

Mounted Warfare Historic Vehicle Rally – Spring 2011

Fort Hood, TX – 13-15 MAY 2011

By Tom Essary, Arlington, TX MVPA #31350

Early on Friday historic military vehicle (HMV) enthusiasts from all over Texas made their way to historic Fort Hood in Central Texas. (About 130 Miles South of Dallas and 70 miles North of Austin west of IH-35) The date was 13-15 MAY 2011. The weather was cool and the skies were clear blue.

A total of 15x vehicles registered for the weekend. Eight vehicles attended the 1st Cavalry Division Museum display on Friday. Several of the participants brought along their historical weapons and militaria collections to be viewed by Soldiers. Saturday dawned cool and sunny with a total of 12x vehicles and 27x personnel participating. Saturday night departures and repairs had 8x vehicles in Sunday convoy to the East training ranges. There were 2x vehicles that dropped out at the last minute due to a medical emergency.



Troop Composition

The men and women who participated are from all ages and walks of life and included: active duty offers and enlisted men, military veterans and civilian “Caretakers of History”.

Chapters Represented

HOST: III Corps, Fort Hood, Texas - 1st Cavalry Division and 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) museums (www.hood.army.mil)

Military Vehicle Preservation Association (mvpa.org)

Loan Star MVPA (www.lonestar-mvpa.org)

East Texas Piney Woods Motor Pool

Arrowhead MVPA (arrowhead-mvpa.com)

Arkansas Travelers MVPA (armvpa.com)

Blue Bonnet Motor Pool (www.bmmp.org)

Guests from Ft. Hood JAG Corps and from the Museums

HMVs

1x: M1009 with M416 Trailer

1x: M29C Weasel

1x: M38 jeep

6x: 1942-1945 MBs and GPWs jeeps

1x: 1972 M151 MUTT, American General

1x: 1942 WC52 Dodge Weapons Carrier, ¾ ton

1x: M1009

1x: Dalmier "Ferrett" Armored Car

1x: M3 Half Track

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Fort Hood, TX – 13-15 MAY 2011

Friday – 1st Cavalry Museum Displays

There were eight HMVs displayed with various weapons and kit for the on lookers to peruse. HMVs were from WWII – Half Track, MB and GPW jeeps, M29C Weasel and a Weapons Carrier. From the Viet Nam Era – M151 MUTT and M416 trailer.



There were numerous Soldiers, their families and retirees that passed through and everyone is looking forward to the article from the Sentinel reporter who interviewed the group.



Weapons included

30 Caliber

M1903 Springfield

M14 Rifle

M1919A4 Browning Machine Gun

50 Caliber

M2 Browning Machine Gun

5.56 MM NATO - M16 Rifle

M1 and M1D Garand Rifle

M1 Carbine

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60 MM Mortar
Mine Detector
M1911 Caliber .45 Colt/Browning Automatic Pistol
Thompson Sub Machine Gun, Caliber .45
Bayonets from all eras WWI to present

3.6” Bazooka

Saturday – Visit 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment Museum

The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment Museum was the Saturday rally point. The museum staff provided a continental breakfast and listened to a briefing for the day’s activities. Certificates from the III Corps Commanding General were awarded to everyone. The troops spent some time talking with the museum staff and looking over the many static displays outside – tanks, artillery, jeeps, trucks and rockets.



Recon the SW Training Area

The group gathered around the CO, LTC Dan Martin, dressed in WWII wools and he laid a map on the hood of a jeep. Discussed were the hills, water crossings and what to expect. Soon after the twelve olive drab monsters roared to life and were on the road.



Mounted Warfare Historic Vehicle Rally – Spring 2011 Fort Hood, TX – 13-15 MAY 2011

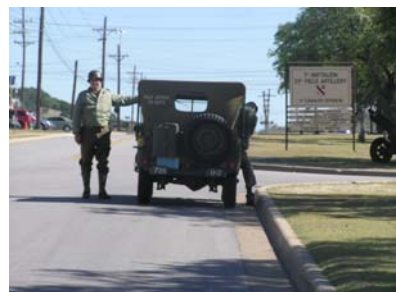
The convoy that day experienced everything imaginable. Great views, points of interest at the Iraqi village training site and a Derelict WW2 M3 Stuart tank hull out in TA41, and lots of driving.



The convoy snaked through the various motor pools on Fort Hood. Along the way were rows of Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, HMMTs, HMMVWs and dozens of other types by the hundreds. The active duty army vehicles dwarfed those in the convoy. None-the-less the troop pushed on. Shortly the paved road turned to gravel and the fenced compounds were replaced by scrub bushes, grass and almost barren dirt. The tank trails were about 40 feet wide and slightly domed. There were sloping shoulders cleared of any vegetation. Fire hazards from grass or brush were eliminated. Sand colored tents are seen from time to time and HMMVWs cruise by on adjacent roads and off in the distance.



