

CONFESSIONS OF A JEEP FANATIC

1. Jeep Fanatic as a boy

The Second World War ended in Europe in May, 1945, and almost six months later I was born in the Royal County of Essex, England, not far to the east of London. The last new jeeps for the American, British and Russian WW2 armies had long since rolled off the assembly line, whether in Toledo, Ohio, Richmond, California, or one of the other plants in the United States dedicated to the production of jeeps and other military vehicles during the war. 'Rosie the Riveter' had clocked out for the last time and gone home to be joined by millions of men and women returning from the battlefronts, and families around the world were attempting to get back to 'normal life' in the early post-war years. I came into the world just before the 'baby boom'.

I was born and brought up on a farm, and have been interested in all things mechanical as far back as I can remember. On a farm, you simply have to turn your hand to making things and fixing things. At an early age I used to make my own pram-wheeled go-carts. I learnt to drive a tractor at 9 years old, and had my own car to drive on the farm when I was 12. It was a 1934 Morris 10-4, no longer road-worthy, that my father bought me for £7.10s.0d (the extinct system of 12 pennies – 'd' for Latin 'dinarii' in the abbreviation – to a shilling, and 20 shillings to a pound). I painted it in different colours and built a trailer to tow behind so that I could help out on the farm, collecting bales of hay from the fields for storage in the barn. When my school friends visited me we used to go joy-riding around the fields. Great fun for all! One day the rust holding the battery box together under the driver's seat finally gave way and the battery was deposited in the middle of a field. But, for me, that wasn't a problem. With some baling wire and bits of wood, I soon made a makeshift support for the battery and had the car running in next to no time.

I can't say that I was bitten by the 'jeep bug' at any particular moment. I was fascinated by them from early on, and by the time I was ten I'd become well and truly hooked. It was like a growing addiction to a drug: the more I saw jeeps, the more I wanted one, and I saw a lot. They were war-surplus jeeps, by then in private hands but still working. For years after the war they were sold at auction, sometimes hundreds at a time, to companies and to private individuals. Businesses sprang up to sell, modify, service and offer spare parts for the ever increasing numbers of jeeps on British roads. They usually had to work for a living, though. Farmers found them especially useful, towing a trailer, hauling bales of hay or sacks of animal feed, and driving to market with a pig or a calf in the back. At the beginning there was nothing else quite like them available, no other

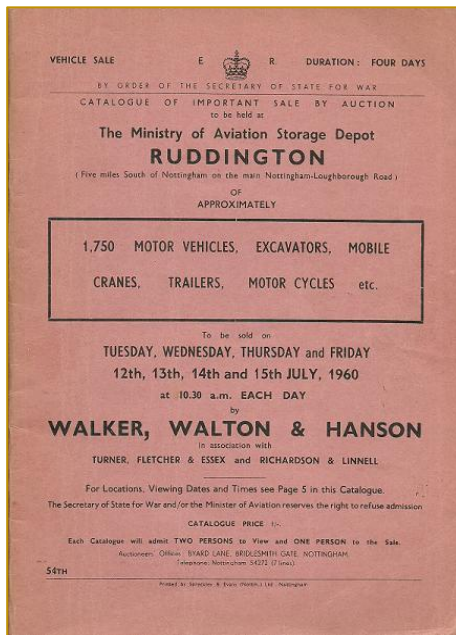
reliable small four-wheel-drive vehicle. A jeep often became a light breakdown vehicle for the local garage or repair shop. There were a multitude of possibilities for a jeep, anything where its off-road capabilities could be used, or just as a general runabout. In the days following the Second World War, there was a demand from the general public for vehicles of every kind and, as the automobile industry in Britain was required to concentrate on exports in order to obtain foreign currency, people often turned to war-surplus vehicles.

While other boys were 'spotting' trains or planes (I hardly noticed what girls were doing), I kept a log-book of every jeep I saw, with its colour, registration number, location and condition. I probably accumulated around 100 jeeps on the list. I also kept a scrap-book of newspaper cuttings and magazine articles relating to jeeps. For example, I remember one about the actor, Rex Harrison (*My Fair Lady*), keeping a war-time jeep in order to reach his cliff-top villa in Portofino, Italy, and another about John Wayne using one on his ranch. Unfortunately, neither the list nor the scrapbook exist today as I lost them in the many moves around the world that I've made over the years. I have, however, preserved a number of original publications on jeeps and photographs of them which I'll share with you in the course of this article. I've also observed jeeps in different parts of the world, and have owned a total of four myself.

But I'm getting ahead of myself, or of my boyhood. Growing up in England in the late 1940s and 1950s, you saw many signs of the aftermath of war. Even out in the Essex countryside there were many concrete defence bunkers, called 'pill-boxes', built to defend Britain from the threatened Nazi invasion. They'd been built in strategic locations near railway lines, crossroads and navigable rivers. In the cities, especially London, there were empty spaces between houses and other buildings, places where bombs had fallen, destroying homes, shops and factories and, far worse, killing people, from babies to old folk. They'd soon been cleared of rubble and debris, but they remained as gaping witnesses to what had passed. The plots were often used as improvised parking lots until they could be redeveloped as places for people to live or work in again. Petrol was rationed until 1950, and much essential foodstuff until 1953 (sugar) and 1954 (meat). Of course, children like me, born after the beginning of the war or soon after it ended, knew nothing different. For us, 'normal life' was simply getting better and better.

