum@gmail.com

The MTM volunteers spent the Fall working on the landscaping of the Camp Lockett stable buildings and the restoration of the antique gas station. Anti-freeze in the operating vehicles is being checked and replenished in anticipation of freezing temperatures.

Since this is the last newsletter of the year it is time for the General members of the Museum to check the status of their membership and renew if necessary. Instructions on how to do this are shown on page 3.

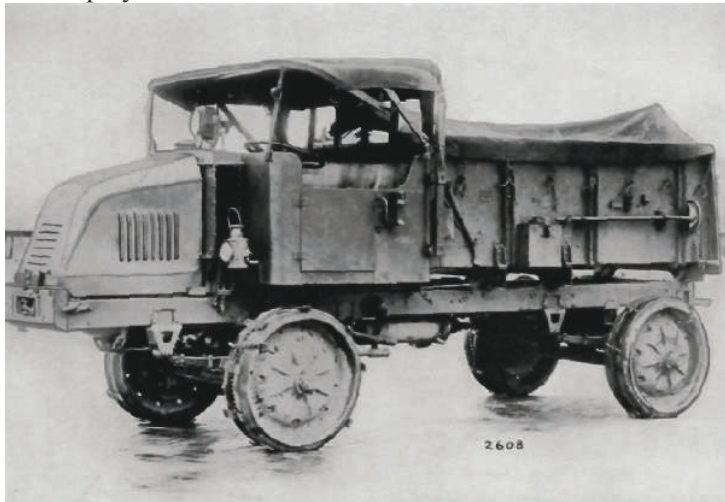
The feature article in this issue is about the Militor, a World War I era military truck/tractor that showed a lot of promise but was overcome by events. It would be wonderful if we could find one to restore.

The Militor

by John W. Thomas

Wartime has a tendency to make possible things that do not make sense at any other time. It also promotes the development of equipment that would be too expensive to invent and produce for a peace-time market. One of the strange and interesting developments to arise from World War I is the Militor.

The Militor was a three-ton vehicle engineered and prototyped for the United States Army by the Militor Corporation of Jersey City NJ. The Militor Company was one of a number of firms incorporated and operated by Neil R. Sinclair, a banker and automotive visionary who seemed to leap from one bankruptcy to another: he had five in his career.



The Militor truck showing the Bulldog-like hood with the radiator behind the engine. (Field Artillery Journal Photo)

The Militor design was begun on November 30, 1917 with the intent of producing vehicles for the army under government contract. World War I had been raging since 1914 and, though the United States produced war material for the Allies, it did not declare war on the Central Powers (as Germany and her allies were then called) until April, 1917. This must have seemed like salvation to Mr. Sinclair as he had bought the assets of the Champion Company in 1913 along with their rights to manufacture a motorcycle called the Militaire. His new company was named the Militaire Autocycle Company. Unfortunately the motorcycle didn't sell

well and the company went bankrupt in 1917. Somehow he got new investors and resurrected the company as the Militor Company with facilities in Jersey City NJ. He sold a few motorcycles to the army and was then asked by the army to make a study of the four-wheel drive truck and design a vehicle that was better adapted to military usages than those currently available. The Company expanded its engineering department, procured and tested seven different makes of 4-wheel drive vehicles and designed the truck known as "the Militor".

The army had been procuring trucks for military purposes since 1904 but the first deployment in wartime was Brigadier General John J. Pershing's punitive expedition against Mexican revolutionary Pancho Villa in 1916. One problem at that time was that the army procured civilian vehicles and made modifications to adapt them to their military role. Unfortunately, the civilian vehicles lacked the inherent capabilities that were required for military use. Most were two wheel drive, (which restricted their cross country operation) and lacked the low gears, high road clearance and extra cooling capacity that made a good off-road truck. The Militor was a four-wheel drive vehicle with a 36-horsepower 4-cylinder Wisconsin engine and a four speed transmission. It had the radiator mounted behind the engine like the Mack Bulldog of the same era. Its four driving wheels were big, 40-inches in diameter clad with 8-inch wide solid rubber tires, which, along with an unusual arrangement of pinion and ring gear to drive each wheel separately, gave it a respectable 16 inches ground clearance. It was designated a three-ton truck and had an empty weight of 9600 lbs. It was considered an "assembled truck" - that is made up of readily available parts designed and produced by specialty manufacturers and assembled by the Militor Company.