Low water crossings were abundant. Several had to be left un-forded as recent rains had them running as much as five feet deep. The mud and water in the passable crossings were plenty slippery and some provided a challenge to cross. Fortunately, everyone except for the CO in the lead jeep had the vehicle in front of them for a visual aid or where to drive!



Mounted Warfare Historic Vehicle Rally – Spring 2011 Fort Hood, TX – 13-15 MAY 2011

For these enthusiasts, half the fun was dealing with the broken track on the M3 halftrack, the drowned M38 jeep during fording and bogging down in the mud. Some of the participants had never taken their military vehicle off the pavement before this rally.

The day ended with an orange sun setting and over 60 miles in dirt and dust behind the troops.



Sunday Raid

Rally point was Belton Lake Outdoor Recreation Area (BLORA) Ranch about 10 miles east of East Range Road. Several of the participants camp here. The setting was beautiful and secluded. There were one M1009 with M416 trailer and six jeeps on the raid.



After about 20 minutes of driving a firing range post was on the left and the impact area is far in the distance. About 4 HMMWVs with turrets and M2 Caliber .50 BMG were parked in various directions. The convoy stopped and the CO made his way up to the observation tower, and made arrangements with the Brigade Commander to visit his troops. LCT Martin radioed the waiting group to proceed to base of the tower.

We were greeted a briefed by a Captain in body armor and carrying an M4. A special thanks goes to CPT Raikes (2-8 CAV) who generously permitted the group to visit with his Soldiers as a "drive by opportunity." The 2-8 Cavalry Soldiers were preparing for deployment. Both active duty and veterans enjoyed the interaction.



Mounted Warfare Historic Vehicle Rally – Spring 2011 Fort Hood, TX – 13-15 MAY 2011



The cavalry troops were at our disposal for about 30 minutes and each group took photos of the other and asked questions about each other's vehicles. A quick repair to a transmission seemed to be the only other activity and soon the thin olive drab line was making its way through the chalky landscape and cedar trees.

A few clicks north up East Range Road the route turned east and up a steep sharp right turn to OP Grove. At about 75 feet above the level below, the would-be parking area was a text book OP. The high ground commanded hundreds of acres of the impact area and dozens of targets were visible ... old tanks, trucks, everything. In the spectacular vista were trees, open grassy areas, creeks, vertical limestone cliffs and flat top mesas everything that is central Texas. Oddly enough the absence of building did not seem out place.

Those who brought field glasses shared them with others. Some took photos and other had a snack or a drink of water. Soon the engines were started up and the dust billowed behind the vehicles. The terrain was vastly different from Saturday. There were more rocks, even bare rock on the trail. There were fewer creeks. A creek of mud and gravel was no feat to cross and across a field the convoy came to a stop at the base of a steep hill. Each vehicle waited as the one ahead changed gears and made its way up a 40 to 50 degree trail ... loose limestone clay made up the slippery slope and black tire streaks marked up the rocks. No vehicular damage and everyone made it to the top of the mesa about a 100 foot vertical climb over about a quarter of a mile. An Iraqi village of about 10 stucco building was at the top ... the group roamed about the buildings.

After a short visit the steel soldiers again roared onto the rocks. Now the surface had little dirt and was mainly base limestone, with short inclines up to two feet high and puddles of mud here and there. The jeeps wound through the would-be moguls like skiers in the snow swooshing from side to side. Mud splashing from time to time and the twisting trail lead up and down hill. There were quite a few steep climbs. There were no broken jeeps or blown tires. A few stucco buildings were scatter along the trail ... the terrain was excellent for training as the location was so remote.

The trail was on a ridge and as it started down the far side the rock gave way to rich black top soil. Soon a large graveled area was on the right in a middle of a several dozen acre meadow. This was a touch and go short landing strip for C-130s and other large cargo aircraft. There were no aircraft seen this particular day.

Mounted Warfare Historic Vehicle Rally – Spring 2011 Fort Hood, TX – 13-15 MAY 2011



Down the trail about eight clicks the CO took a right turn out across an open field and we drove straight for a tan stucco Iraqi training compound/fort with a three story building in the center and many courtyards. We toured the training “palace” and enjoyed our stay in the luxury Middle Eastern hotel mock-up as a few dozen cattle (Texas camels) grazed near-by.



A few clicks further and the convoy paralleled the shore of Belton Lake ... a few boats and fishermen were on the lake, but otherwise things were very quiet.

The drive back to the SP was uneventful, but the view of the hills, lake, base and GIs training was excellent. This day brought over 30 miles of rough terrain, rocks and mud which the old war horses conquered with hardly any struggle.

