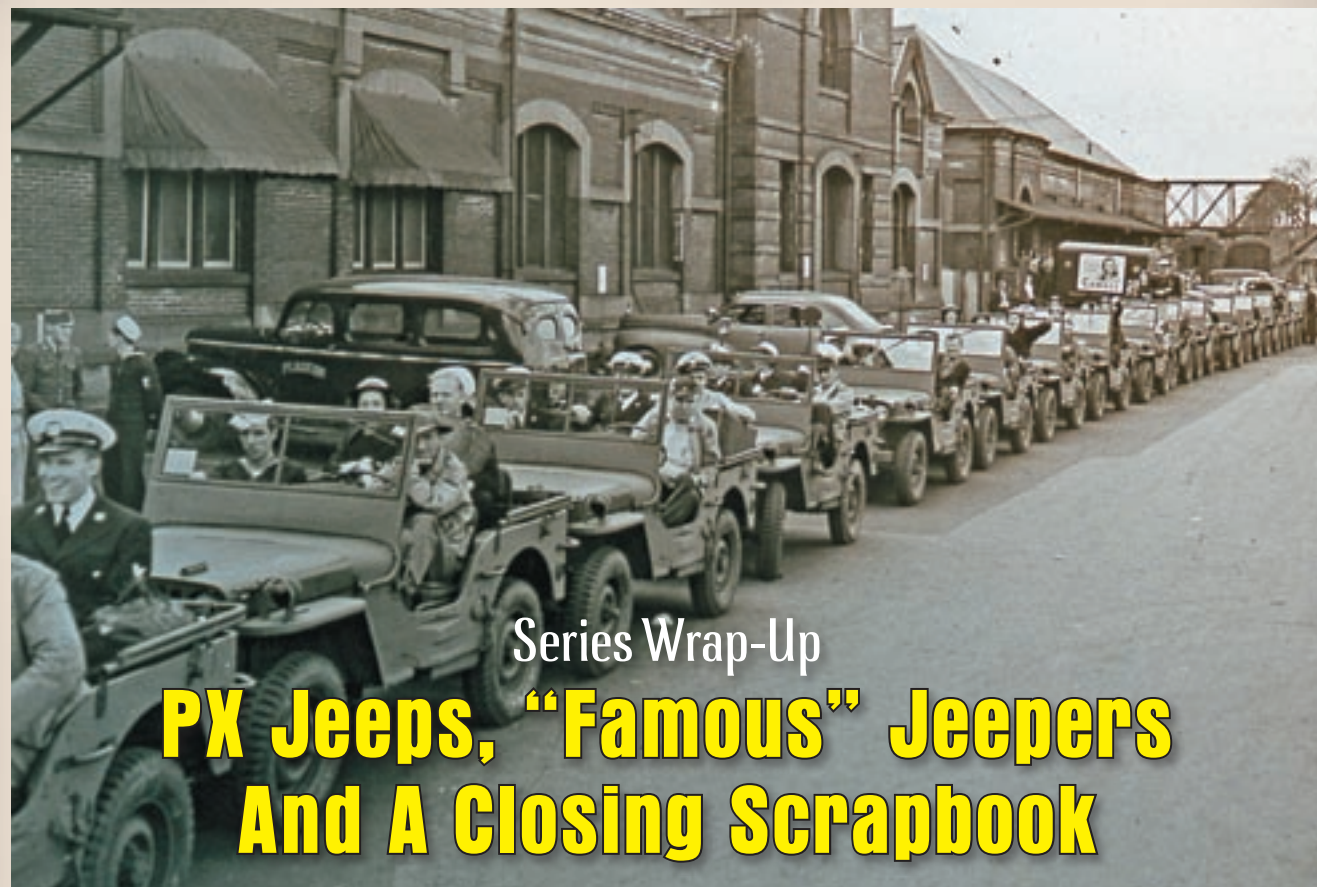


Building The Legend Part 6



Series Wrap-Up

PX Jeeps, "Famous" Jeepers And A Closing Scrapbook

Although we come to the end of our first historical series, the legend continues...

text by Jim Allen



The island of Guam, 1948. This is an MP (Military Police) accident photo of a privately owned war surplus jeep that was hit by a car, spun off the road and upended. These war surplus jeeps often changed hands many times before ending up in the scrap pile. Tours of duty could be from one to three years, and the jeeps were usually sold to another G.I. prior to leaving the station. The cycle continued until the jeep was too abused to continue reliably.

The PX Jeep: Military Jeeps In Civvies

We all know that the flood of surplus military jeeps on the market helped create the recreational four-wheeling craze that has yet to peak more than a half-century later. What many people don't know is that, for a time, G.I.s could buy a rebuilt jeep through the PX (Post Exchange) at a bargain price. The full story is sketchy, but we know that right after the war rebuilt jeeps in Europe were painted black with red wheels and were offered to soldiers as POVs (Privately Owned Vehicles) for approximately \$450. Several of these made it back to the States with their paperwork, but the scope of the program, how long it continued and how many were sold is unclear at this point. If any of our readers bought these jeeps and have recollections, we'd love to hear them.



photo by R. P. Allen

Here is one of the surplus jeeps in a color photo taken in Vienna in 1946. The context is unknown, other than the author's father, who was serving in Austria in the CIC (Counter Intelligence Corps, which had just begun keeping an eye on the Soviets), shot the photo and made the lurid sign on the front of the festively adorned jeep. Note the license plate at the lower left of the sign, which is the first issue of POV plates in Germany.