On the roads, which I was watching closely, there was an increasing number of motor vehicles, a reflection of that slowly growing post-war prosperity, and of relative peace around the world. What I noticed most – see above – was the abundance of ex-military vehicles being used for civilian purposes. I don't believe there was a garage or repair

shop in those days that didn't have a breakdown vehicle that had come from the army, American or British. Whether it was a Scammell or Diamond T for heavy lifts, or a converted AEC Matador, Morris-Commercial, CMP or Bedford MWD, they were everywhere. The AEC Matador, as well as the F-W-D SU COE and the Mack NO, were also popular vehicles for showmen, transporting the rides and amusements to fairs all over the country, often with an ex-army generator set mounted on the back. Many of the Scammell, Diamond T and Pacific tank transporters were used by transport companies such as Pickfords and Wynns for heavy haulage all the way through the 1950s and 1960s. The Bedford QL (and then later the Bedford RL) were used extensively during the sugar beet harvest and the pea harvest in our farming area, taking the roots and vines from the field to the processing plant. Such vehicles were used until they broke down terminally and were scrapped. There were always more vehicles available to replace them from the disposal sales, which were held from the end of the war all through the 1950s and even into the 1960s. Those were things I observed and noted on the roads, and on the farms, around me, and the names and specifications of those vehicles was a dialect I spoke. And, of course, there were the jeeps.



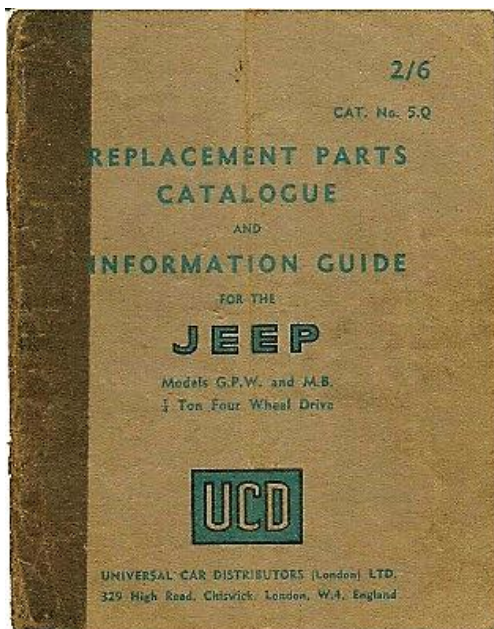
Well, anyway, I ran that first car of mine on the farm, the Morris 10-4, for over three years, but I'd long made up my mind that what I really needed was a jeep! My own jeep! In fact, I craved one. It would be so much more fun on the farm, more reliable, and just the job for hauling those bales of hay! I even used to dream repeatedly about going all the way to the Ministry of Aviation Storage Depot in Ruddington, Nottinghamshire, where there were vehicle auctions, to buy one. I requested the catalogues for both the May and July 1960 sales from the auctioneers, Messrs. Walker, Walton & Hanson. It's always amazed me that there were lend-lease war-time jeeps and jeep trailers with at

least 15 years' use left in them included in these catalogues, alongside British Land Rovers and Austin Champs built at a much later date and already being sold off. Does that prove, once and for all, that war-time American Ford and Willys jeeps were better, or at least sturdier, than those similar Land Rovers and Austin Champs? Whatever. I didn't crave any vehicle, even a brand new one, the way I did a jeep. I fervently wanted one, my own jeep!

2. Jeep Fanatic as a juvenile jeep owner

The old Morris finally given up the ghost and had to be replaced. A possibility? An old jeep as the replacement? Yes! We found one locally and my father duly purchased it. Oh, joy, oh, boyhood joy! For the life of me, I can't remember how much it cost, but it must have been around £50. It was a Ford GPW, built in 1945, one of the last war-time jeeps, already 16 years old. Just like me, a sort of mechanical twin! It came with its log book, but it wasn't taxed and hadn't passed its MOT (Ministry of Transport Test, introduced in Britain in 1960). No problem: at my age then, I couldn't drive it on the road, anyway.

It was in quite good shape, although it was missing the top and bows, the rear seat and the jerrycan carrier. The body tub didn't have any rust issues except for a small spot on the left side where the axe head holder should have been (it was missing), one of the tyres needed replacing and one of the wooden windshield bumpers was missing. The engine ran quite well (at least for a year or so – more on that later), and the transmission and transfer case shifted fine. That was my very simplistic analysis of the condition of the vehicle. But what did I really know about jeeps? Nothing! All I knew is that they'd been



manufactured by Willys and Ford and that all the parts were interchangeable. I didn't know anything in those days about the history of the jeep, including the important early involvement of the British company, Austin, through American-Bantam, and the slightly different development work of Ford and Willys. There wasn't really much information available at that time, I suppose. One of the first things I did, though, was to send off half-a-crown (2 shillings and 6 pence) to Universal Car Distributors in Chiswick for a copy of their *Replacement Parts Catalogue and Information Guide for the Jeep*. That served as my parts book and showed both Willys and Ford part

numbers, as well as UCD's own numbering system and prices for each of the parts they sold, although I never actually purchased any of my parts from them.

I made the replacement windshield bumper at school in carpentry class with the dimensions taken from the existing one. After installation, I stuck new strips of rubber on both bumpers to support the windshield when in the horizontal position. I patched the rust hole and then started looking for the missing items to complete the vehicle. I think I went round all the breaker's yards in the area and was able to find some of the

items. One day I came across a jeep abandoned in a front garden near home. I knocked and asked if I could remove one of the parts for my jeep. But something about the jeep was wrong, it didn't look like all the other jeeps I'd seen before. The grill was different, it had been fabricated from steel strip. Only years later did I realize that it was a slat-grill Willys, not a Ford GPW. I'd go on my bicycle to the local breaker's yards, but for further afield I'd convince my mother to take me in the family car. On one of our trips I found someone in Houghton-on-the-Hill in Leicestershire who specialized in take-off jeep parts and I was able to get all the remaining parts I needed. He had several spare-part jeeps parked in a field. Those were the days!

I wonder how many people noticed that 16-year-old me wobbling happily home along a country road, clutching an old jeep part or with one tied on the back of my bike, or pedal-plodding along, disappointed, without one. I can certainly almost live those rides, some quite long, in my mind again.