The first Militor prototype was on the road in March of 1918 and the second one shortly thereafter. In May these two trucks were demonstrated against other trucks before the army motorization board. The Board approved the Militor and on May 31 the "Truck, 3-Ton, Model 1918 Ordnance Department" was approved by the Army Chief of Staff making it the standard four-wheel drive truck of the U. S. Army.

The Militor came in two varieties, a 4-wheel drive, two wheel steer truck on which a number of bodies could be installed and a 4-wheel drive 4-wheel steer artillery tractor.

The driving equipment on the steering axles limited the angle to which the wheels could be turned, thus giving a large turning radius. By making all four wheels to steer, the tractor could meet the Army Ordnance specification for a 30-foot turning radius.

The tractor also mounted a motor-driven winch and a sprag that could be buried in the ground to anchor the tractor when it had a particularly heavy pulling job for the winch. The Militor Company claimed that 90% of the parts were interchangeable between the truck and the tractor.

All looked rosy for the Militor. The army had ordered four more test vehicles in May 1918 and placed orders for 1000 with the Militor Corp on August 27 and for 4000 with the Packard Corp on October 2. The Packard production was to be built from the Militor Corp drawings.



The artillery tractor variant of the Militor showing the power-driven winch on the back. (Field Artillery Journal Photo)

But time and circumstances caught up with the Militor. On November 11, 1918 an armistice between Germany and the Allies ended World War I and suddenly the army had more trucks than it knew what to do with. Both the Militor and Packard contracts were cancelled before any trucks had been delivered leaving the six test vehicles as the only surviving Militors.

The Militor's outstanding performance in its tests had not gone unnoticed by the army, however, and in June 1919 the Ordnance Corps placed a requisition with the army for 150 of the 4-wheel drive, 2-wheel steer truck chassis, enough to motorize an artillery regiment equipped with 155 mm howitzers. This was a very controversial requisition in a time when the army had a policy of no new procurements of war material and didn't want the policy weakened by granting exceptions. The requisition was subsequently reduced to 75 trucks to be delivered between May and August 1920. The procurement was to be filled by the winner of a competitive bid solicitation sent out to all the major automotive companies. The quantity requested was small and the truck manufacturing companies' order books were overflowing with orders from civilian truckers, consequently the only proposal for the procurement was presented by the Militor Corporation.

The procurement didn't go smoothly, however. By this time the Militor Corp, having lost out on its big military contract and having no competitive machines to offer the civilian market, was in dire financial straits. According to the *Field Artillery Journal*, the Winther Motor Truck Company, of Kenosha, Wisconsin had to be called upon to complete the

order of 75 trucks. All mention of the Militor Corp. (by now renamed the Sinclair Corp.) subsequently disappeared from the popular press.

All of this would have been an obscure footnote to the history of the U. S. Army artillery except for the great 1919 Motor Transport Convoy. This was a great publicity stunt fathered by Henry Osterman, Field Secretary of the Lincoln Highway Association, a group of automotive executives organized to promote the designation of a Coast-to-Coast highway. The route was to be from New York City (though the Convoy started from Washington DC) to San Francisco. and was to go through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois crossing the Mississippi River at Clinton, Iowa. All of this was over good roads, some paved but all of them graded and improved. It was another story on the west side of the Mississippi. The roads got progressively worse as the Convoy went west and all but disappeared in western Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah and Nevada.

The Convoy was led by Lt. Col. Charles W. McClure, fresh from combat duty in France and was attended by a number of army observers including one Brevet Lt. Col. Dwight D. Eisenhower, future Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe in World War II and the thirty-fourth President of the United States.

The convoy was made up of 79 vehicles, most of them trucks, including one Militor. The convoy was manned by 24 officers and 258 enlisted men. The objective, besides promoting the building of good roads, was to increase army enlistment, acquaint the public with the development of motor vehicles for military purposes, and to test motorized equipment for military use.

The convoy started from the nation's Capitol on July 7, 1919 and, after the usual ceremonies, proceeded north and west to Pennsylvania, with Henry Osterman ranging ahead by one or two days in his 12-cylinder Packard to survey the route and advise the towns and cities of the approach of the convoy.

East of the Mississippi the convoy had relatively easy going but the Militor was still called upon to rescue cars and trucks from ditches and mud-holes and to tow the disabled into camp at the end of the day. It was after crossing the river that the Militor proved its worth.

