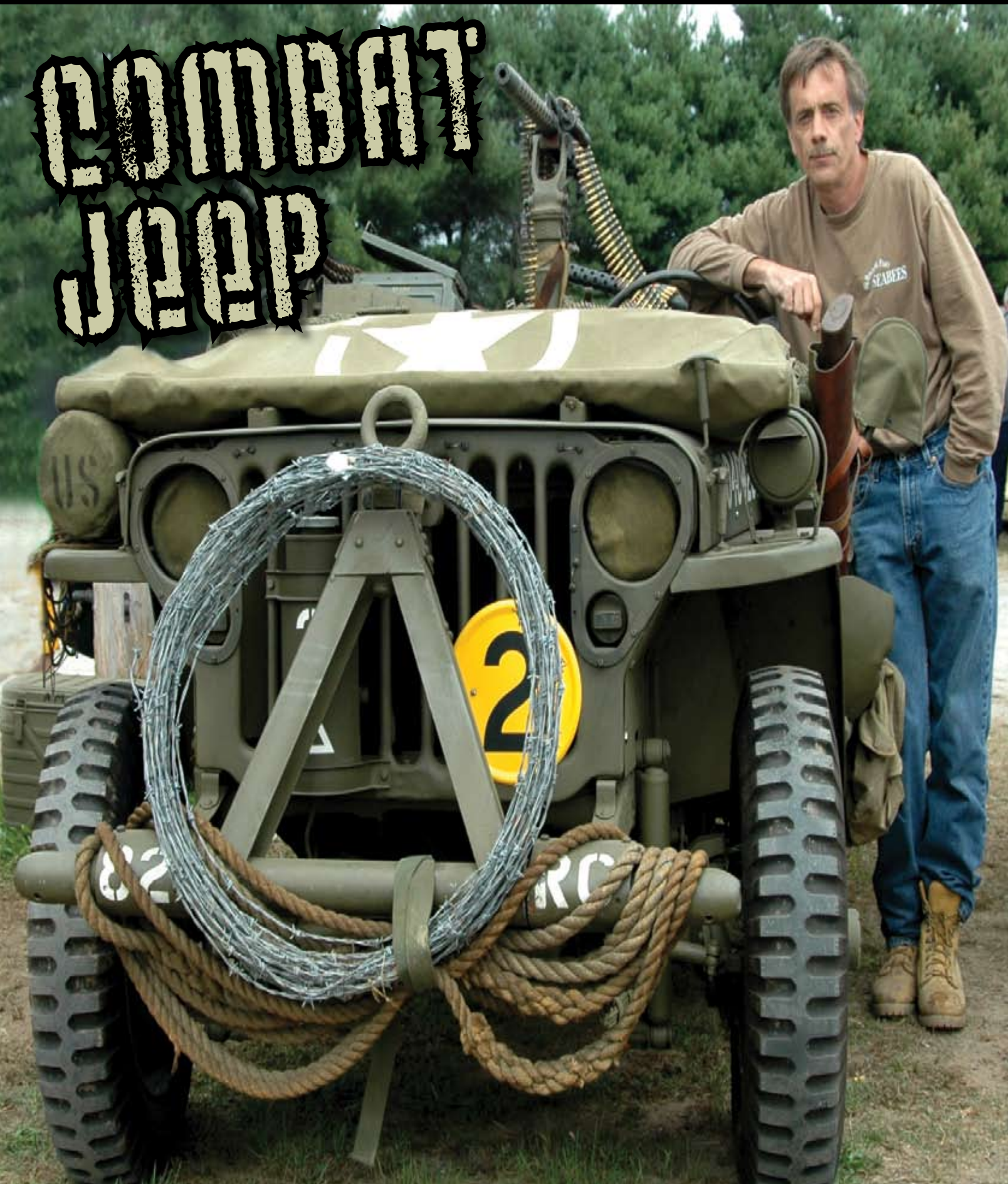


COMBAT
JEOP



Willys Overland Scout Car

Article by Dan Sheridan

Tim Taylor's 1944 Willys MB looks like it belongs on display in the Smithsonian. The attention to detail is remarkable. But back in 1998, this piece of history was just sitting in a field, rotting away. "It was an abandoned vehicle," recalled Tim. "A pile of rust."

But it ran. Tim drove his jeep through the woods for a couple of years before he decided to rebuild it. He did some research and found that his World War II army jeep was made March 6, 1944 by the Willys Overland Motor Company. (They produced an estimated 300,000 of these models during WWII.)

"Interestingly, the title to the vehicle makes no mention of the word jeep," explained Tim. "It was referred to as a Scout Car. The title says, 'Willys Overland Motor Company Scout Car'. It does not say jeep. I did some more research and then became totally amazed. I was hooked," said Tim who then embarked on a complete restoration project from the frame up.

