

# The Cobra Has Landed at American Legion Post 65



**THE SNAKE RESTS.** Strapped to a flatbed truck, the AH-1 Cobra assault helicopter completes a trip to Hurst-Turner American Legion and Auxiliary Post from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri.

**Neil Furr**  
IREDELL CITIZEN

**THE SNAKE HAS** a home in Iredell County.

The 45-foot long reptile, jet-propelled and capable of spitting fire, was taken from a Missouri field recently, very carefully defanged, strapped to a flat-bed truck and hauled east for public viewing. Fortunately, it went quietly.

Quietness, though, was one of the Cobra assault helicopter's greatest military virtues and deadliest features. From training encounters with "the Snake" at Fort Hood, Tex., Jeff James, vice commander of Hurst-Turner American and Auxiliary Legion Post 65, remembers that feature well.

"You don't hear it until it's on top

of you," he said. Sometimes, during the training, the slender helicopter would hover out of sight just below the ridge of a hill or small mountain. Suddenly it would rise up and have the whole field at the mercy of its rocket launchers and other armaments, James said.

Although this Cobra's hovering and rocket-launching days are done, the "snake" has been brought to Iredell County to guard Legion Post 65's entrance for many years to come. For drivers eastbound on Salisbury Road, the sudden appearance of an attack helicopter "at three o'clock high"

can be a bit startling.

Which is exactly the effect Leon Clem, post commander, and James had in mind. For two years now, the post has been seeking a large military display for passersby to "look at and enjoy." At first they sought a tank but opted for the chopper when national American Legion Headquarters informed them an AH-1 Cobra was about to be "demilitarized" at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri. The chopper was set "for release on May 5." On a recent Saturday, Jeff James and David Hager of Hager Trucking set off for Missouri in a flat bed truck to get it.

At the Air Force base, the chopper and lots of chopper parts were loaded onto the truck by crane. The operating systems of the chopper had been thoroughly razed to ensure the Cobra would never "strike" again. When James and Hager arrived back the legion post, Phil Redmond and the Iredell County Sheriff's Department had Salisbury Road blocked until Hager's truck could make the turn into the post driveway. A crane donated by the G. L. Wilson Building Company and G.L. Wilson employees positioned the helicopter onto a concrete pad donated by Metromont. With everything else donated, the only costs were for travel.

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## **Cobra**

Post Commander Clem said the post hasn't received the helicopter's paperwork but he knows it was put into service in 1969 and was used in Vietnam. A lot more of its history should be available in a couple weeks, he said.

The chopper has one more mission to make supporting military servicemen before settling in as the Legion post's showpiece. "We're going to have a ceremony," the commander said, "to dedicate it to legionnaires and other veterans who have passed away."



Maggie Shoobridge/CITIZEN

**EASY, EASY.** A crane from G.L. Wilson Building Company gingerly  
owers the attack helicopter to its new home.