Clockwise from the top left, Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, General Douglas MacArthur, Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley, General of the Army Dwight David Eisenhower.

Famous American Jeepers of WWII

Lieutenant General George S. Patton, 1885–1945

"Old Blood and Guts" was his nickname, and the usual G.I. follow-up was, "Yeah, our blood...his guts." He is generally acknowledged as simultaneously being our most accomplished tactician and our least politically correct general. Patton was fond of showing up unexpectedly close to the front lines and getting down and dirty. His leadership of the 3rd Army during the Battle of the Bulge and the push into Germany is regarded as the epitome of command competence and one of the pivotal moments of the war.

Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, 1896–1984

Clark is best known from WWII for his command of Allied forces in Italy in 1944. He was a capable, energetic commander and well versed in the art of politics. His skills in the latter area aided him with the difficult multinational command structure of the Italian Campaign. He is credited with the capture of Rome, but also criticized for having allowed a significant German force to escape in the process and lengthen the campaign.

General Douglas MacArthur, 1880–1964

"I shall return," was his famous WWII line as he left the Philippine Islands in March 1942, just before they fell to the Japanese. Good to his word, he did return to the Philippines and took them back. Between those two events he acquired the nickname "Bug-Out

Doug." In fact, MacArthur left the Philippines reluctantly upon the direct orders of President Roosevelt. Upon his return from that harrowing escape, he was awarded the Medal of Honor—an event largely regarded as political assuagement for the government having had to leave our forces there to wither and be captured. MacArthur was well known for being arrogant and egotistical, but also as a highly capable strategist—bold, but thorough and caring of his troops.

General of the Army Dwight David Eisenhower, 1890–1969

As the Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in Europe, "Ike" was almost universally liked, or at least respected, in that highly contentious multinational command. That included the troops. A brilliant organizer, he could focus the talents, assuage the egos and slap the wrists of the most difficult generals in the Allied command structure.

Lieutenant General Omar N. Bradley, 1893–1981

Known as "Brad" or the "G.I. General," Bradley was especially liked by his troops and was known for carrying a WWI-era bolt-action '03 Springfield on his trips close to the front. Bradley was not particularly known for brilliance but for his overall organizational competence and ability to carry out a difficult task against all odds.

Building The Legend

Editor's Note: Few, if any, magazines have ever taken on such an ambitious and long-term project as we have done with noted Jeep historian Jim Allen's highly acclaimed "Building The Legend" series. Even though this series just scratched the surface of the history and lore of the jeep, beginning with its hurried inception and continuing through the end of WWII, thanks to Jim's authoritative research, quality contacts in the military vehicle restoration hobby and deep personal archives, we have been fortunate to bring you the most comprehensive look at the rise of this celebrated four-wheel drive wonder ever presented in a magazine.

For those of you who are just now joining us, you can still acquire the full series, which began with the first edition of *J Rations* magazine—Standard Issue 1—by ordering the back issues (see page 75). While Standard Issue 3 is sold out, readers are welcome to download a complete PDF of that issue at no cost by visiting us on the Web at www.jrations.com. This free download will be available for a limited time. The following is an index of the series:

Standard Issue 1

"Jeep: An American Icon Forged In War" (magazine & interactive CD-ROM)

Standard Issue 2

"Forged In War: The Standardized Military Jeep" (interactive CD-ROM)

Standard Issue 3

"Forged In War: Variations On A Theme"

Standard Issue 4

"G.I. Genius: Adaptations, Accessories And Field Modifications"

Standard Issue 5

"Dead Ends: Jeep-Based Prototypes And Variations That Went Nowhere"

Standard Issue 6

"Series Wrap-Up: PX Jeeps, Famous Jeepers And A Closing Scrapbook"



This is a lovely and rare color photo of jeeps on the deck of a landing craft just before D-Day.



Christmas Eve, 1943, near Mignano, Italy. Not exactly family style, but members of the 68th Coast Artillery Anti-Aircraft Battalion enjoy the break nonetheless. Next time you get to feeling glum about Christmas, imagine eating your dinner outside in the mud with nothing better to sit on than your steel pot and then going back to work.

The Scrapbook



The top three vehicular American heroes of World War II: the Willys or Ford 1/4-ton 4x4, the Dodge 3/4-ton weapons carrier and the GMC 2-1/2-ton 6x6. They were known fondly as "Jeep," "Beep" and "Jimmy."



Germany, spring 1945. A heavily loaded jeep on a muddy road could be a handful. Jeep accidents were fairly common. This was due to many elements, not the least of which was tired soldiers behind the wheel. It was also due to the nature of the vehicle and of young, testosterone-charged G.I.s. Back then, the jeep was a pretty zippy machine compared to the average American auto of the time. Young men are prone to pushing the envelope as far as they can. This was true in WWII as much as it is today. The modern U.S. Army has as much trouble keeping young soldiers in Humvees reined in as the U.S. Army in WWII had keeping G.I.s in jeeps under control.



photo by R.P. Allen