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They Make the Jeep

By a YANK Correspondent



They're a little too old to go marching off to Africa but these are the assembly line fighters who are making the Incredible Unsinkable Jeep for us, the British, the Russians and the Chinese.

TOLEDO, OHIO — This bustling industrial city held a ceremony recently. It took place at the Willys-Overland jeep plant, and it marked the completion of the x-thousandth jeep on the Willys-Overland assembly line.

Now there is nothing unusual about this, except that (1) x-thousand is a staggering figure capable of causing great consternation among our enemies, and (2) when they hold a ceremony for a jeep in Toledo, it is like holding a ceremony for a member of the family.

To a field soldier, this is difficult to understand.

We ride along in the ugly snub-nosed little vehicle, never realizing the care and precision and sweat that go into the making of a jeep. Snorting efficiently, it bounces us cross-country, smashes its way through tangled jungle undergrowth, and struggles across treacherous streams and impassable desert sands. It carries our ma-

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chine gun, our stretcher, our mortar or our 75 into places we never thought it possible for a machine gun, a stretcher, a mortar or a 75 to go under power. It strains and toils, does a thousand things no other vehicle in the history of the world has ever been able to do. And we pat it on the nose and say, "Thank God for the jeep."

But still we don't know the heart and soul and fibre that goes into the making of the jeep.

The men of Toledo know. And that's why, when they have a ceremony celebrating the x-thousandth jeep to be created at their plant, it's like having a ceremony for a member of the family. They stand around and watch with genuine pride, and dream that they are 20 years younger and riding a jeep down the Ginza or the Wilhelmstrasse.



Jack Ellis

There's Jack Ellis, for instance. Twenty-four years ago, Pvt. Jack Ellis crouched in a shell hole on the battle-scarred road from Dijon to St. Mihiel in France. He was the driver of a 7-ton ammunition truck then, only he didn't have his truck anymore. It was about a hundred yards down the road, tipped over crazily in a ditch. An axle had broken the night before, when he was leading an ammunition train up to the front. He had worked like a demon to repair the axle, but it was no use. Defective workmanship back at the factory — and the axle just cracked up under battle conditions.

Now, in the full light of the dawn, a German Fokker plane was coming in over the truck to finish it off.

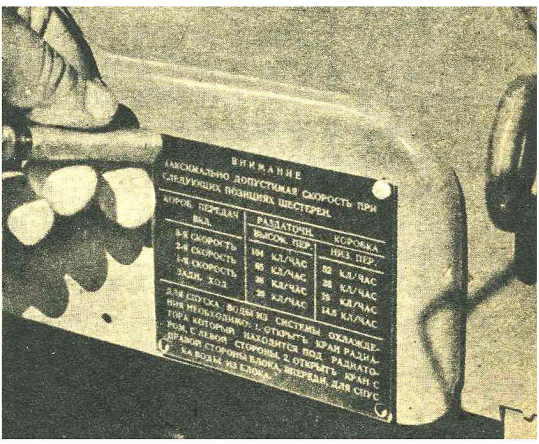
Ellis watched and winced as the first machine gun bullets bit into the truck. Then, with an earth-shattering roar, the truck blew up. Debris rained down around Ellis' head. He cursed silently to himself. A whole battalion was depending on the ammunition in that truck. "Why," he muttered over and over again, "why in God's name did that have to happen — back at the factory?"

Today, Jack Ellis (whom you may remember as one of the great auto-racing drivers of the 1920s) is at the Willys plant, keeping an eye on things. He is the chief inspector for the War Department, and his job is to see that not a single jeep is shipped out of the plant without being tested for all possible defects. He has 55 men working under him. Every operation is watched Every Saturday, 15 jeeps chosen at random from the assembly line are subjected to a 100-mile road test. Every day, 30 out of each 100 vehicles are smashed and hurtled through the most difficult automobile-testing course in the country. Seldom are any defects found. There are no "bugs" in the jeep. Ex-Pvt. Jack Ellis has seen to that.

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Jeep Factory



Destination: Russia.

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Down on the production line, there's a couple named Ralph and Bertha King. Ralph King works in the "jeep hospital" where minor defects in tested jeeps are corrected. Bertha King works on body assembly, where the jeep begins to take its final form. Once 21-year-old Ralph King Jr. worked here, too. But young Ralph is away now. He's with the Amphibious Engineers, training for commando warfare, at Camp Edwards, Mass.

Own Son in Army Inspires Exactitude

Bertha King is a brown-haired motherly woman in her 40s. She works with a crew of six other women, and they cluster around each jeep as it passes them on the assembly line, tightening nuts and bolts on the body. Mrs. King tightens each bolt with almost fanatical exactitude. "What we do here," she says, "shortens the time that my boy will be away."