Iowa and Nebraska were alternately dust and mud, and Wyoming and Nevada were trackless deserts. The Militor towed most of the cars and trucks of the convoy at least once, and its power winch and sprag rescued many a bogged down Mack, Liberty and Garford. It was not unusual for the Militor to arrive in camp long after dark towing a string of the day's casualties. Eisenhower's report from the convoy gives high praise for the Militor:

"The Militor, equipped with power winch and spade (sprag) in rear, did wonderful work in pulling vehicles out of holes, sand pits, etc. On one occasion at least, the Militor came into camp at night towing four trucks, showing that its power plant was almost perfect."

The convoy pressed on through Nevada, up the east slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountains at Carson City to the good roads of California. Then to Oakland for a ferry ride across the bay to San Francisco and a celebration at Lincoln Park. There were medals for the troops presented by the Lincoln Highway Association, speeches by dignitaries and lunch served by the

Red Cross. The Convoy then went down to the Presidio where the troops were dismissed and the trucks sent back to Maryland by train.

Where have all the Militors gone? Of the 81 built I can find no evidence that even one exists today. They were still in active use with the army in 1925, and they are mentioned as still used by the 5th Field Artillery as late as 1930, but I have been unable to locate even one old hulk much less a well preserved museum piece. This vehicle was superbly engineered, the standard by which follow-on vehicles were measured for more than a decade and it would be wonderful to find and restore an example of this historic vehicle.

Recent Donations

Gerald Mulder of Jamul, CA has donated a 1972 Ford flatbed truck to the Museum since publication of the last newsletter.

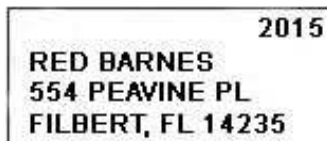


1972 Ford flatbed donated by Gerald Mulder of Jamul, CA

The MTM thanks Gerald for his generosity in helping the Museum to attain its goals.

Dues Reminder

January is the month for General members of the Museum to renew your membership. You can determine your membership status by the year printed on your address label just above and to the right of your last name. If the label reads "2015" or "LIFE" or "COMP" no further action is necessary. If it reads "2014" or any previous year please use the membership renewal application printed on the back of this newsletter to update your membership. We appreciate your membership and thank you for your support.



New Members

New General members of the Motor Transport Museum enrolled since our last newsletter are **Joseph Packer** of Mesa, AZ, and **Joanne Taylor** of Campo, CA. We welcome you to our Museum and thank you for your support.

Upcoming Events

The Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation and Drainage District will hold its **Wellton-Mohawk Tractor Rodeo** on January 17th, in Wellton, AZ. There will be an antique tractor pull, tractor games and rides, a biscuit and sausage breakfast and barbecue beef dinner. For more information call 928-344-2000.

The **Big 3 Auto Parts Exchange** will be held at Qualcomm (old Jack Murphy) Stadium parking lot

on the weekend of February 20, 21 & 22, 2015. There is no charge to the general public to attend this event, however, there is a stadium parking fee. The shoppers hours are 12 noon to 4PM Friday, 8AM to 4PM Saturday and 8AM to 12PM Sunday. Please visit <http://www.big3partsexchange.com> for more information.

The **Arizona Flywheelers Annual Engine & Tractor Show** will be held at the Verde Valley Fairgrounds, Cottonwood, AZ on March 20th & 21st 2015 9am to 4pm. Please visit www.arizonaflywheelers.com for more information.

The **MTM Board of Directors'** meetings for the Winter quarter of 2014-2015 will be held at the Horseless Carriage Foundation Library at 8186 Center Street in La Mesa, CA at 6:30 PM on the following Thursdays:

January 15th February 20th March 20th
Everyone is encouraged to attend.

Hours of Operation

The Museum facility at 31949 Highway 94 in Campo, CA is open to the public every Saturday from 9 AM to 5 PM. Admission is free, donations are accepted.

Wednesdays and Fridays are work days and members are working on projects. Visitors are welcome to come in if the gate is open.

Members! Advertise Items for sale in the Newsletter!

The Motor Transport News is now offering a sales insert page for museum members. Got a vehicle, motor or some parts that you would like to sell? Are you in need of some vehicle parts or a particular type of equipment or truck?

Now you can reach hundreds of buying and selling sources by advertising in our newsletter, and it's free! Check out our new sales insert for more information on how you can place your Ad in our "For Sale" ads and "Items Wanted" ads.

All ads must be placed before the 10th of March, June, September and December. Check out the sales ads insert in this issue for more information.

