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Willys Jeep, World War II Legend

In the years before World War II, there were horses, motorcycles with side cars, half-ton trucks, and small-to-large tanks. The Using Arms of the military, including Infantry, Field Artillery, and Calvary departments, needed a vehicle for a variety of lightweight and rugged missions. During the decade prior to the launch of the new, four-wheeled vehicle, there were many obstacles to overcome. After just under ten years of predecessors and prototypes, the Jeep was finally born under the title “truck, quarter-ton, 4x4”¹—or simply known as General Purpose vehicle or G.P. This little vehicle was about to change the automotive world as it was known by accomplishing astonishing feats, one after another.

An understanding of where the Jeep comes from fundamentally includes earlier technologies, controversies between Using Arms and the Quartermasters Corps due to unrealistic specifications, and many issues with the automotive companies asked to produce this new truck. After the Depression, funding was a major issue. However, the service branches, including the Quartermasters Corps, felt there was a need for a vehicle to replace the motorcycle, which had proven to be problematic and sometimes dangerous unless used by exceptionally skilled drivers. In 1911, Four Wheel Drive Auto Company in Clintonville, Wisconsin, created by Otto Zachow and William Besserlich, caught the attention of the United States Army by producing the first vehicle able to drive with power pushing all four tires. Another source indicates that it was the Spicer Manufacturing Company from Toledo, Ohio, that later on was subcontracted to help in

the production of parts for the standardized Jeep. A major stepping stone in the evolution of the Jeep was the engine found in the John North Willy's "Whippet automobile," which was later reworked by Delmar—better known as "Barney"—Roos. He created the motor the Willys edition prototype would use, which was chosen to be the standard version of what would become known as the Jeep.²

Although they do not count as prototypes, a few important predecessors to the Jeep were the Austin and the Howie Machine Gun Carrier. The Austin, with over-sized tires, was the Americanized version of England's baby Austin, a small, light vehicle extremely popular in Europe. The military bought only one around November 1932. The company that received the license to build this car was the American Austin Company in Butler, Pennsylvania, which was later taken over and became the better-known American Bantam Car Company. The second major predecessor was the Howie Machine Gun Carrier, also known as the "Howie Belly-Flopper," designed by Captain Robert G. Howie and Master Sergeant M. C. Wiley in an attempt to solve the issue of a lightweight, low-profile weapons carrier. This vehicle's overall height was 33.25 inches with a wheelbase of only 75 inches with no suspension. The vehicle weighed only 1,015 pounds without equipment and was designed for both passengers to lie in the prone position. The Howie Machine Gun Carrier managed to provide a light, four-wheeled vehicle that filled some of the requirements set by the Using Arms for a light weapons carrier, including the power to carry a .50 caliber machine gun and tow a 37-mm anti-tank and anti-aircraft gun without issues. Even though there was no way it was going to make it through the obstacles necessary to become a standard part of the military vehicle lineup, it was enough to begin the

¹Rifkind, Herbert R. *Jeep — Its Development and Procurement Under the Quartermaster Corps, 1940-1942*, 1

² Rifkind, Herbert R. *Jeep — Its Development and Procurement Under the Quartermaster Corps, 1940-1942*, 6, 26; Arch Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*, 10,13

process of development and spark ideas for a General Purpose vehicle able to accomplish countless tasks.³

There were several controversies to overcome between the government and the contracted automobile companies. There were also several discrepancies between the Using Arms and the supply services. The company to begin the race to produce a new quarter-ton truck was the American Bantam Car Company. Following testing of a proposed development, the specifications for weight were increased by 75 pounds, totaling 1,275 pounds, and the wheel base was lifted to eighty inches, as was the overall height to forty inches. The Calvary desired these new trucks to have standardized four-wheeled steering, even fighting for this feature later. The Quartermasters Corps opposed the standardization of this due to foreseen maintenance problems, though it did provide extreme maneuverability. All of the discrepancies over weight, size, and technical decisions were eventually resolved.⁴