I used to buy *The Exchange & Mart* magazine each week. There were always jeep ads in

the Motoring Section, whole jeeps and parts for sale and sought, as well as the omnipresent Metamet ad with the little black jeep profile logo. Later, whenever new parts were required for my jeep, I'd buy them from Metamet. It was quite easy for me to get to their place in Daleham Mews in London, by train to Liverpool Street Station, then on the Underground to Belsize Park Station, and walking from there. I also came across an ad for Farmcraft Ltd. of New Malden, Surrey, and wrote to them for a copy of their

The collage consists of six distinct advertisements for Farmcraft Ltd. products:

- Top Left:** "THE FARMCRAFT 'Burlleigh' Utility Jeep". Features a black and white photograph of a white utility jeep. Text includes "4533 IDEAL FOR GENERAL FARM USE" and "EXTRA PARTICULARS ON REQUEST".
- Top Middle:** "ALL WEATHER BODY". Shows a jeep with a canvas-covered cargo area. Text describes it as a "12 cwt. model" and lists "Chrome Steel 'Socket' Set" as an option.
- Top Right:** "Farmcraft Ltd." logo and a circular profile of a jeep. Text at the bottom: "115 Malden Road, New Malden Surrey".
- Bottom Left:** "STANDARD JEEPS 16 H.P. MODEL". Shows a green jeep. Text includes "1212" and "1185".
- Bottom Middle:** "12 cwt. JEEP TRUCK". Shows a green truck conversion. Text includes "1212" and "1185".
- Bottom Right:** "THE ADVENTURER" and "The FARMCRAFT TOOL KIT". Shows a collection of tools. Text includes "1212" and "1185".

brochure. They sent me a very nice triptyque offering their standard jeeps and spare parts and also jeep conversions. They were doing estate car and pick-up variants of the jeep. About the same time, I also acquired a booklet with exploded views of all the major components that go to make up a jeep. I was an avid collector of all things 'jeep'.

But back to my jeep itself. When I had all the parts I needed to complete it I decided it was time for a coat of paint. I sanded down the old paint, which was obviously several coats of old paint, and I committed that unpardonable sin of not sanding down far

enough to the original paint and looking for the hood number and any other wartime unit markings it might have had. I now know that's what should be done in any worthwhile restoration. I left that sin for someone else to discover at a later date! I then hand-painted the jeep in what was supposed to be an army colour but was really more like British Racing Green, much darker. It didn't turn out too badly, though, as the paint I chose was specifically prepared for brush-painting. I even remember that the brand I used was called Valentine: I loved that jeep! I painted the front and rear bumpers with red and white stripes, not very military looking but I thought it looked great, at the time.



Shortly before my seventeenth birthday, the age at which you could get a driver's licence in Britain, I decided it was time to get the jeep MOT tested so that it could be driven on the road. I still couldn't drive it on the road so my father took my jeep to the garage for a pre-test revision and the MOT inspection. The test wasn't very sophisticated in the early days and I

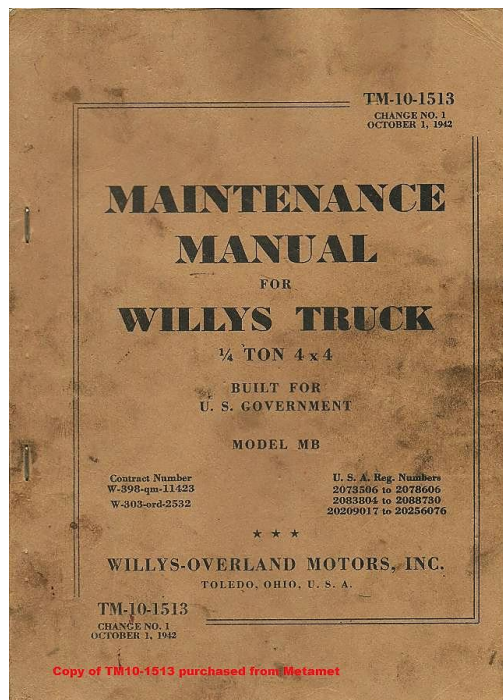
remember they used an instrument placed on the passenger side floor to measure braking efficiency. My jeep passed the test the first time.

A few weeks before my birthday I applied for my provisional driving licence and made the appointment for my driver's test. I was given a date for 17 days after my seventeenth birthday, so I had time for final practice to prepare for the test. My birthday was on a Saturday that year, so that morning, with the L-plates tied on, I drove the jeep on the road for the first time, accompanied by my mother. Of course, I'd been driving vehicles on the farm for years so handling the jeep was no problem, but I had to get used to applying the rules of the Highway Code, which I'd been studying for some time, and to other road users. I'd also practiced driving the family car, and my father had spoken to our local police constable and persuaded him to give me a couple of driving lessons. I remember him telling me I had no hope of passing the test, which made me more determined to do so, and, on the day, I proved him wrong. I was suddenly free, free, free! I could go anywhere I wanted! Well, within reason.

From then on, I used my jeep almost every day on the road, as well as on the farm, and I noticed its first glitch. There was a leak from the fuel tank, and it had to be replaced. I went up to London, to Metamet, and bought a new tank, which I installed as soon as I

got home and got the jeep back on the road. I drove to school in it every weekday, and I started attending a youth club one evening a week. Some of my school friends went to that youth club, as well as some of the students from the girls' school next door to our school. We'd chat, listen to music, dance, or play badminton. In January, 1963, I took a fancy to one of the girls, and one day I plucked up courage to invite her for a date one evening, and she agreed. I pulled up outside her house and rang the doorbell. She was all dressed up for our first date and got into the jeep, perhaps a little warily. When we got to the corner of her street and I paused the jeep before turning into the road, she suddenly got out and walked back to her house without saying a word! I suppose the canvas summer top on the jeep didn't offer her enough protection from the cold and drizzle! I never ventured to invite her out for a date again!

