

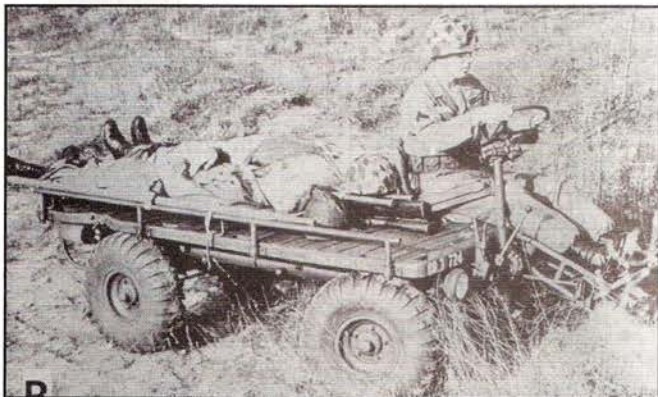
# MV-101...

# The M274: Not a Stubborn Mule!

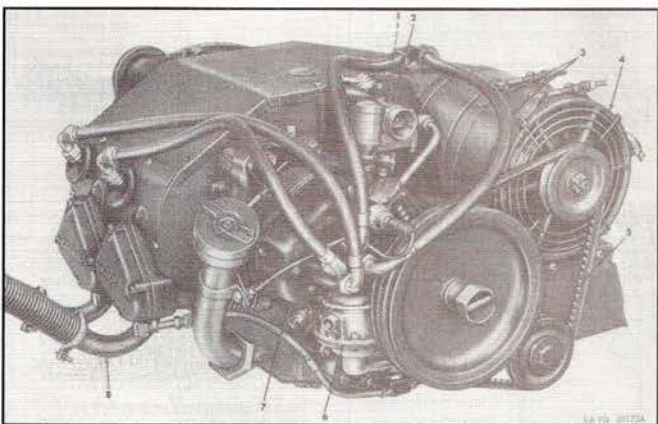
by Denise Moss

**K**nown to most as the "M274 Mule," this small, agile workhorse is more properly called a "Truck, Platform, Utility, ½ ton." Mules were made in 6 different varieties from 1956 until 1970 by four different companies. Willys began the work on what was to become the Mule during WWII, and was the contractor for the first production models. Later manufacturers included Bowen-McLaughlin-York, Baifield Industries (a Texas defense contractor specializing in lightweight metal products) and the defense division of the Brunswick Corporation.

All versions of the Mule were four-wheel drive. The first 5 varieties could be driver-selected to be two-wheel steer or put into a four-wheel steer mode. Though the



**Figure 1.** This April 1956 photo of a prototype XM274 shows how the vehicle could be used to transport two litter patients. *US Army photo*



**Figure 2.** The Willys AO-4-53 engine that powered the early Mules. The M274 and M274A1 were both powered by this engine, but they differed in details such as belts, hour meters, and air filters.

## Breaking the Code: Mule Designation

### G823: 4 Wheel Steering

Model	Manufacturer	Number Built
M274	Willys	2,452 1956 to 1960
M274A1	Willys	1,905 1962 to 1964
M274A2	Bowen-McLaughlin-York	3,609 1964 to 1967
M274A3	Result of installation of A0-42 engine into M274	
M274A4	Result of installation of A0-42 engine into M274A1	

### G400: 2 Wheel Steering

M275A5	Baifield Industries	2,400 1965 to 1969
M274A5	Brunswick Corporation	874 1968 to 1970

Mule had twice the cargo hauling ability of a Jeep, it topped out at just about 15 mph.

Two different versions of air-cooled engines appeared on the first 5 models. The first two models, M274 and M274A1 used the Willys A04-53 4-cylinder engine. All subsequent models used the A042 Military Standard 2-cylinder engine. These were rear-mounted and pull started. On the final version, the M274A5, the engine could finally be equipped with an electric start. Retrofitting the A0-42 engines into earlier M274 and M274A1 vehicles created the M274A3 and the M274A4 respectively. The first five versions were made of magnesium (a metal which will burn), the last type (M274A5) was made of aluminum.

An unusual feature was the basket for the driver's feet and the movable steering column. If one had a lot of cargo to haul, the steering column could be swung up and the driver then walked behind it and steered while driving in



**Figure 3.** Shown above is one of the 3,609 M274A2s built by Bowen-McLaughlin-York between 1964 and 1967. The company only produced the 4-wheel steering version of the vehicle. *Patton Museum, Fort Knox, Kentucky*

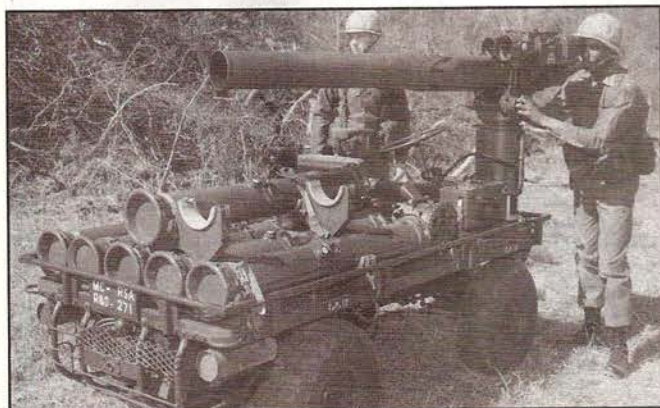


**Figure 4.** The Mule was a compact, versatile vehicle, and popular with the troops. Shown above is one fitted with cable reels for signals use. *U.S. Army photo*

reverse. This permitted the space where the driver would normally sit to be used for cargo. There was storage for the seat under the platform. If the driver thought there was a danger of being seen or shot, the steering column could be swung down further so that the driver could crawl along behind it. The speed and gear controls were located for the driver to easily reach them regardless of what the configuration was. The most unique quality of



**Figure 6.** The M274 Mule was popular with both the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps. Here, an Army Mule is refueled while on a road in Vietnam.



**Figure 7.** Because of the versatility of the Mule, it was a suitable platform for various weapon systems including the TOW missile launcher (pictured above) and the M40C Missile, 106mm, Launcher. *US Army photo*



**Figure 5.** G.I.s demonstrate how to prepare a Mule for a river crossing by wrapping it in the cargo canvas of a 2-½ ton truck to make an expedient boat. *U.S. Army photo*

these vehicles was their ability to be operated normally with the right front tire missing.

Used extensively in Vietnam by both the Army and the Marines, some Mules were equipped with recoilless rifles. Later on, some M274A5s were equipped with TOW (Tube launched, Optically tracked, Wire guided) anti-tank missiles, though the vast majority performed the task for which they were designed—hauling equipment and troops.

### Specifications: M274

Seating	1
Length	118.25in
Configuration	4x4
Width	46.60in
Towing capacity	N/A
Height (at platform):	27.50in
Weight:	
empty	870lbs
loaded	1,870lbs
Wheelbase	57in
Tread	40.5in
Turning radius:	
Two wheel steering:	
left	44ft 5in
right	38ft 0in
Four wheel steering:	
left	23ft 4in
right	21ft 4in
Ground clearance:	
front	12in
rear	12.5in
Fording depth	18in
Cruising range:	
5mph/high gear on highway:	approx. 150 miles
25mph/high gear on highway:	approx. 90 miles
Speeds transmission/transfer:	
3rd gear, high range	25mph
3rd gear, low range	13mph
2nd gear, high range	14mph
2nd gear, low range	7mph
1st gear, high range	8mph
1st gear, low range	4mph
Fuel consumption:	
5mph/high gear on highway	17.8mpg
25mph/high gear on highway	8.4mpg