The Army had allowed 49 days for the production of a working prototype. The American Bantam Car Company was the only company able to produce the model in such a short timeframe, primarily because of Karl Probst. Following the first prototype, Willys Overland and Ford began to produce mock-ups of possible quarter-ton, 4x4 vehicles. Before standardization and mass production for the war, each company needed to achieve the military specifications for this new General Purpose vehicle. Before Bantam finished the first prototype, the Army ordered the remaining 69 vehicles of that bid. Because of this, Ford and Willys Overland were forced to speed up their production unless they were going to be left out of the military contracts entirely. After the order of 69 trucks, the Army decided they needed more options, and, even though

³ Rifkind, Herbert R. *Jeep __ Its Development and Procurement Under the Quartermaster Corps, 1940-1942*, 2, 6-7, 9-11; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*, 14

⁴ Rifkind, Herbert R. *Jeep __ Its Development and Procurement Under the Quartermaster Corps, 1940-1942*, 23, 25-26

Bantam objected, they provided Ford and Willys with drawings of their first prototype. Initially, the Army did not want to test any Willys vehicles due to concerns about their being over the weight limit, but, eventually, this changed and Bantam had a competitor for the mass contracts. Willys' version, the "Quad," arrived at Holabird on November 13, 1940, followed by Ford's "Pygmy" ten days later. Several demonstrations across the country, including two attempts to drive up the steps at City Hall in New York City with the Acting Mayor and President of City Council Newbold Morris, helped begin the long testing process.⁵

This new vehicle had already acquired the nicknames "jeep," "quad," and "bug" from Army men. After several tests, each company was to produce 1,500 more quarter-ton trucks with specified modifications. After starting overweight, Barney Roos and the Willys Overland team managed to make the final product seven ounces under the weight limit after analysis of paint weight and excruciatingly detailed cuts of any possible excess metal, including screws and studs, long bolts, clamps, nuts, and washers. Each company's product had several advantages, but Willys was the favored, having qualities such as the most powerful engine and skid plates, with Bantam second and Ford last. To save time and money, instead of rebuilding a new vehicle from scratch with all the favored parts, the Army decided to pick one and add all the preferred parts from the others.⁶

Even through their shortcomings, the Quartermasters Corps had elected to give Ford the contract because, being the larger company, they seemed a more dependable supplier. At the command of Lieutenant General William S. Knudson, the contract was awarded to Willys Overland, possibly saving the quality, if not the existence, of one of the most effective pieces of

⁵ Rifkind, Herbert R. *Jeep __ Its Development and Procurement Under the Quartermaster Corps, 1940-1942*; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*; "Army's 'Jeep' Car Balks At City Hall" in *The New York Times*, February 22, 1941, 8

equipment produced from World War II. Many difficult tests were designed to exhibit the early Jeep's abilities. Major J. H. Chamberlain is quoted after a demonstration ride as saying, "Grueling tests showed that the Jeep could fight as well as run, and it could go places the motorcycle couldn't." Now that standardization had been achieved, the contracts for production needed to be assigned.⁷

Leading up to mass production, there were many controversies over which company would receive the government contracts. Production began after the decision to use Willys' chassis, Barney Roos' engine, and Ford's flat hood, shift lever, and hand-brake arrangement. Higher authorities directed the Quartermasters Corps, which still preferred Ford based on the large-scale production capabilities, to rebid on the basis that Ford was already fulfilling contracts for the United States Government and did not produce the best product. Without additional contracts with the military, The American Bantam Car Company was facing a shutdown, which prompted an agreement for the production of fifteen units instead of 65 units per day to extend the current order and keep the factories open; this prevented the loss of the workers who had the most experience building Jeeps. The continuation of the bids was based on an all-or-nothing policy, meaning the company to win the contract would produce all of the future Jeeps. Eventually, Bantam lost their military contracts due to several issues, including not having the preferred vehicle and lacking the production or pricing of Ford.⁸