On the way back home from the youth club one night, I was stopped by the police. It was raining and to protect my hair from getting wet, I was wearing my US M1 helmet. I'd found it in someone's chicken run while out for a walk one day in a village near Newbury, Berkshire, a year or so earlier. It was just the outer shell and was being used to hold water for the chickens. I knocked on the door of the house and asked if I could buy the helmet from them. They were quite surprised at my request but were happy to give it to me. When I got it home, I cleaned it up, made a liner for it and painted it the same colour as the jeep. The policeman said that it was illegal to use a 'political uniform', referring to my helmet. I said that I was just using it to keep my head dry but the policeman didn't accept that and asked for my name and address and my father's name. Satisfied with

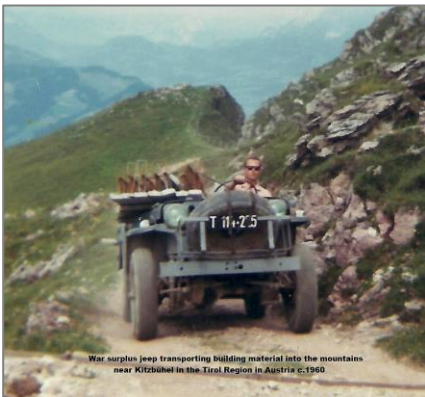


that, he told me to take the helmet off, never wear it again, and that I could proceed on my journey. To this day, I still can't believe that an old helmet, once a chickens' water bowl, could be regarded as a political uniform. Perhaps it says something about politics.

I started having trouble with the jeep engine in early 1963. There was a bad knock from one of the big-ends. Not having enough money for a complete overhaul, I found a jeep engine for sale cheaply, close to home. It was a Willys but, no problem: Ford and Willys parts were interchangeable. So I set about disassembling the Willys engine to remove the crankshaft and save all the main and big-end bearings in an orderly fashion, remove the engine from the jeep, and rebuild the bottom

end with the Willys parts before reinstalling it. The only other expense I had, apart from the Willys engine, was a complete overhaul gasket set and a copy of the TM10-1513 Maintenance Manual, both of which I bought from Metamet in London. I had some help to remove and reinstall the engine but I did all the disassembly and reassembly work myself. I somehow managed to get it all together and the jeep back on the road even though I didn't have a torque wrench and I knew nothing of 'Plastigage'. Of course, I did have some problems later on, with the cylinder head not seating properly and losing all the cooling water from the engine, so I had to have the head skimmed and someone torque it down properly for me.

In those two fantastic 'jeep years' for me, 1962 and 1963, I also had my first encounters with jeeps outside Britain. Both summers, my mother and I spent holidays in the Tyrol region of Austria. We flew British Eagle to Innsbruck and then took the train to Kitzbühel, where we stayed in the Hotel Schweizerhof at the foot of the Hahnenkamm mountain. It's a lovely part of the world and we did a lot of walking in the mountains. To my surprise, I came across several war-surplus jeeps delivering supplies including food and drink to the many mountain-top restaurants. Of course, I realised, it wasn't just Britain that had war-surplus jeeps! They were to be found literally all over the world, wherever the war had taken them, and beyond. Not only that, I also came across VW Kübelwagens and NSU Kettenkrads doing the same job and it was then that I realised that the war-surplus vehicle market included many ex-Axis vehicles as well.



War surplus jeep transporting building material into the mountains near Kitzbühel in the Tyrol Region in Austria c.1960



Me in an NSU Kettengrad, Austria, 1962



War surplus VW Kübelwagen in Austria c.1964

I once took time off from school to attend a short course on tractor maintenance at the Writtle Agricultural College near Chelmsford, Essex. I drove there in my jeep, of course, and it caught the attention of the instructor. So, when the moment came for some hands-on practical work, he chose my jeep to demonstrate engine problem diagnosis. It didn't take me long to find out that, unseen by us trainees, he'd removed the rotor from the distributor.

I ran my jeep all through the summer of 1963 but I never went very far in it. I think the furthest I went was to Hatfield Forest, about 25 miles away, for a picnic and to do a little off-roading. I remember one day driving along Watery Lane, close to home, which, true to its name it was flooded with about a foot of water. I suppose it was about half-a-mile long and by the time I got to the other end enough water had been picked up by the fan and thrown on top of the engine to cause two of the sparking plugs to short out, but I kept the engine speed up and in low gear and just made it through.

Sometime after going back to school for the autumn term of 1963, my parents persuaded me to sell the jeep and put the money towards buying a 'proper' car that offered better protection against the elements and protection also in case of a road accident. I reluctantly agreed and sold the jeep to the brother of a school classmate for £45. It didn't take me long to find a 'proper' car that was to my liking and for £120 (my father paid the difference) a 1949 four-door Ford Customline was purchased. It was one of those cars that had been sold new in Belgium and then after several years there, imported as a used car into Britain. I ran that car for three years, even making a trip across Europe as far as Naples in the Spring of 1966, but that's another story. So is the next jeep I bought, in Iran, and I'll tell it.

3. Jeep Fanatic as a supposedly sane adult: My second jeep

After finishing school I went on to study mechanical engineering at Sheffield University and spent four years there. I was living away from home for the first time, in digs on a farm about 180 miles from my boyhood home, although it seemed much farther away where people spoke with a very different accent – or I did! During that time I sold the Ford Customline, bought a 1956 Opel Rekord, wrote that off in an accident (it wasn't my fault, really!), and then bought a 1957 Mercury Monterey – yes, another American vehicle, and it took me back to jeeps. Someone ran into the back of the Mercury when it was parked at the side of the road and damaged the rear bumper and the right-side rear light assembly. After a bit of searching, I came across the parts I needed in Reg Woolhouse's yard in Barnsley, Yorkshire. There, he had a number of American made vehicles left behind by US servicemen when they relocated back to the USA, and he had some M38 jeeps stacked one on top of the other against the back wall of the yard. There must have been at least a dozen of them. I was very interested because I'd never seen an M38 before. Years later, someone from Barnsley he told me that Reg always refused to sell any of the jeeps and, despite his primitive attempt to preserve them by throwing used engine oil over them, they finally rusted away.

