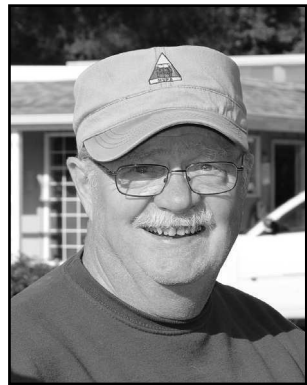


Siuslaw News Community Voices

MILITARY HERITAGE CHRONICLES – The Iconic Jeep



CAL APPLEBEE
Special to Siuslaw News

variety of other platforms, the Army Quartermaster Corps settled on a concept they thought would do the job, and developed specifications and put out an invitation to 135 different automotive manufacturers to submit bids and prototypes. Out of that effort, only two auto manufacturers responded: American Bantam Car Company in Butler Pennsylvania and Willys-Overland in Toledo Ohio.

Eventually, the Army realized that Bantam's production capabilities would not be able to keep up with the anticipated volumes of vehicles they would be ordering, so Willys continued with its prototype, and the Army eventually talked Ford Motor Company into also participating.

With the production constraints of Bantam, they were eventually dropped from the contracts after delivering just shy of 3,000 vehicles. Both Willys-Overland and Ford Motor Company went on to produce jeeps for the military thru mid-1945, with Willys producing approximately 348,849 units and Ford producing approximately 277,878 units.

After the war, American

Bantam Car Company went on to manufacture a variety of other steel products, but never entered the automotive industry again, and eventually faded into oblivion in the mid-1950s.

Ford Motor Company wasn't interested, at the time, in continuing jeep production, and went back to their own passenger car and truck efforts in the post war years. Willys-Overland realized the importance of the jeep vehicle that came out of the collaborative effort during the war, and even before war's end, had started re-designing both the vehicle as well as uses for marketing, and in late 1945 and into 1946 began manufacturing the now famous CJ2A, both for the American market as well as overseas, where the jeep vehicle already had a lot of acceptance and credibility.

Though developed for mili-



Oregon Coast Military Museum hosted its second annual Jeep Junction at Johnston Motor Company in Florence on Saturday.

ern Wranglers, some with considerable modifications and a lot of personality — maybe even attitude!

In the military category, five different Ford-built jeeps were in attendance, as well as the iconic 1942 "slat grill" manufactured by Willys/Overland, which is now on display in the museum.

We expanded the award categories this year to include People's Choice Awards for both military and civilian. Traci Kelley from Coos Bay with her 1943 Ford GPW won for military, and civilian went to Scott Ryland's 1984 CJ-8 Scrambler. Ryland also took home the Newest Award with his 2015 Wrangler JKU, and Oldest Award went to Jim May of Eugene with that awesome 1942 slat grill.

You can learn more about military jeep heritage (as well as other military vehicles) by visiting the website for Military Vehicle Preservation Association at www.mvpa.org, and you can learn more about the Oregon Coast Military Museum by visiting 2145 Kingwood St. or www.oregoncoastmilitarymuseum.com.

tary use initially, the civilian models would go on to unprecedented success for nearly 80 years, at current production. Not only does the original Jeep platform still exist, albeit considerably more refined from its origins, the Jeep has spawned a whole new genre of vehicles that evolved over time to the SUV market, with multiple clones following suit.

In addition to the significant impact this little vehicle has had on automotive heritage, it also had an impact in the medical field. According to an article

which ran in the Feb. 28, 1944, edition of Time magazine, "Jeep Disease" was the name given by doctors for a disorder resulting in a congenital cist on a man's spine — caused by the harsh ride of a military jeep!

They don't ride much different today.

We had over two-dozen Jeeps ranging from 1942 through 2015 make an appearance at the Oregon Coast Military Museum's recent annual event. There were pristine restored military as well as early civilian jeeps, as well as a bevy of mod-

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