The contract was then awarded to Willys because they had underbid Ford and Bantam. Also, Knudson had made the decision that they had complete capability to produce all the

⁶ Rifkind, Herbert R. *Jeep __ Its Development and Procurement Under the Quartermaster Corps, 1940-1942*; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*

⁷ Rifkind, Herbert R. *Jeep __ Its Development and Procurement Under the Quartermaster Corps, 1940-1942*, 29, 32; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*, 24, 28-31

⁸ Rifkind, Herbert R. *Jeep __ Its Development and Procurement Under the Quartermaster Corps, 1940-1942*; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*; Dickenson Hartwell, "The Mighty Jeep" in *The American Heritage Magazine*, Volume 12, Issue 1, December 1960

vehicles and parts the military would need. Even though the decision had been made, Ford and Bantam were not willing to give up, and both attempted to re-enter the Jeep program. Ford was successful because the Quartermaster, General E. B. Gregory, approached Ford about producing Jeeps based on Willys' plans. Ford responded positively, and they reached an agreement with Willys and Ford to co-produce Jeeps. Patents, licenses, drawings, and all other manufacturing information were to be shared so that all parts were interchangeable between both versions of this car. Even though these vehicles were supposed to be exactly the same, the Ford model was distinctive because the front frame cross member was an inverted U-shape. This was the first contract of its kind since World War I. Bantam, on the other hand, never successfully regained entry into the Jeep program. Their last chance was to be responsible for the production of the four-wheeled steering Jeeps, which the Quartermasters Corps would not contract regardless of Using Arms appeals because the advantages did not outweigh the potential service and production problems. Exactly who deserves the credit for the original creation of the Jeep is an issue still debated today.⁹

During 1941 and 1942, the Jeep had begun to spread across the globe. Before the United States officially joined the war, two Army Privates, First Class, took part in the first "Rodeo" put on by the American Trucking Association. Initially, the audience, primarily attendees of the American Trucking Association's convention, began to make fun of the little box-like vehicles, but their opinions quickly changed as the new "Jeep Cars" and their drivers managed to take first and second place in the final competition.¹⁰

⁹ Dickenson Hartwell, "The Mighty Jeep" in *The American Heritage Magazine*, Volume 12, Issue 1, December 1960; Rifkind, Herbert R. *Jeep — Its Development and Procurement Under the Quartermaster Corps, 1940-1942*, 101-103, 108, 110-112; "Willys' and Ford to Produce 'Jeeps'" in *The New York Times*, October 19, 1941, 23; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*, 34

¹⁰ "Truckmen Heckle, Then Applaud 'Jeep Cars'; Army Drivers Nearly Steal The Show at 'Rodeo'" in *The New York Times*, October 30, 1941, 48

The Jeep had preceded the United States into the war efforts by means of the lend-lease program designed so that war materials could be sent to assist Allied forces fighting against the German armies. Of everything supplied through this program, including tanks, planes, trucks, and food, nothing was received more enthusiastically than the Jeep. The primary recipient of assistance was Britain, soon followed by China and the Soviet Union. The Russians had asked for motorcycles with side cars, but it was explained that the American Army was now using their new quarter-ton trucks. The Soviet Union agreed to try these new vehicles and quickly understood the reasoning behind the change. Later, upon reviewing an extensive list of goods to be provided by the United States and Britain, Josef Stalin appeared disinterested until he noticed “5,000 Jeeps,” at which point his eyes lit up, and he exclaimed “Good!” He even wished to receive more than 5,000, believing the side with the most motors would win the war. The Willys Jeep had spread to several other parts of the globe, including Africa, New Zealand, and most of Europe. Jeeps were officially solidifying a name for themselves and had become known by the nickname “son of an army mule.” This was due to their many capabilities, as they were helpful with cable laying, field telephone exchange, convoy protection, first aid, and smoke screens.¹¹