After leaving university, and after two interviews in the London Hilton with the owner of a company in Iran, I began working for them, starting at Now Ruz (the Iranian New Year which falls on March 21st) in 1969. Before leaving for Iran I visited a number of companies in the UK with which the Iranian company was doing business to learn about their products, and then I was sent to the USA to do the same with suppliers in New York, Oklahoma, Texas and California. I spent three months there, and also managed to do a lot of sightseeing at weekends, visiting Oklahoma City, Six Flags, the Grand Canyon and Universal City Studios. I finally arrived in Tehran in July and was met at Mehrabad Airport by the owner of the company. Perhaps too busy, too young, too enthralled by the novelty to notice, I was becoming a world citizen of a sort, beginning to globe-trot.

The office I was to work in for the next three years, the period of my contract, was on Iranshahr Avenue in Tehran, and for the first two weeks I stayed in the Marmar Hotel which was about a ten-minute walk away. I should mention at this point that a lot of street and place names in Iran have changed since the Islamic Revolution, but I'll refer to the old names as I remember them. Obviously, I had to find permanent accommodation and a vehicle. Anyone who's been in Iran will no doubt agree with me that it must be the worst traffic chaos in the world. The Iranians are very polite when it comes to letting you through a doorway, insisting that you go first but, but behind the wheel of a car, that all changes. Anyway, I started looking for an apartment and found one in the Yousef Abad area close to the only cinema in Tehran that showed English language movies. The next step was to find a car, especially as the apartment was a lot farther from the office than the hotel was, and too far to walk each day.



My 1952 Willys M38 shortly after purchase, somewhere in Tehran

Taking into consideration the high cost of new cars and my salary of US\$500 per month, it was obvious that a new car was out of the question. One weekend, as I walked around Tehran getting to know the city, I came across Amir Kabir Street, where to my delight I saw a number of M38 Willys Jeeps for sale and several businesses dedicated to supplying parts for the M38. In fact, the whole street was full of businesses offering spare parts and car accessories. I found someone who spoke English, and he was able to help me negotiate a reasonable

price for a 1952 M38 in good condition. I don't remember just how many Rials it cost but it was substantially cheaper than a car. It was painted in a light grey colour, no doubt a government requirement to avoid confusion with any active military vehicles.

There were quite a number of M38s in civilian use in Iran in those days. They'd been supplied by the US as military aid sometime after the end of the Korean War and the reinstatement of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi as Shah. By the time I arrived in Iran to live, the M38 had reached the end of its useful military life and had been replaced by the GAZ-69 and 69A. In fact, all Iranian military soft-skinned vehicles by that time were of Soviet origin including many GAZ-66 and ZiL-157 trucks.

Life was good in Iran, at least for a young Brit in my position, and for many Iranians, but not all. I got on well with my mostly Iranian colleagues and spent some interesting, agreeable, and even fun times with them. I always felt very secure in Iran and did a lot of walking, getting to know the city, even going deep into the Bazaar area. The Shah was continuing a policy of 'westernization' started by his father, Reza Shah Pahlavi, when he came to power in 1925. The Pahlavi Dynasty finally ended with the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Looking back, I suppose it was inevitable, but at the time, I never thought about the possibility, I was too busy enjoying a dinner of blinis and caviar at Leon's Grill Room, or drinking Screwdrivers on the terrace of the Hilton Hotel overlooking the city, or going dancing in a disco on Pahlavi Avenue. With the rush to modernize the country, fuelled by income from the vast crude oil reserves, the Shah and the elite of Iran were distancing themselves further and further from the rest of the population. Any dissidence was being firmly quashed by Savak, the Shah's secret police, whilst at the same time the people were listening more and more to what their mullahs were saying at prayers on Friday. I often reflect on one example of how by the mid-1970s a vast sector of the population was being left behind in the modernization process. With so much cargo arriving by ship at the Persian Gulf ports, there was an urgent need for more trucks to move the goods inland. That need was covered by importing vast numbers of Mercedes and White tractor-trailer units, but who was going to drive them? The government didn't initiate a massive driver training programme for Iranians, no, instead they brought in thousands of drivers from South Korea and Pakistan!

Now back to my passion! Obviously, I used the M38 to go to and from the office every day, and I think it offered me a little more protection and respect from other road users than any car in such disorderly traffic. In the two years I ran that Jeep I only had one accident. It was on a street crossroads not far from home and close to Pahlavi Avenue. I

was on a priority street but a car on the other street that should have given way to me, didn't. The other car hit my jeep on the right hand side just under the canvas door. Fortunately no one was injured and as I knew there was a police post on Pahlavi Avenue, I walked there and got an officer to come back to the scene of the accident with me. He very carefully paced the width of both streets and declared that I was in the right (phew!) as my street was two paces wider than the other street. He made his report, with which I was able to claim for the repair from my insurance company, Bimeh Asia.

The jeep had a fixed tubular support for the canvas roof and canvas doors. I never took the canvas roof off the vehicle because in the summer one needed shade and I'd only remove the doors. In the winter, with temperatures falling below 0°C in Tehran, even with the doors on one had to use warm winter clothing as there was no heater in the vehicle. Despite having a tailgate, the spare tyre and jerrycan carriers were mounted to the rear much like an MB or GPW jeep. Otherwise the jeep was pretty much as it had left the factory with its 24-volt waterproof electrical system intact, although I never did put it through any wading tests.