Ralph King Sr. is a stocky red-haired man with crinkly lines under his eyes. All his life he's been working on engines. In the last war, he was a motorcycle dispatch rider with 3rd Division Headquarters, and he and his hell-wheel tore through the shot and shell of six battles, from Chateau-Thierry to the Meuse Argonne. In the Argonne his whole outfit was wiped out beside him, but he escaped unscathed. On that one front, he rode his wheel under fire for a month and two days without a single hour's relief.

But at Metz, a motorcycle he was riding crashed into a truck, and he ended up in the hospital for

Sixty-two-year-old Theodore Schuster was born in Poland. Part of his family is still there.

He prays, too.

It is these men and thousands like them who see that the best of everything goes into the jeep. The chassis, frame and body are made out of the best steel; the windshield is made out of the best glass; the engine is the same 4-cylinder job that used to power the Willys passenger cars. The assembly line, too, is the same. The welded chassis goes in at one end, and a fully-assembled jeep comes out at the other end of the plant, the special weather-resisting paint already dried in a series of near-infra-red drying tunnels along the way. Each man performs just one operation. After testing, the jeep is knocked down and crated for shipment.

The jeep of today is without a flaw—less than one year after it was first put into production. "It is," as Chief Inspector Ellis puts it, "the best all-around combat car of any type in the world." The British and Canadians are using them by thousands. The Russians have been clamoring for the "jeepski" in tremendous quantities, and Marshal

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Andy Jones finds 'em reliable.

Timoshenko actually credits them with stopping the Germans in the Stalingrad street fighting. The Chinese use them until they fall apart from old age and acute overwork. In the Chinese language, the word jeep means "tough guy."

There are no less than 32 ways of equipping the basic jeep for different combat purposes, the latest of which is as a pee-wee half-track fitted with scrapers for converting wilderness into landing fields for fighter planes. Besides, it has been demonstrated by the Department of Agriculture that the jeep is unsurpassed for plowing, harrowing and general farm work. The U.S. Marines and the British Commandos have used it as the backbone of landing operations. And there isn't a vehicle or animal in the world that can go through matted jungle country as easily as the jeep.

This Man Made Jeep What It Is Today

According to Delmar G. Roos, its designer, that's the way we're going to lick the Japs. "Burma," he says, "demonstrated the complete unsuitability of heavy armored vehicles for jungle fighting. The small light jeep with its low silhouette is perfect for this type of warfare. Five hundred jeeps at Mandalay, and the Burma Road would be in our hands today."

Roos should know. His nephew might be alive today if those 500 jeeps had been at Mandalay. His nephew was Scarsdale Jack Newkirk, who, if you recall, was the ace of the American Flying Tigers in China before his patched-up P40 was knocked out of the skies by the Japs.

It was Roos, one of the nation's foremost automotive-engineering geniuses, who designed the jeep in its present form. Two years ago the Army came up with a platform on wheels, built to carry two men with a machine gun, riding flat on their stomachs. Then the Army turned over sketchy specifications for a vehicle, weighing 1400 pounds, to Willys, Ford and Bantam. "Build us a GP or general purpose reconnaissance car," they said, "that will be as light and practical as this 'belly-flopper.'" That's when Delmar Roos set to work. It was his model that the Army adopted. After the "bugs" were ironed out, all three companies began making GP's, or jeeps as they were called, according to Roos's Willys specifications.

Today, the Willys plant is converted 100 per cent to war work. By far the greater number of the thousands of men and women employed work on the jeep line. It's an old plant, with none of the chromium and trimmings of the newer indus-

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Have Very Real Stake in the War

He's right. The men here know what they're doing. Those of military age long since have gone, and a huge honor roll is erected for them in front of the plant. The others have a very real stake in the war—their own flesh and blood, the security of their homes and country—and they realize it. More than two million dollars of their salaries have gone into war bonds.

A few months ago, a man walked into the personnel office of the plant and asked for a job. He didn't look at all like the ordinary applicant, and the personnel interviewer stared at him curiously. The man was in his 50s, and with his graying hair, spectacles and beautifully-tailored suit, he looked more like a banker than a factory worker.

"Your name, please?" said the interviewer.

"George Ryder."

"What position are you applying for?"

"Anything on the assembly line."

"Previous experience?"

"None, except that I studied engineering in school."

"Er—where have you been working?"

"Thirteen years as an executive of William Taylor Sons and Company, a Cleveland department store. Eight years with Lamson Brothers department store here in Toledo. That's where I'm working now . . . In the last war, I drove an ammunition truck. 116th Supply Train. St. Nazaire to the artillery behind the front lines."

"But—but, Mr. Ryder," stammered the interviewer, "what does a man of your—er—background want with a job on an assembly line?"

"Son," said Ryder, "I just tried to enlist and they wouldn't let me. I'm not too old to work *here*, am I?"

Today, George Ryder, department-store executive, is a gauge inspector on the Willys assembly line. He works with precision instruments, seeing to it that every wrench on the line is adjusted correctly, to the 1/10,000 of an inch.

That's the kind of man we have backing us up on the Home Front.



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