July 13, 1942, brought the announcement that the Jeep had officially become part of the Army’s regular equipment, and soldiers, particularly farmers, were beginning to want some for after the war. Another acquired use for the Jeep was as a transportable command center, as when Sir Claude Auchinleck commanded the British Eighth Army in the El Alamein battle from one of these vehicles in Egypt. Also, on July 21, 1942, the Red Army was implementing the regular use

¹¹ H.B. “Jeep – Son Of A Mule” in *The New York Times*, April 19, 1942; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*, 36, 38; Special Cable, “New Zealand Gets U.S. Tanks and Jeeps” in *The New York Times*, July 14, 1942, 4

of Jeeps to round up Nazi parachutists landing behind Russian lines. Because of how well the vehicle climbs hills, the Russian soldiers declared a new name for the Jeep: “goat.”¹²

In the United States, the importance of Jeeps to the war effort was already well known. *The New York Times* reports that, in an attempt to promote that war effort further, Mayor La Guardia had his picture taken with four Jeeps after they climbed from the plaza to the top of the stairs at City Hall, cracking several steps on the way up. In July 1942, the Dodgers and Giants played a benefit game in support of the war effort. Following a speech by former Mayor James J. Walker, both 51st Street and 52nd Street were closed so the teams could ride into the game on Army Jeeps, signing autographs along the way.

During this time, most Jeeps were being built by women. In general, the work was more labor-intensive than for regular civilian vehicles, but the workers enjoyed it regardless. Schools and women’s organizations also raised money to purchase war bonds to provide Jeeps to American troops. In New York City, the public schools made a pledge to raise money and purchase enough war bonds to send 800 Jeeps overseas for the soldiers, totaling one to two per school. Along with these institutions, the Women’s Division of the War Savings Staff and several fundraisers assisted in the purchasing of these bonds. In California, Stockton High School students raised enough money to supply 275 Jeeps. Each one had a plaque asking for a report about what happened to their vehicle. One of these Jeeps made it back and is still on display in Stockton. These efforts combined to provide large amounts of supplies for the troops fighting in the war.¹³

¹² “Auchinleck Battles From a Jeep” in *The New York Times*, July 20, 1942, 4; Reuter, “Russians Use U.S. Jeeps To Trap Nazi ‘Chutists’” in *The New York Times*, July 21, 1942, 2; “Jeeps in U.S., ‘Goats’ in Russia” in *The New York Times*, September 13, 1942, 52

¹³ “Steps of City Hall Cracked by Jeeps” in *The New York Times*, April 23, 1942, 1; “Fans Ride Jeeps Tonight” in *The New York Times*, July 30, 1942, 25; Lucy Greenbaum, “Jeeps Take Shape In Women’s Hands” in *The New York Times*, September 2, 1942, 20; “Pupils To Supply 800 Army Jeeps” in *The New York Times*, April 20, 1943, 20; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*, 54

During the second half of the war, Jeeps maintained a valuable role, with countless Jeep stories emerging to become part of American legend. One such story is of a German glider crew attempting to attack Allied communications. Positioned in Tunisia, they were dressed as American soldiers and approached a road block near an outpost, telling the French sentries who stopped them, “We are American!” The sentries immediately opened fire and later explained that, not only was the accent incorrect, but “Americans always ride in Jeeps.” A similar story comes around the Battle of the Bulge in 1944. Here, a Belgian sentry stopped a Jeep carrying three men again in United States Army uniforms. Without hesitation, the sentry demanded that they surrender. He knew they were not United States soldiers because real American Colonels always drove with their aide next to them and never rode in the back of the Jeep due to how uncomfortable that seating was.¹⁴

Also, during the Christmas Battle of “Long Stop” Hill near Medjez-el-Bab, Corporal Walter John Will borrowed a Jeep and volunteered to make a total of fifteen six-mile round trips, bringing ammunition, food, and water to men still fighting, each time returning with a wounded soldier. Will, along with several other men, was recommended for citations of valor for similar performances. One of the most notable achievements of the Jeeps and American trucks in Russia was their unbeatable usefulness in maneuvering through, and towing weapons through, thick mud. Photographs depict the Red Army using Jeeps to tow two 120-mm mortars, each through Moscow. These American vehicles with four-, six-, or eight-wheel drive spent most of their time