Me and Willys M38 at the Ab-Ali Ski Resort, 1971

I made several long trips in the jeep, from Tehran to Isfahan and Shiraz, and to Rasht and along the Caspian Sea coast, as well as a couple of trips to Ab-Ali, one of the ski resorts close to Tehran. Once out of Tehran, the main highway system in Iran was quite good and linked all the major cities. It had been built, no doubt with military defence objectives in mind, under the auspices of CENTO, the long defunct Central Treaty Organization, whose

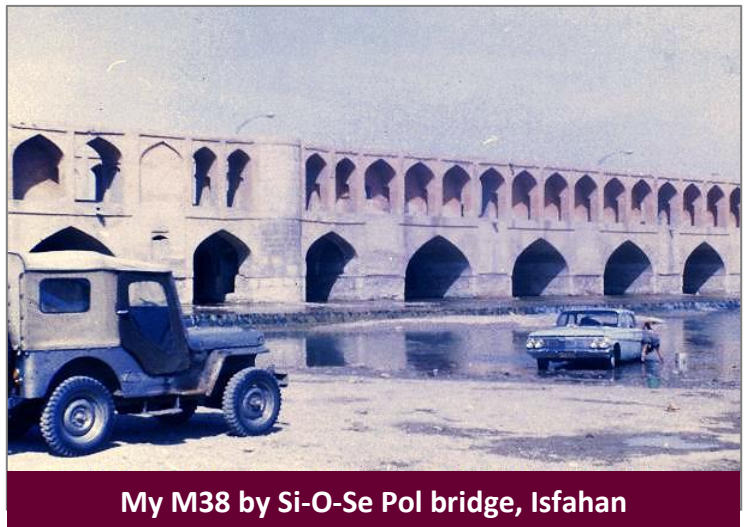
member states included Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, the UK, and later the USA.

I decided to make the trip to Isfahan at night while it was cool as I'd be crossing an area with very high daytime temperatures. It turned out to be one of the scariest trips I've done in all my life. Iranian truck drivers don't use their lights at night! They drive by moonlight or, if it's cloudy, Allah seems to guide them. The jeep's headlights weren't all that good and it was difficult to pick out the silhouette of a truck coming towards me with no lights in the darkness. The truck driver would obviously see my vehicle with its lights on and to make sure that I wasn't falling asleep at the wheel, just as we were about

to pass each other, he would turn his full headlights on and completely blind me. That's how it was! Every truck driver on the road did the same. Maybe that was their way of extending the useful life of the vehicle's battery! That's the only logical explanation I could think of, but perhaps there's another explanation, I really don't know!

There was one thing worse than that though, and that was driving at night with trucks going in the same direction and with no lights on so you couldn't see them until you were up close behind them. I had several nasty frights on that trip coming up fairly fast and getting far too close to a very slow moving truck before realizing it was there. In fact, it was so frightening that I still have a fear of running into the back of a truck at night even today, nearly fifty years later.

In spite of the scares on the journey, the visit to Isfahan was very well worth it. There are so many historical and fascinating places to visit: Chehel Sotoun, a splendid pavilion in a park, the Ali Qapu Palace, the Si-O-Se Pol bridge with 33 arches over the Zayandeh River, the main square with the bazaar, and the many mosques decorated on the outside with very ornate blue tiles. I then drove on another 300 miles to Shiraz, also known as the Garden City, famous for its roses (the climate is much milder there), and for being the birthplace of the poet, Hafez.



My Iranian colleagues in the office told me about the Caspian Sea coast, and how different it was to the dry climate of Tehran, so I offered to take them in the jeep. I'd pay the cost of fuel if they'd take care of the food and lodging. They were very enthusiastic about the trip, so taking advantage of a long weekend holiday we set off for Rasht and the Coast. It was a very pleasant trip and there's certainly much more vegetation along the coast compared to the rest of Iran, which is mostly very barren. We passed several hotels and motels but my friends knew where we could rent a tent with mosquito netting in someone's garden along the shore, which is what we did. It was a great way to spend a couple of days by the beach.

I remember the sand was very dark in colour and it looked perfect for driving along the shore. All went well for a while but I didn't notice that where a small stream emptied

into the sea, where the sand was much softer. We got stuck. Even with four-wheel-drive in low range, it wouldn't budge. We tried rocking it, we tried to lift it and put some planks of wood under the wheels, but we couldn't get it out. In fact, we were probably making things worse as the wet sand seemed to suck the jeep down. After a couple of hours, we gave up and walked to the main road. Fortunately, it wasn't long before a local farmer drove by on his tractor. My friends stopped him, explained the problem and he kindly offered to pull us out. With the tractor far enough away from the jeep on hard sand and with a long, strong rope, the jeep was finally extricated. Once back on the main road, I never drove on the beach again.

After two years running the M38, by 1971 I'd saved up enough to buy a new car as I had other plans for my last year in Iran. I went back to the man who'd helped me with the original purchase of the jeep, who'd become my friend, and told him that I planned to sell it. It wasn't long before he found a client for the jeep, but just before I could show it to him, the gearbox developed a problem. Not wanting to spend money on repairs, I dropped the selling price and the buyer accepted. Good-bye old friend, you served me well.

The Willys M38 wasn't the only jeep to be seen in Iran. There was a factory, then known as Sherkat Sahami Jeep, later to become Pars Khodro, on the Tehran-Karaj road, that built



Me and the Jeep factory sign near Tehran

jeeps under license from the Kaiser-Jeep Corporation. The CJ-5, often sold with a hard-top, was known as the Jeep Shahbaz and was built from about 1959 onward. The Jeep Wagoneer was introduced in the 1960s as the Aho'o, as well as the Jeep Gladiator Pick-Up, known as the Simorgh. These three Jeep models were quite a common sight on Iranian roads in those days. Pars Khodro went on to produce Rambler cars as well in the 1970s, but when General Motors purchased part of the company, they changed to producing Opel, Chevrolet and Buick products until the Islamic Revolution and the cessation of all commercial ties between Iran and the

USA put an end to all that. For the company to continue in business, they obtained parts from Mahindra & Mahindra in India in order to produce the Tosan jeep and meet a demand from the military for vehicles eventually required to fight the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s and for civilian off-road use.