It was about 1500 and all of the jeeps were being loaded onto trailers and the group chatted about the weekend’s adventure that was coming to a close.

Lessons Learned

At least bring some basic tools.

7/16”, 1/2”, 9/16” 5/8” and 3/4” open end and or box end, possibly 3/8”

Adjustable Wrench (crescent)

Flat blade screw driver, large and small

Pliers

Sharing on the trail was automatic. A few tools were swapped around (wrenches, fuel, oil, tow straps, even snacks and ice water!) and no one was left behind.

Someone must get stuck for the photo op!

Mounted Warfare Historic Vehicle Rally – Spring 2011

Fort Hood, TX – 13-15 MAY 2011

Mishaps

M1009 and M416 – Stuck in deep mud recovered using borrowed tow strap by M151A1 MUTT.

M38 – water fouled ignition in low water crossing, twice, pushed by hand to edge of crossing and pulled to high ground where engine was started.

Ferret – Ran out of gas and engine would not start. M1009 towed to service station where everyone pitched in to try and start engine. Might have been carburetor trouble. The engine would start and run for a few second if you choked the intake using the M1 GI Hand! Several men pushed the multi-ton machine down a long hill and it made it up the ramp onto the recovery trailer. What a sight.

MB – Rear carburetor nut loose, accelerator spring tab moves, borrowed 9/16” open end wrench to tighten nut.



Halftrack – Overheating, added water several times ... engine started running normal temperatures.

Halftrack – Drivers side track parted after striking six inch tall rock in dirt trail. Removed track after it was wound up in the bogies. Owner self recovered after retrieving truck and trailer.

GPW – Transmission making noise, and is stuck in third gear. Drove to truck and trailer using low range and high range for starts and speed. Removed transmission cover and discovered the forward plate spring was not aligned or was missing. Pushed plates back into position and the transmission would shift normally. Drove about a mile and discovered that in third gear the plates had shifted out of place. At next stop, put the plates back into position and drove the rest of the day without using third gear. As the terrain and convoy speed did not allow for speeds over 30 MPH, this was a very acceptable compromise.

Various vehicles ran out of fuel, refueled from Gerry cans as needed.



Mounted Warfare Historic Vehicle Rally – Spring 2011 Fort Hood, TX – 13-15 MAY 2011

Fort Hood History – “The Great Place”

www.hood.army.mil

- Sixty years ago minimum wage was 30 cents per hour, a gallon of gas cost 19 cents and there were only 48 stars on the American Flag.
- It was also sixty years ago that 108,000 acres of central Texas land was transformed from rural farming land into Camp Hood, home of the Tank destroyer Tactical and Firing Center.
- World War II was blazing and tank destroyers, mobile anti-tank guns on armored half-tracks, were developed to go against the Germans who were over running Europe.
- These destroyers needed space and the central Texas location could provide that needed space.
- The roughly 300 families that resided in the chosen area were relocated and replaced with nearly 38,000 troops. The number of soldiers multiplied until it peaked at almost 95,000 in less than one year’s time.
- A shift in Camp Hood’s mission brought about by the end of the war caused the number of soldiers to drop.
- Eight years after its official opening, Camp Hood became a permanent installation and was renamed Fort Hood.
- Fort Hood is now the largest active duty armored post in the U.S. Armed Services. It is home to two full divisions, 1st Cavalry Division and 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized).



- It also supports 12 additional units. There are about 41,000 soldiers who work on Fort Hood.
- The soldiers of Fort Hood are infantrymen, cavalrymen, and tankers. They are engineers, mechanics and health care professionals. They are the life of Fort Hood. Their training gives Fort Hood its purpose just as Camp Hood soldiers did 60 years ago. They are part of what has made Fort Hood “The Great Place” for six decades.

Mounted Warfare Historic Vehicle Rally – Spring 2011

Fort Hood, TX – 13-15 MAY 2011

What Next!

This was the second Rally and there will be many more to come. The next Mounted Warfare Rally is planned for October 2011.

For more information about this and future events, visit: mountedwarfarerally.weebly.com

“Press on Regardless”



About the author: Tom and Laurie Essary live in Arlington TX. They spent 5 months reviving 1943 GPW-I00709 in early 2008. Their jeep named "Toby" after Tom's WWII veteran grand father has over 6500 new miles (May 2011) on it since the restoration. Tom can be reached at tom@ad5zo.com See ad5zo.com for more info about the jeep restoration etc. Tom spent about 8 years in the US Navy as an ET3 and LTjg. He served as the Damage Control Assistant (DCA) on the USS Luce DDG-38 in '85 and '86 leaving the Navy in 1989.*