¹⁴ The United Press, “Nazis Fail as ‘Americans’ Because They Lack Jeeps” in *The New York Times*, January 5, 1943, 3; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*, 46

in the southern Ukraine mud, supplying ammunition, food, and guns to bogged-down locations that a horse could not even manage.¹⁵

In addition to those achievements, the battlefronts demonstrate the impressive speed at which Jeeps could travel. After being in contact with German troops for 39 consecutive days, a Cavalry detachment lead by Lieutenant Marvin Heuffner took down an entire column. They had gotten far enough ahead and pulled into some woods for a rest. Before they could even take a break, orders came to re-engage the enemy. After letting a motorcycle pass to wave the column on, the detachment chased the motorcycle in a Jeep and took down the first vehicle, trapping the entire column. After this, the detachment methodically worked its way from the back to the front, rounding up the German soldiers who had fled to the nearby woods. In this engagement, Americans suffered one casualty, while 200 Germans were captured or killed. At another point during General Douglas MacArthur's march on Manila, six Jeeps and one light tank were traveling south on the Manila Road headed for Angeles, about 48 miles from Manila. The patrol tank came across a roadblock which the second Lieutenant present noticed had not been there the day prior. After the tank halted and radioed back, Homer Bogart of the *New York Herald Tribune* reported, "We saw the tank lurch in a cloud of black smoke and dust. Its radio went dead." They were being attacked by enemy troops. The lieutenant present wanted to pull back and use the mortars, but Sergeant Ralph Nyquist from Marquette, Michigan, commanded the "No. 5 Jeep" to head to the front of the line. The three men managed to make it all the way to the tank under enemy fire and rescue the entire crew. The Jeep was an all-around super car of the times.¹⁶

¹⁵ "Jeep Driver Saves 15, Braving German Fire" in *The New York Times*, January 17, 1943, 5; "Jeeps Tow Russian Guns" in *The New York Times*, October 10, 1943, 42; James Aldridgen, "33,000 Jeeps Aid the Russians; 'Weelies' Conquer Ukrainian Mud" in *The New York Times*, March 27, 1944, 3

¹⁶ "Jeep-Mounted GI's Rip Enemy Apart" in *The New York Times*, September 10, 1944, 3; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*, 48

There were many civilian needs the Jeep fulfilled as well. On February 10, 1943, Jeeps began to be used for the plowing program and were already clearing agricultural land in London. By March 1943, farm plots had been set up and were being worked as a means to provide food for the American troops. There were approximately 10,500 plots, which averaged about an acre a piece, covering a total of about 12,000 acres of British land, and Jeeps did most of this work. In Africa, Jeeps and planes had become the primary modes of transportation. American and British men casually drove across miles of extremely treacherous roads through horrible weather that most normal men would not face. Another unorthodox use for the Jeep was as a locomotive on the British railroad systems. When fit with flanged rail wheels, these quarter-ton trucks could travel at 42 miles per hour even across poorly aligned tracks. Jeeps could also pull up to 20,000 pounds, and were used as switch engines or to tow train cars.¹⁷

For a time, due to a shortage of the normal olive drab paint typically used, the lend-lease program provided paint colors such as “Brown Number 2 special,” which were leftovers from desert camouflage the British had used in Northern Africa. These appeared as various shades of pink, which were not well received, being considered—at best—“all right, both aesthetically and otherwise.” After the war, the general attitude was that the Jeep could be useful specifically as an agricultural truck, not as a potential passenger vehicle, and many believed there were no post-war hopes for this truck despite its prevalence as a tactical vehicle used throughout World War II.¹⁸