Of course, the jeep wasn't new to Iran. Many original standardized jeeps had seen service in Iran during the Second World War, escorting convoys of lend-lease vehicles and other



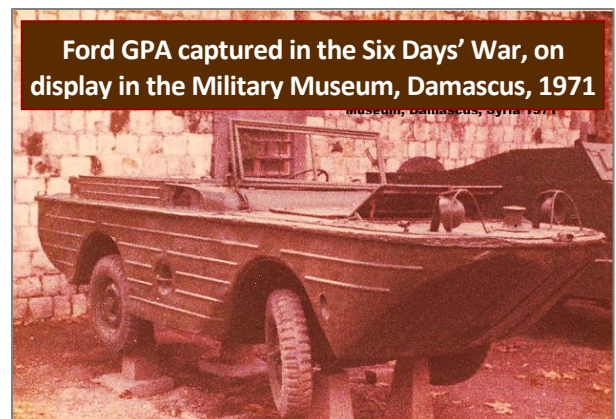
My collection of technical and other manuals purchased in a bookshop in Tehran in 1971

materiel along the Persian Corridor from the Iranian ports up to the Russian border. Some may have stayed on in Iran after the war, either being transferred to the Iranian Army in an attempt to reorganize it once the Allies left, or auctioned off to individuals. I really don't know. The fact is, I never came across a single Willys MB or Ford GPW during my stay there. I did, however, find a number of Technical Manuals one day in a second-hand bookshop near the British Embassy

in Tehran. They were mostly for TM10s and TM5s, pertaining to other (non-jeep) war-time U.S. military vehicles. How they got there is anyone's guess but I took the opportunity and bought them, including a GAZ-69/69A Driver's Handbook in Russian. I kept them for many years before selling them to a collector.

The new car I purchased after the M38 was a 1971 Volkswagen 1302S with the 1600 c.c. engine. I had the factory deliver it to me through a VW dealership in Vienna. The colour was 'Clementine' (remember the 'Valentine' paint for my first jeep? How romantic my vehicles have been, haven't they?). It was on German Zollfrei (duty free) plates, the old oval ones, and after picking it up in Vienna, I used it first for a holiday in Europe and then drove it to Iran for my last year there. Getting there was quite an adventure, driving across what was then Communist Yugoslavia, the North of Greece and all the way across the centre of Turkey. It took me about six days.

Before ending my employment contract, I had some holiday time due so my mother came to visit from England, and we took a trip to Lebanon to spend Christmas 1971 there. We drove through Tabriz and crossed the Iran-Turkey border at Bazargan, then on via Agri (with temperatures overnight low enough to freeze the battery of the car and turn the engine oil in the sump to a thick greasy substance), Erzurum, Elazig and Iskenderun in Turkey, then along the Mediterranean Coast of Syria and down into Lebanon. It was winter-time and, fortunately, I'd gone prepared with snow-chains and a shovel. My mother's idea of being prepared was taking a



Ford GPA captured in the Six Days' War, on display in the Military Museum, Damascus, 1971

bottle of Iranian vodka with her! Even crossing the mountain pass on the Antakya-Yayladag highway before arriving at the Syrian border, I had to use the shovel to clear the snowdrifts so we could get through. There were about ten cars following in our tracks that weren't so well prepared. We spent a whole week in Lebanon visiting Byblos, Sidon, Ba'albek and Beirut, with Christmas night spent watching the excellent show in the Casino du Liban. We encountered far less snow on the trip back to Tehran and saw in the New Year in a hotel in Elazig in the middle of Turkey.

Finally at Now Rooz 1972, I loaded up the VW with all my worldly possessions and set off for the UK, this time taking the route along the Black Sea coast through Trabzon, Turkey. It turned out to be a bad decision. It was a time of terrorist activity and three NATO engineers had just been kidnapped in Ünye on the Trabzon-Samsun road. I first realised that something was happening in the area when I stopped for lunch at a restaurant along the way. Someone there showed me a local newspaper with photographs of the three engineers. I could read their names in the captions under each photograph and then the person holding the newspaper drew his index finger across his throat, indicating that the three were dead. After leaving the restaurant I was relieved to find that the Turkish Army had roadblocks set up along the highway all the way to Ankara. At the first one, an officer explained what was happening and that I should only stop at each of the roadblocks and not deviate from the route. I felt fairly safe as I could see that they were expecting me at each roadblock along the way and they would wave me through.

After an accident in Gebze just before Istanbul, I had to spend nine days in the city while the car was being repaired, and so taking advantage of the time, I got to know the place fairly well. I enjoyed Istanbul very much and hated leaving, but when the repairs to the car were finished I really had to depart for the UK.

Once settled in at my mother's house in Essex (my parents had recently separated), I started commuting to London to work at the offices of a US company in the pipeline construction equipment business, where I'd found myself a job before leaving Iran. It didn't take me long to realize that commuting wasn't for me. After three years working in the Middle East, I needed to look for another job overseas. However, while looking I needed something to keep me busy during the evenings and at weekends. What better than a jeep to occupy my spare time.

