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Jeep

The Ultimate Utility Vehicle

— by Spencer Paterick, ACA Library Intern

The term “jeep” was not affiliated with a vehicle until 1941, when the Willys-Overland company won the bid to produce a general-purpose transporter during the war. The name is derived from G.P. and is an abbreviated slang term for “General Purpose.”

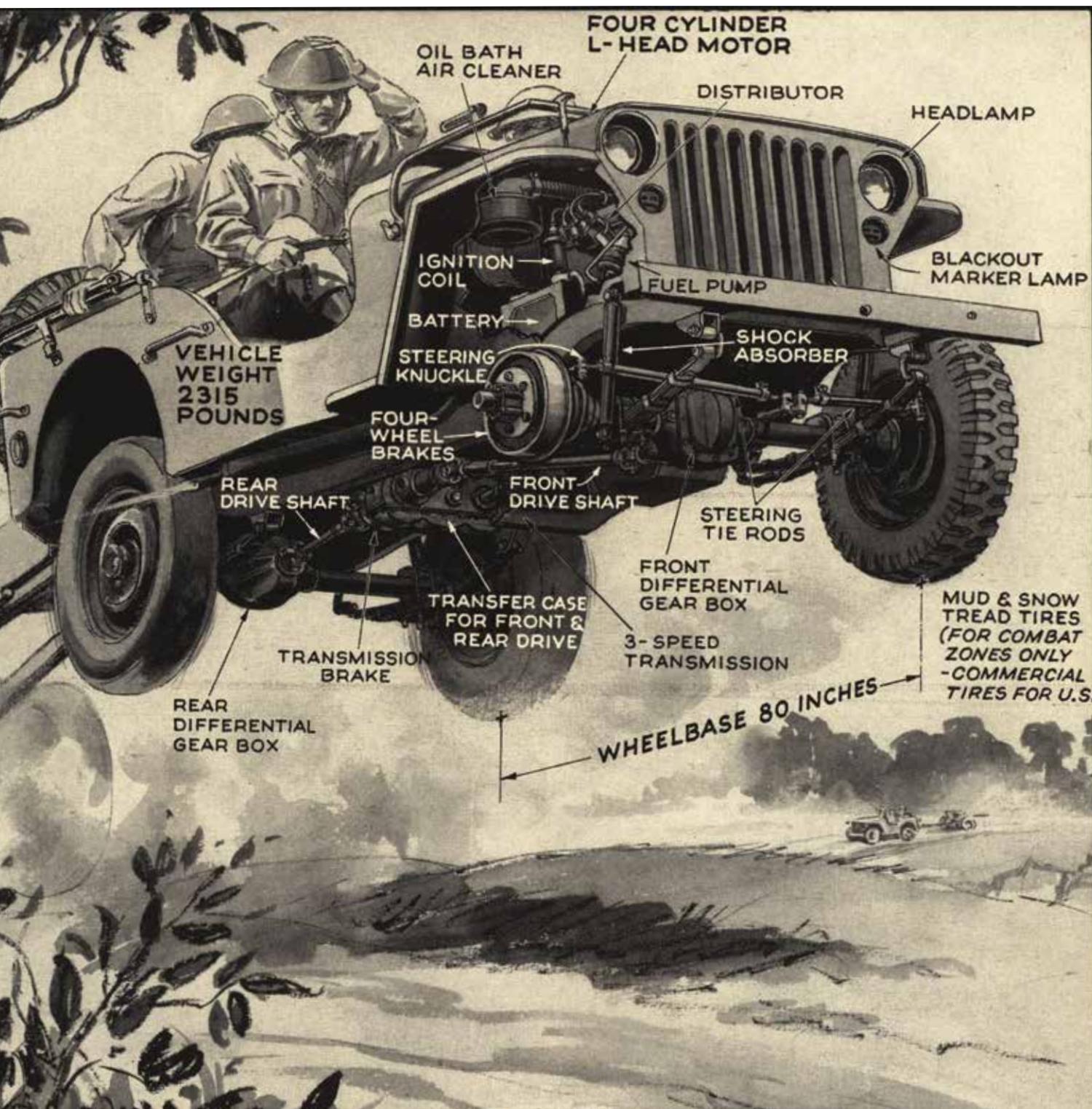
In 1940, a group of engineers put together a set of specifications for a new military vehicle to be used during the war that had broken out in Europe. Although 135 manufacturers were contacted about producing the vehicle, only two responded: American Bantam and Willys-Overland. While American Bantam had submitted a better design in accordance with the specifications, the company lacked the financial resources as well as the production capabilities that were required to produce the desired number of vehicles.