¹⁷ “Jeeps to Help in Plowing” in *The New York Times*, February 11, 1943, 3; Milton Bracker, “Jeeps Pull Plows On Yanks’ Farms” in *The New York Times*, March 19, 1943, 8; C.L. Sulzberger, “Planes and Jeeps Africa’s Transport” in *The New York Times*, April 13, 1943, 5; “Jeeps Aid British Railroads” in *The New York Times*, March 30, 1944, 3; Rifkind, Herbert R. *Jeep — Its Development and Procurement Under the Quartermaster Corps, 1940-1942*, 36;

¹⁸ The Associated Press., “Jeep’s Farm Use Seen After War” in *The New York Times*, February 14, 1943, 43; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*, 52; The United Press., “U.S. Army Drivers Differ On Merits of Pink Jeeps” in *The New York Times*, April 30, 1943, 2

One adaptation of the Jeep, aside from four-wheeled steering, was a seagoing version called the “Seep.” The production for this adoption began in March 1941. The original specifications for this amphibious Jeep were 2,600 pounds, a maximum silhouette of forty inches, driving capabilities of the standardized quarter-ton Jeep, and the ability to carry three men with ammunition and guns. Along with the quarter-ton version, production intended to include a half-ton and a 2½-ton amphibious vehicle. An early obstacle for this project was that the first group of engineers had not been given an actual Jeep to design from. They could only work from basic drawings that underestimated the weight of the standardized Jeep by approximately 30%. After the product was almost canceled in August 1941, field generals, particularly General George Marshal, declared they urgently needed water-going Jeeps, and efforts grew to start production of these new Jeeps during the summer of 1942. The first versions were made by Ford and Marmon-Herrington. Ultimately, Ford got exclusive focus. The first Ford Seep was 3,400 pounds, 187.6 inches long, 64 inches wide, and had an 84-inch wheel base. With the ability to go seven miles per hour in the water, this vehicle’s land speed nearly matched the normal Willys Jeep. Ford made a second version of the Seep; both versions were being tested by May, along with a third nearing finalization, the “GP-A.” After an order for 5,000 vehicles reached Ford, General Frink pressed for the production of the amphibious Jeep to be the highest priority. He requested a minimum of 100 to be produced per day, and he wanted the whole order filled prior to September. After only 12,778 had been manufactured, production was halted without clear reason. The GP-A was neither a good boat nor a good car, and consensus is that a normal timeframe for development and testing would have addressed its various shortcomings.¹⁹

¹⁹ Rifkind, Herbert R. *Jeep — Its Development and Procurement Under the Quartermaster Corps, 1940-1942*, 170-172, 175-177, 179; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*, 50-51

After the war, Jeeps proved to be useful in unexpected ways. George W. Ritter announced that, without gearing down the military Jeep for civilian use, the truck would ultimately be dangerous. The government ended its contract with Ford on July 31, 1945, and Jeep was left solely to Willys Overland to produce. Where these vehicles did a minimum of 24 tasks for the military, the manufacturer had already created plans for 36 civilian uses. In Brazil, the public was polled as to what they most wanted to purchase from the government after the war. Most farmers, as well as some city-dwellers, preferred a Jeep. Without hindering the military output of Jeeps, Willys started producing “civilian Jeeps.” These vehicles had slight variations from the military version, but presentations demonstrated their civilian advantages for hunting, fishing, farming, oil drilling, road construction, and hauling. By July 18, 1945, Willys Overland had begun mass production of the civilian version of Jeeps. Some of the changes included a power take off and new gear ratios to allow for low-speed pulling, with highway speeds up to 60 miles per hour. There were also new peacetime accessories one could purchase for the Jeep, with these versions getting up to twenty miles per gallon. Along with the gear ratios and improved steering, a more comfortable seat was also added. These trucks’ capacity for digging posts, hauling hay, and herding cattle meant that farm life could be simplified.