Get Your Newsletter by email

You can donate towards MTM's cause without spending a dime by simply receiving these quarterly issues of the *Motor Transport Museum News* by e-mail. This way MTM can save mailing costs and use the savings towards operating expenses. You will get an instantaneous PDF copy of the newsletter without the Museum spending money on printing and postage. Email us at motortransportmuseum@gmail.com and subscribe.

Remember

You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.
Mae West

MTM Officers and Directors

The officers and directors of the Motor Transport Museum are as follows:

Officers: Greg Long, President
Bill Fields, Vice President
John W. Thomas, Secretary
Carl E. Calvert, Chief Financial Officer

Directors: Jim Jensen, Bill Jellyman, Mike Anderson,
John Thomas, Carl Calvert, Bill Fields,
Bryan Butler, Sherman George and Mark Scudder

ITEMS FOR SALE



1960 International Stake Bed
MTM Ref.#RN699
\$1,200.00



Cushman Scooter
Gulf Ball Dents
MTM Ref.#RN527
\$500



1964 International Truck
With Camper Shell
MTM Ref.#RN009
\$1,200.00



1964 Chrysler Imperial
Crown Coupe, 413 V8
MTM Ref.#RN400
\$800.00 OBO



Cushman Scooter
With Engine and Parts
MTM
Ref.#RN1345
\$300.00



Davey Air Compressor
125cfm Gas, 2axel
MTM
Ref.#RN702
\$350.00



1927 Mac Truck
Cab and Chassis
Chain Drive Dual
Ref. Carl Calvert
\$6,000.00



1953 Packard Clipper
Straight Body
4door, V8
MTM Ref.#RN388
\$1,400.00



2 1960 Divco Milk Delivery Trucks
Motor Transport Museum
Ref.#RN600 & RN#602

\$1,400.00



Very Rare Obscure Metal Art
"Woman and Pig"
(must be sold together)
\$363,176,991.13
OR ANY OFFER



1915 White Car
No Body, Extra parts
MTM Ref.#RN1093

\$2,000.00



1965 International Pickup
excellent shape
Historical Plates
MTM Ref.#RN228
\$800.00



1991 Chevy Cavalier
2 Door, 21,000 miles
Minor Body Damage
Ref.#RN885
\$100.00



200 gallon water tank
Polypropole w/stand
Ref.#RN1200
\$200.00



1969 International
Travelall V8,
65,269 original miles
Ref. Carl Calvert
\$1,800.00

Motor Transport Museum

Friends and Members

2015 Open House

Saturday April 18th, 2015

10am - 4pm

Fairbanks/Morse hit & miss and 1930 Clark Diesel Engine demo
Truck Movies • Music • Yard Sale • Book Sale • 50/50 Raffle
1926 AC and 1922 AB Mack ride • Show vehicles

\$5.00 Lunch At Noon

Food supplied by the Motor Transport Museum

**Come and Join Us at:
31949 Highway 94
Campo, California
91906**

Directions: Campo is approximately 50 miles from San Diego on State Route 94. From San Diego, go east on Interstate 8 to Buckman Springs Road. Go South on Buckman Springs 9 miles to the junction of Highway 94. Turn left at the "T" intersection. Go about 3/4 mile East on Highway 94. The Motor Transport Museum is a nine story tall Mill Building and 5 acres of transportation history with more than 200 old trucks.

For more information check out our Web Site at:

www.motortransportmuseum.org

E-mail us at: motortransportmuseum@gmail.com

Or call us at: (619) 478-2492 or (619) 993-1220

MOTOR TRANSPORT MUSEUM
APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

New Renewal

Name _____ Spouse _____
 Street Address _____ City _____
 State _____ Zip _____
 Phone _____ eMail _____

GENERAL Membership	1 Yr \$ 20 _____	2 Yr \$ 40 _____	3 Yr \$ 60 _____
GENERAL-INTERNATIONAL Membership (Non USA mailing address)			1 Yr \$25 _____
CORPORATE Membership			1 Yr \$75 _____
LIFE Membership			\$250 _____
ENDOWING LIFE Membership			\$1000 _____
ASSOCIATE Membership - non-profit organization			1 Yr \$35 _____
JUNIOR Membership - children under 18 - non-voting			1 Yr \$1 _____
STUDENT Membership - full-time students 18-25 years old			1 Yr \$6 _____

I agree to comply strictly with the By Laws of the Motor Transport Museum; to conduct myself at all times in a manner which will support and promote the best interest of the Motor Transport Museum

Signature of Applicant _____ Date _____

MOTOR TRANSPORT MUSEUM
 81949 HIGHWAY 94
 CAMPO, CA 91906

PLACE
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