

Bob =
Ralph Turner.

Ralph, unlike Harold
was bitter. I feel I

need back up
to take some
of this material

On the other hand
worth checking
out and some
is clearly ok.

Shear

Bob = This man is sensitive about getting credit for his
interviews & transcription

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH THE BANTAM,

by Bob Lindsey

no qualifications really?

The 50'th anniversary of the Bantam July 25-29, 1988 was an experience for me that is only equaled by such events as my marriage, the birth of my children, etc.

My interest in Bantam began in November of 1987. Ralph Turner, who now lives in Corry, Pa., has his car repair done at Buesink Ford in Corry where my brother "Cap" works. Cap has been Ralph's mechanic for over ten years. He had mentioned to me once that he knew a man who had helped make the world's first Jeep. Right! I train pink elephants too!

Last December, after having told Cap about his experience a little at a time for over ten years, Ralph brought his scrap book to the garage and loaned it to Cap over night. That night my brother came walking into my house about three feet off the ground. He said, "Boy you want to get down there and talk to him." My brother knows that I like to write up local history stories so that my eighth grade students can read about real people.

I called Ralph and asked for an interview. Ralph said, "Sure! Come on down. I'm not doing anything except sitting here!" I borrowed a second rate video camera from the high school library, and went to see Ralph. My father-in-law, Mearle Ja went with me to run the camera.

Ralph welcomed us into his home, and we proceeded to talk for four hours about the development of the Jeep. How it was hand crafted by Crist, Chet Hempfling, and Ralph. How it^{was} put on Army bases and tested. How the drivers rated the vehicle, etc. Bantam outscored Willy's and Ford on every test from endurance to gas mileage, but in the end Willy's received a contract for over 300,000 Jeeps and Bantam got a contract for only 2000. There was no question why Ford made so many Jeeps. Ford had money, a respectable trade name, and an owner who knew the people in government who counted.

Some one had to have influence in the government and some how be deeply involved in Willy's. Who could it be? The President? The Quartermaster General? The Secretary of Defense? The Truman Commission? Who?

The government press releases stated that Bantam couldn't produce Jeeps fast enough for the war effort. Ralph said, "Bull shit!" "I stood at the end of the assembly line, and I know for a fact that we could make 250 units in an eight hour period." Let's see?

$$\begin{array}{r}
 250 \text{ in eight hours} \\
 \underline{\times 3} \text{ shifts in a day.} \\
 750 \text{ per day} \\
 \times 365 \text{ / year} \\
 3750 \\
 4500 \\
 \underline{2250} \\
 273,750 \text{ units per year possible}
 \end{array}$$

I then looked in the book, All American Wonder the Military Jeep by Cowdery and on page 12 was the "Jeep Geneology of WWII."

TOTAL: BANTAM production	WILLY'S production	FORD production
2,675	362,841	281,448

Ralph went on to explain that the entire Jeep deal was a put up job by the government from the time the Quartermaster Corps invited Roos to Holabird to the dedication of the Jeep memorial in Butler Square on November 10, 1960. Ralph explained that at the dedication Crist, Ralph and Chet attended but weren't even acknowledged or mentioned. Federal politicians, state politicians, and military generals, etc. mumbled through some words that meant nothing.

"Then, as if in a prophetic moment, when they unveiled the monument, they had etched a 'DAMNED WILLY'S JEEP' on it!" Crist, Ralph, and Chet went home in disgust. " All in all, when you really sit down and think about it," Ralph said, " That celebration put everything in a nut shell." " No government official who ever dealt with the Bantam Jeep knew what the 'HELL' he was doing!"

The 50'th year of the Bantam celebration gave me a chance to

talk with people inside the Bantam establishment, Walt Hempfling- Personnel Manager, Chester Hempfling- Chief Inspector, and Ralph Turner- In Charge of Assembly Line.

I had never met either Chet or Walt Hempfling (who are cousins) before, but their stories paralleled what Ralph had said. After 48 years their Bantam Jeep story still paralleled.

ENJOY THEIR STORIES!