By November 1945, several of these vehicles had already been sold into oil fields in Michigan to clear areas, plow snow, spread cinder, and drag road surfaces. The magazine *Popular Science* was particularly excited about the return of Jeep to the United States, even holding a cash prize contest for ideas of peacetime uses for these vehicles. Because of the large number of entries, the magazine increased the rewards from eight cash prizes to eleven cash prizes and eleven honorable mentions. At the conclusion of this contest, many expected Jeeps to

spend the rest of their existence on farms. However, this car was to continue its extreme usefulness in many more situations.²⁰

After proving itself time and time again, the Jeep came back to the United States as a near-legend. Countless stories and comics expressed the bonds servicemen developed with their Jeeps during the war, including the story written by Staff Sergeant Ralph G. Martin, entitled “The Biography Of A Jeep,” published in *The New York Times* July 2, 1944. In another anecdote, a corporal sat in the charred wreck of a Jeep and, even though he would be receiving another, sobbed, “But you don’t understand. I loved this one.” The police in Rome put Jeeps to use post-war for their law enforcement, causing turmoil because only Allied Forces had been seen driving them before. There are ongoing debates as to the origin of the name “Jeep,” with one school of thought arguing that the sounds of “G.P.” for general purpose vehicle simply slurred together. The other school of thought is that the name comes from a September 1936 Popeye comic strip that featured a fourth-dimensional creature by the name of “Eugene, the Jeep,” who had the ability to go anywhere and was exceptionally useful in a time of trouble. The vehicle enjoyed many other nicknames at the time, including Bantam, Blitz Buggy, Bub, Gnat, Quad, Pygmy, G.P., Midgit, Peep, Wheelies in the Ukraine, son-of-a-jeep, jeepie, and puddle jumper.²¹

The off-road capabilities of these vehicles were unsurpassable at the time, an element also celebrated in stories from the war. When two soldiers arrived to Imphal after driving their Jeep from Burma to India following the capture of Mandalay by the Japanese, others pointed out

²⁰ Wireless to The New York Times, “Brazilians Want to Buy Jeeps,” The New York Times, October 10, 1944, 3; “Output Is Started of Civilian Jeeps” in *The New York Times*, July 18, 1945, 28; The Associated Press., “Jeep Must Be Tamed For Use of Civilians,” The New York Times, December 10, 1943, 4; “Post-War Jeeps On The Assembly Line,” The New York Times, July 19, 1945, 40; “Jeeps On The Farm,” The New York Times, September 14, 1945, 22; “Jeeps Prove Useful at Home,” The New York Times, November 17, 1945, 27; and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*, 58

²¹ Staff Sgt. Ralph G. Martin, “The Biography Of A Jeep” in *The New York Times*, July 2, 1944, 22, 38-39; Wireless, “Police Jeeps Stir Rome” in *The New York Times*, October 28, 1945, 16; “Jeep,” The New York Times, June 26, 1944, 14; Brown and the Editors of Consumer Guide. *Jeep: The Unstoppable Legend*, 42

the impossibility of the trip due to the absence of roads. The soldiers replied, “Sh-h! Not so loud. Our Jeep hasn’t found out about roads yet, and we don’t want to spoil it.” There are numerous more accounts of soldiers’ opinions surrounding the Jeep, but one thing is consistent: everyone had respect for the abilities of these jack-of-all-trades vehicles.²²

The Jeep surpassed the expectations of everyone involved in its procurement. Through all the controversy, the end product was an amazing piece of machinery that consistently accomplished its job—and many others—throughout the war. The offshoots had potential, but they never compared with the first standardized Willys Jeep. On every stage of the world theater, the Jeeps and the men who accompanied them overcame impossible odds. Civilian Jeeps proved to have close resemblance and similar utility to their military elders. Later, in June 1959, the Jeep was replaced by an improved quarter-ton 4x4 with the uninspired nick name of “Mutt,” a shortening of Military Utility Tactical Truck. However, anyone who adored the simplistic rugged reliability of the Jeep will not forget the amazing feats of this vehicle.²³

²² Dickenson Hartwell, “The Mighty Jeep” in *The American Heritage Magazine*, Volume 12, Issue 1, December, 1960

²³ Dickenson Hartwell, “The Mighty Jeep” in *The American Heritage Magazine*, Volume 12, Issue 1, December 1960

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