

September 27, 1999

# Salisbury Post

24 PAGES ★

50 CENTS



ARRIVAL: Helicopter arrives at Hudson-Miller-Tatum VFW Post on Brenner Avenue.

JAMES BARRINGER/SALISBURY POST

## VFW post gets Vietnam-era copter

BY ROSE POST  
SALISBURY POST

Maybe you've seen it out there on Brenner Avenue, an old and dusty Huey helicopter that saw service during Vietnam.

It's not bright and shiny now, but Hudson-Miller-Tatum Post No. 3006, Veterans of Foreign Wars, will get it spruced up with paint and parts and whatever else is needed as soon as possible.

And if it's not quite finished or ready for a dedication by the time Veterans Day gets here on Nov. 11, it'll be far enough along to be part of the memory — and at 1200 Brenner Ave., that 1966 Huey helicopter that saw service during Vietnam, says Buddy Kyles.

"We'll have it to where it can be open for the public whether we're done with it or not," he says. "We want to serve the veterans, and this gives them an opportunity to see up close and first hand what we have and what we stand for. It gives them an opportunity to put their hands on something that's been in a combat zone."

Kyles, quartermaster of the post and president of the Rowan County Veterans Council, takes no credit for getting the helicopter in place.

"But I helped," he says. "We all had a hand in the thing. We did it as a team," but Commander Bobby Lee was the rambrod.

He works at Salisbury's Hefner VA

Medical Center and found out what channels to go through to get a piece of military equipment as a visible symbol of patriotism at the post, which originally wanted a tank.

"We had seen cannons sitting in front of buildings, and we wanted something to give the people a little bit of something to talk about the VFW I guess," he says.

But a woman at the military equipment office in Baltimore said people have abused tanks.

"They get them and use them in parades, so they've stopped letting them have them, and she talked about about getting something else, maybe a plane or a retired one, so we checked with N.C. Army National Guard, and they said they had four or five Hueys sitting out there. They canabalized them, taking their parts when they needed them.

"So we called the woman and told her about it."

And thanks to Warrant Officer Gary Rash they were on their way.

First they had to build a 20-by-20-foot concrete pad about eight inches deep and put in a five-foot wide walkway that would accommodate a wheelchair and get everything approved by the Army.

"It's taken us about four years to get it done," he says.

But finally last week the helicopter was ready to be moved, and Wagoner Construction Co. volunteered the equip-

ment and the men needed to do it.

Not that it was easy.

"The Air National Guard had pulled it into one of the hangars and took a hoist to pick it up and when they set it down, the truck wasn't wide enough."

But they got that straightened out, moved it and put it in place.

Now they're planning a dedication ceremony — after they get flags representing the branches of the military and put a plaque in place indicating how many hours it was flown and when it was in combat and get it painted and put the decals back on it and fix up the inside and get some of the instruments back in place.

"And then we'll have a little podium put there and dedicate it to the men and women of the armed forces of the United States of America."

Whether or not that's going to be done in time for the Veterans Day celebration, Kyles doesn't know, but it will be open, whatever condition it's in.

"We want to let people go in it," he says, and see a helicopter like this one that men flew into combat in Vietnam.

"It lets the people in Rowan County know there are dedicated men and women in the armed forces that risked their lives for them. They fought for freedom. This symbolizes the patriotism that the veterans showed toward the freedom of the American people."



ENTHRALLED AUDIENCE: Unidentified youngsters watch as helicopter is unloaded from trailer.



ON DISPLAY: Helicopter's arrival, far left, was big moment for members of VFW. Above, copter arrives at its home, a concrete pad.