

but that study is now on file in the Archives of The Infantry School, and in it I analyzed all types of motor vehicles then in existence and reached the conclusion that the ideal battlefield vehicle of the Doughboy was a super-light all-wheel-drive motor truck of such weight and dimensions that it could be manhandled out of difficulties. It was a fairly accurate forecast of the present Jeep. It is quite a remarkable coincidence that my subsequent assignment to Washington and your placing me in charge of motor vehicle development for the Infantry afforded me a chance to put into effect ideas which I had formulated as a student under your direction.

I think that I am neither exaggerating nor deluding myself at all in thinking and saying that, in so far as the Jeep has any one ancestor, I am by way of being its father as well as its guardian and protector during the period of gestation, and after its birth until it had attained a fully grown status.

I think you remember that in the fall and winter of 1939 we were very much disturbed about the course taken in the development of two projects of special importance to Infantry. One of these was the 1/2-ton, 4x4, weapons carrier, based originally on the Marmon-Herrington model which had been tested at Fort Benning by The Infantry Board while we were both here. It had grown in weight and in silhouette far beyond what we had wanted. The other project was the motor tricycle based on the Deleo copy of the German BMW. The motor tricycle development had been completely fumbled by the Quartermaster General's people and was being given the coup de grace by Harley-Davidson and Indian. Towards the end of May, 1940, you directed me to attend a three day conference at Holabird on the revision of military characteristics for motor vehicles. I asked you at that time to order Ray Robbins and Bob Howie up from Benning to act as my technical advisors during that conference. Representatives of all interested War Department agencies and of all the principal manufacturers were at that conference. As I told you upon my return to Washington from that conference, what transpired there convinced me that there was practically no prospect of getting the 1/2-ton weapons carrier changed back to what we wanted nor of getting any type of motor tricycle developed within a reasonable time, and that we would have to make a fresh

*General's  
copy file*

*Fales had  
nothing  
to do with  
it. 6/28*

start from a different angle if we were to get suitable battlefield transportation.

It happened that when I walked into the office on my return from Holabird there was waiting for me one Mr. Charles H. Payne, who claimed to be the representative plenipotentiary of the American Bantam Company. He was looking for Bob Howie and stated that he was trying to get the War Department to revive the Howie-Wiley carrier, which has been built here at Fort Benning around the chassis of a Bantam passenger car or truck found in the salvage yards here. I helped him to contact Bob Howie but informed Mr. Payne that we had already fully tested the Howie-Wiley job and had found that, although it was a very interesting vehicle, it lacked the ability to move at satisfactory speeds on the road or to move at all across country when conditions were at all difficult and that no further consideration would be given to it. Mr. Payne then proposed to give us several Bantam cars and trucks for further tests at Fort Benning. I told him that we had exhaustive reports of tests on the Bantam car in our files and that it had no qualities except small size and light weight that would make it suitable as a battlefield vehicle for the Infantry. I then told him that the Chief of Infantry was completely committed to the policy that battlefield vehicles must have power on all wheels with sufficient torque and gear ratio to keep those wheels turning across country and speed enough for all convoy purposes on the road. I made him the proposition that if his Company would place a power driven front axle on the Bantam chassis and strip the body down to bare essentials so as to give a minimum silhouette and bulk and weight, we would definitely be interested and would be glad to renew the conversations. He made no response to this proposal and left the office breathing anathemas against the "Army Brass Hats" in general. However, he came back several days later and informed me that his Company had contacted Spicer who had indicated their willingness and ability to produce a front axle and transfer case of proper dimensions for the vehicle I had suggested. I recall that I sat right down at my desk and drafted a letter to The Adjutant General, for your signature as Executive, requesting the immediate initiation of a project for such a vehicle, which I tentatively designated as a "Liaison and Reconnaissance Car", and in which I stated the military characteristics to be incorporated in it. That letter was dated June 6, 1940, and was duly signed and forwarded after a day or so of discussion in the office.