"The nose was original. The windshield was original. Everything else I had to go find. In particular, Phil Nelson from Nelson's Surplus Jeep Parts based in Ohio was instrumental. Mr. Nelson taught me everything I know about jeeps. He's not just out to sell parts, he's there to carry on the tradition. He's preserving the history. That's what I want to do," commented Tim.

Tim also enlisted the help of his friend George T. Palmer III who helped out with the welding. "We started with the frame then worked on the suspension and then the drive train and completely re-built the engine," said Tim. "The little Go Devil engine is 60 horsepower with a T-84 Transmission. Did you know that a WWII Army jeep will beat out a Korean War Army jeep in a road race due to the higher gears," Tim remarked.

Rick Larsen from Otis, MA did all the stencil work on the insignias and military lettering and stars. All the canvas work was supplied by New Life Resource Management of Vermont. They specialize in military canvas which is very rare and difficult to find, according to Tim.

"When I started out, I didn't know too much about the military jeep. At first, I learned through hearsay until I found the right people that were willing to help me out like Mr. Nelson. I can't say enough about him,"

said Tim who is now a walking encyclopedia on the whole history of the jeep.

Tim gave me a brief history of the G503. (This is the military number for a WWII jeep. The U.S. Army had a number for every vehicle.) Tim discussed the three versions of military jeeps: The Bantam, The Ford GPW and the Willys MA. "The Willys MA is very rare, very hard to find. The Willys MB was the second series. The Bantams were



"This combat jeep is a tribute to the veterans. I want to thank all the veterans that fought for my freedom." -Tim Taylor

The title to Tim's vehicle makes no mention of the word jeep. It was referred to as a 'Scout Car'.



Photos by Bill & Dan Sheridan



Bantam car in mid-air. This photo was taken in 1941 at New River, North Carolina during early testing of the Bantam jeep, the forerunner of the Willys MB and Ford GPW jeeps that became the World War II standard. This photo was the inspiration for the "Flying Jeep" poster.



the prototypes. The photo of a jeep flying through the air with a cannon behind it is one of the most famous photos in the world for military jeeps. That was a Bantam." (See photo above.)

After rebuilding the jeep, Tim took it to the next level of a restoration project and added all the military equipment to make it look like an authentic period piece. Tim set about tracking down all the original canvas equipment – referred to as web gear – backpacks, uniforms etc. He also added an original bundle basket on the tailgate. These were used to hold extra equipment and sandbags. On the front, he added a hard-to-find canvas windshield cover. These were a protective measure to prevent reflections to the sky and hence, aerial attacks. Tim also managed to find an original tow bar. With these, one jeep could tow a whole series of jeeps together. He also added barbed wire and an authentic

bridge plate (the yellow number two) which told the MPs vehicle weight at pontoon bridge crossings. Tim located an extremely rare decontamination unit which he mounted on the front fender. Tim even put a Coca-Cola bottle opener on the jeep. "Many combat jeeps had these for the soldiers to open up their beverages," said Tim who got this idea from looking at original pictures. "I built not just a WWII Army jeep but a combat jeep."

Last but not least, Tim added authentic WWII armament: Three .30 caliber machine guns, a Thompson machine gun, two 1911 .45 caliber pistols, and an M-1 Garand rifle in a leather scabbard. He just recently tracked down an authentic WWII Army Bazooka. A word to the wise, if you see Tim driving down the road, don't tailgate, flash your brights, or honk your horn at this vehicle. It wouldn't be prudent.



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This jeep is in memory of Tim's brother, Jeff Taylor.



Tim equipped his jeep with an original tow bar. With these, one jeep could tow a whole series of jeeps together.



Coca-Cola bottle opener.



Gas tank beneath driver's seat.



.30 caliber machine gun ammo.



Decontamination unit.

Tim belongs to the Connecticut Military Vehicle Collectors (COMVEC - www.comvec.org). He exhibits his jeep at Veteran's Day parades, Memorial Day Parades, and Military Vehicle Shows. For the last five years in a row, Tim has won first place for military jeeps at the Great American Jeep Rally.

"The way I look at it, there are two styles of military jeeps," explained Tim. "One is the stateside military jeep that you would ride around the barracks with... the basic one with the canvas top, pick axe and shovel. That's it. Now, I set about building a combat jeep. This combat jeep is a tribute to the veterans. And I want to thank all the veterans that fought for my freedom."

Lastly Tim added, "This jeep is in memory of my brother Jeff Taylor. He died of brain cancer a year ago at a young age. He loved my jeep. He rode in it quite often." ■