Ford would later enter their “GP” vehicle design to be considered for production, but Willys-Overland eventually became the company to strike a deal with the U.S. Government, largely due to the fact that their vehicle utilized the 60-horsepower “go-devil” engine. Despite the fact that Ford’s GP was not chosen, Ford agreed to produce the Willys vehicle under the name “GPW,” which stands for “General Purpose Willys.” Throughout the course of the war, more than 360,000 jeeps were manufactured.

Prior to 1945, jeeps were used in Willys advertising, solely detailing how valuable the vehicle was as a resource in the war as well as to maintain morale in regard to the battles that were a part of life during wartime. Toward the tail end of World War II and immediately afterward, there was an opportunity to offer production versions to consumers. Prior to the war, a similar vehicle had not existed, so the market for such was unknown. Nevertheless, Willys found ways to appeal to a variety of customers. Since the jeep designation was synonymous with Willys-Overland, buyers



were already eager to purchase one. Its reputation of outstanding durability and ruggedness preceded it because it had served its purpose so well during the war. If they were strong enough to stand up to the torture of war, they would also be strong enough for more docile work on farms and within other industries.



The first vehicle officially named Jeep was marketed to the public as the Willys CJ-2A. CJ stood for "Civilian Jeep," and more than 200,000 were built, with production beginning in mid-late 1945. This new civilian Jeep was meant to be used as a piece of agricultural equipment and is considered by many to have been responsible for the creation of the idea of the Sport Utility Vehicle (although modern SUVs do not have the same types of uses or capabilities). The Jeep proved that it could be utilized for countless tasks, therefore living up to the name "The Universal Jeep."

Jeep advertising shifted drastically once the war ended. One of the earliest ideas for the use of the Jeep in civilian life was that it could be used as a tractor when equipped with a power take-off unit (PTO) that allowed consumers to use additional farm implements such as hammer mills, silo fillers, saw mills, corn shellers, augers, mowers and much more. Willys marketed the vehicle as the "4-in-1 Universal Jeep" because it could act as four separate vehicles, being marketed as a replacement for trucks, tractors, normal cars, and mobile power units.

Advertisements from the late 1940s and early 1950s boasted that the Jeep had the ability to go anywhere, and that it could save farmers time and money since it did not require as much maintenance as the four vehicles it could replace. From 1945 through the late 1960s, Jeep proved it was a vehicle that was capable of performing a wide range of tasks. Those who owned a Jeep were able to purchase countless accessories and attachments enabling them to use their vehicle for just about any given job.

As the Jeep brand changed hands between manufacturers, the lineup began to expand to include a larger variety of models. In 1953, Willys was purchased by Kaiser, which meant that Kaiser owned the Jeep name. In 1963, the company changed its name to Kaiser-Jeep. During this time, the lineup included the Wagoneer, Gladiator pickup, CJ series, Super Wagoneer, FC 150 and 170, and Jeepster Commando.



The CJ series, FC 150/170, and the Gladiator pickup were the vehicles that allowed buyers to do the most in terms of attachments and accessories. All of these attachments further reinforce the fact that Jeep was a vehicle that was made to do more than transport

passengers. Some of the most interesting and unusual accessories available for purchase included an electric welder, fire-truck conversion, manure spreader, generator, tow truck hoist, trencher, backhoe, and dozer blade. Using these implements allowed the



relating to the many types of Jeeps as well as available attachments. A significant number of original Jeep advertisements and pieces of sales literature are available to view for research purposes. For more information on this topic or any other automotive subject, visit the Library in person or give us a call.

Spencer Paterick is an ACA Library intern for the Spring 2019 semester. He is a student at nearby Lebanon Valley College and his career goal is to become a writer for a major automotive publication. Spencer has been a valuable addition to the library team and he was more than happy to use this article as one of many projects he worked on during the past few months.

—Chris Ritter, Library Director

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