*Fales*

*Shortly*  
As you remember, Lieutenant Colonel W. F. Lee had shortly before been assigned to the office and was then the Chief of the AEF Section. He knew nothing whatsoever about motor vehicles except that they were objects with wheels in which people ride and carry their things, but he had been carrying around in his hands for several days a file of papers describing a Swiss motor vehicle called the "Benz Car". These papers had come from Barney Legge who was Military Attache in Switzerland. Quite a while before this time you and I had examined the official information available to us about this "Benz Car" and had studied the specifications, which, as I remember, were in either French or German. We had decided, that, while it was an interesting light vehicle, it was not substantially different from the "Howie Carrier" or the "Palen Cart" which we had already tested and rejected as being just some more false leads. The "Benz Car" had the power plant mounted on, and integral with, the rear axle, and had a light, central back-bone type, tubular frame. It had no power on the front wheels. The "Palen Cart", similarly, had a small motor integral with the front axle, while the rear wheels were without power. Both of those models, as you and I had previously diagnosed them, were inadequate in that insufficient power and such power as they had was supplied to only two wheels while the other two wheels were parasites in so far as traction was concerned. However, I recall, that I enlisted Bill Lee's support for the 4x4 Bantam idea by assuring him that the latter was right down his alley as indicated by his enthusiasm for the "Benz Car". From then on Bill Lee became as enthusiastic as anyone and I suppose between you and him you won General Lynch over to the project. I expect, in so far as General Lynch knew, the light 4x4 was Col. Lee's idea since he was the Chief of the section. In any event the letter which I had drafted went forward and the development of the "Jeep" was on.

*no*  
Mr. Payne has, as I understand it, been recommended for decoration with the Legion of Merit for his part in the development. I don't know what the outcome of that recommendation has been or will be, but I think I can state that if it had not been for his amazing salesmanship efforts with various persons of high and low degree including (as he at least said) General Marshall, The Secretary of War, and even some individuals in the White House, the Jeep would have suffered the fate of many other good pieces of equipment which have been smothered, from time to time, in the natural conservatism and professional jealousy of procurement personnel. In any

event, the Chief of Staff's office became interested and set aside the sum of about \$170,000 for the project, at the same time stamping it with the magic word "must".

Because of the sad experience you and I had had previously in attempting to get the Quartermaster Corps to develop any new type of vehicle, and the fact that the Ordnance Department had much greater freedom of action in that regard, we agreed that it would be desirable to have the Ordnance Department designated as the development and procurement agency for the new vehicle. To accomplish this we included, in the original characteristics, a paragraph providing for a small section of "face armor", because, under the peculiar rules covering the division of responsibilities between those two departments, any vehicle with integral armor or part armor was the responsibility of the Chief of Ordnance. This expedient succeeded to the extent that the project was first formally referred to the Ordnance Department for action and a Subcommittee of the Ordnance Technical Committee was sent to Butler, Pennsylvania, to investigate the manufacturing facilities of the American Bantam Company. At the time of that trip I was away from Washington, I think attending some maneuver, and Bill Lee made the trip in my stead and as a member of the Ordnance Technical Committee. However, the only action taken by the Ordnance Department was to strike out our requirement for face armor, which automatically transformed the project into a Quartermaster affair, and all further steps in the design and the development, in so far as the Infantry was concerned, were back in my lap as the Infantry member of the Subcommittee on motor transport of the Quartermaster Technical Committee. From that time on I held almost daily conferences with the technical personnel of the Quartermaster General's office both in Washington and at Holabird, and the design was evolved step by step as the result of these consultations. Colonel Lawes, "Skip" Johnson, Van Deusen, Mr. Brown of Holabird, and Van Ness Ingram, who were the persons actually supplying the engineering data for the design, took the position that since it was an Infantry project in which no one else appeared to be much interested, they would engineer the vehicle in strict accordance with the wishes of the Infantry. Since I was the spokesman of the Infantry, I had the unique privilege of dictating practically every part and bolt of the new vehicle. The reason for this pliant attitude on their part is still slightly obscure, because, as you know, it was somewhat out of character. I assumed at the time that General Marshall's personal or official attitude was responsible.

Handwritten notes in the left margin, possibly including "face armor" and "not out".

Handwritten note: "Tech Com not out".

I know that it was not wholly a matter of enthusiastic <sup>faith</sup> ~~coopera-~~tion on their part because in personal conversations nearly all of them, at various times, expressed grave doubts as to the need for or the feasibility of any such development. However, I will say for them, that they played ball in very good style. No representative of any other Arm attended any of the preliminary conferences, except scheduled Technical Committee Meetings, other than Captain Tompkins of the Chief of Cavalry's office, who accompanied Bill Lee and myself to Holabird two or three times to see the preliminary mock-ups, and whose chief concern was that the job should incorporate a steering hook-up for the rear, as well as the front, wheels.

It was not until the first pilot model had been built by Bantam and delivered at Holabird that anyone outside of the Chief of Infantry's Office, Captain Tompkins, the Bantam people and the four or five persons of the Quartermaster Corps named above, knew anything about the project. The Armored Force, which, I now understand, is claiming to be the spiritual ancestor of the Jeep, actually disclaimed any interest even in the original test lot of 70 Bantams, until after Colonel Lawes had sent the original pilot to Fort Knox, driven by Captain Moseley, for a demonstration. It was then that Colonel Cheves, who was the representative of the Armored Force in Washington at the time, came to us and asked if they might not have a few of the 40 test vehicles scheduled for the Infantry, for test by the Armored Force. We agreed to relinquish 10 of our 40 to them for this purpose.

In the original letter setting up the military characteristics we had recommended that 70 be procured for test, because I had computed that the Infantry should have about forty to replace both the motorcycles and the Command and Reconnaissance Trucks in one Infantry Regiment, and we figured that at least three other Arms would want about 10 each for test. Seventy were contracted for, plus eight or ten additional which were to incorporate Tompkins' idea of a 4-wheel steering hook-up. When the delivery of those 70 was made, about four were sent to the Cavalry Unit stationed at Fort Oglethorpe while a few others were divided between the Cavalry Board and the First Cavalry Division. Fort Oglethorpe immediately began to appear in the newspapers of that part of the country with pictures of the Jeep engaged in various wild west stunts, and they modestly left the impression that this mechanical horse was one which they had conceived, borne and nurtured in secret, presumably on the hillsides around

Chattanooga. Since then large numbers of other people who first became aware of the 1/4-ton, 4x4, truck after it had been completed and distributed for test, have imagined, or at least claimed, that the idea was theirs and that the Jeep had, like Minerva, sprung full-panoplied from their Jovian brain. Many of these have been written up by column writers and, I presume, are now guiltily basking in the full radiance of their sinfully acquired fame.

I reviewed these facts at this unnecessary length to you largely because you are one of the few having personal knowledge of the real facts, and there has been much misinformation put out. I have heretofore gone on the assumption that it makes absolutely no difference but this Mr. Wells rather sold me on the idea that, from the standpoint of history alone, the true facts touching the origin and development of the Jeep ought to be put down. I gave him the facts as stated above. Since Mr. Wells has asked you to state your recollections I thought it would be proper for me to assist in refreshing your memory about a matter that was only a minor matter to you at the time but which was my major interest.

I am returning the letter from Mr. Wells and the carte blanche from Dupuy of the Bureau of Public Relations as you requested.

We learned with some surprise that you had left Camp Roberts where you had, according to reports, made an enviable record. I think with regret of the situation which made it impossible for me to join you out there. The experience of working with real friends is one that I have had very little of since you, General Lynch, and Bill Lee left me holding the sack in Washington. If my nature had not been such that I could not pull out in the middle of a fight, I should most certainly have been out in California with you long ago.

While you do not say so in your letter, I assume Mrs. Fales is with you in Florida, and that, in turn, leads us to hope that one of these days you may drop in on us. We certainly hope you will not fail to do so when opportunity offers.

Very sincerely yours,

Ingomar M. Oseth,  
Colonel, Infantry.