4. My third jeep... and 30 jeep-less years

I started looking for a jeep and soon found one. It was standing in the entrance to a farm near the village I was living in, with a For Sale sign stuck on the windscreen – or should I say 'windshield'? It was a 1944 Willys MB, the engine was seized and it cost me £100. I

got the tow truck from a local service station to tow it to the house and put it in the garage to be disassembled. I decided to remove the body as it needed work done on it and, not having the tools nor skills for bodywork repairs, I sent the body off to the local service station to be worked on. The owner of the business also came up with the idea of replacing the original seized jeep engine with the engine from a Riley 1500 write-off that he “just happened to have available”. I seem to recall paying £45 for the complete engine with all its accessories and any other bits and pieces that I might need. It was a rather irreverent solution, but the Riley engine had a fairly low mileage and was in good condition, and when I compared the Riley engine specs against the jeep engine specs, they were very similar in torque and horse-power. Besides, the Riley engine was smaller than the jeep’s so, in spite of having overhead-valves, it easily fitted into the jeep engine compartment without any modifications to the bonnet, or should I say ‘hood’. I could even use the original jeep engine supports with a simple additional spacer required on one side only. I went to Archers Garage in Great Dunmow and had them machine an adapter plate from steel in order to mate the Riley engine to the jeep bell-housing. The jeep clutch disc fitted nicely inside the Riley clutch pressure-plate and the original clutch thrust bearing worked well. All in all, it was a fairly straightforward and easy modification. Any engineer with the surname Frankenstein would have patted me on the back! But there was more to do.

I had the fuel tank repaired and installed all new fuel and brake lines. I remember buying the preformed brake lines from Metamet in London and feeling quite conspicuous carrying them on the crowded Underground and then on the train home. I had the engine installed and running in the chassis, and could move it in and out of the garage under its own power, still without the body (you know, Frankenstein – just testing as we go). Of course, the Riley generator, starter motor and ignition system were all 12 volt and I decided that the lighting, when the jeep was finished, would have to be 12 volt. It was time then for the body to go on. All seemed to go well and everything was in its place until I discovered that the back of the engine was touching part of the firewall. That wouldn’t do, but time was running out. I’d got the new job I wanted, in Dubai, and had to get the jeep finished fast.

I crudely cut a hole in the firewall to alleviate the problem and made a cover for the hole out of aluminium sheet. Job done! Well... there was no time to paint the bodywork and I had to leave it in red primer. I got all the lighting installed with round non-original rear lights and mounted the Riley headlights in the front grill (in CJ3B style) with the original Riley chromed headlight rims. I even installed turn signals. I bought a used summer top in good condition and five nearly new 7.50 x 16 road tyres to complete the vehicle. My



automotive 'monster' must have passed as a genuine jeep for most people, looked really good, and ran well. I quickly got it MOT tested and found someone to purchase the original seized Willys engine from me. I loaded the engine in the back of the jeep it had belonged to (like someone carrying their old brain to an organ clinic?), and delivered it to him in Kent on the other side of the River Thames. On that trip I took the only photograph I have of that restored jeep – you can see the English rain on it.

Time was now at a premium, and then, before I left the UK for my new job, my mother decided to move house to be nearer to friends and family far

away in Berkshire. She bought a house in Spencer's Wood near Reading and I drove the jeep there, while she drove her Volkswagen Beetle. Once the furniture arrived and she was installed in the house what was I to do with the jeep, as I might not be back in the UK for months, even years? Someone suggested that I park it in the barn of a farm belonging to an acquaintance. I loaded the jeep with my tools and parts that I'd accumulated over the past few months and drove it to the farm where my acquaintance did let me park it in his barn. And that's the last I ever saw of it. I left for Dubai the next day and didn't go back to the UK for several years. I was so engrossed in my new job and life in Dubai that I forgot entirely about the jeep.

After one year in Spencer's Wood, my mother bought a semi-detached house nearby in Newbury where she spent the rest of her years. I was with her at the end, recalling in my head the good and the exciting times we'd had together. I'd completely forgotten about the jeep by then, and it didn't even cross my mind while I was in England that time, though it was probably still in that farm barn close by. In fact, it wasn't until years later that I remembered about it at all, and then I didn't have a clue as to where I'd left it, and I never spent sufficient time in the UK again to investigate. I hope whoever 'discovered' it found it in fair condition and was able to enjoy using it as much as I'd have liked to!

I enjoyed living the next four years in Dubai. It was at a time before the skyscrapers were built, before there were golf courses, before shopping malls, before artificial ski slopes. The road to Abu Dhabi had just been paved (Beware of Camels!), the road to Muscat was mostly unpaved, the tunnel under the creek was built while I was there, and the first

major hotel, the Intercontinental, went up at that time. Dubai was very unsophisticated then but, for a person with a spirit for adventure like me, it was fabulous, and I travelled a lot. Each week I'd either drive to Abu Dhabi in the company Pontiac Le Mans or fly to Doha, Bahrain, Muscat or Tehran to visit clients. Eventually, after obtaining the necessary permits, I'd even drive to Muscat instead of flying. That was an adventure in itself. I remember once, after crossing the border, coming across a man alone literally in the middle of nowhere. He was obviously a descendent of one of the East African Omanis returning to live in Oman. He spoke no Arabic – neither did I come to that – but with sign language, I offered to take him as far as he wanted on his journey. It was the right thing to do. He got into the back of the car and off we went. Neither of us said a word until about an hour later he tapped me on the shoulder and indicated that we'd arrived at his destination. It was a crossroads in the desert with nothing to be seen for miles. He took out some money and offered to pay but I said no. Being very grateful, he said "Shukran, Bwana" and off he went. I continued on my way to the coast and then down to Muscat, where I usually stayed at the Al-Falaj Hotel.

There were no jeeps in Dubai, nor in any of the Gulf States at that time. The Jeep Corporation was on what was known as 'the Arab League's Palestinian Blacklist' because of its close business ties to Israel. They weren't allowed to market their products in any of the Arab Nations. The Ford Motor Company and Coca-Cola along with about another 8,500 companies were also on that now defunct list. However, one saw lots of ex-British Army Series II Land Rovers and Bedford RL trucks and newer Toyota Land Cruisers and pick-ups. They were the vehicles of choice for those that lived in the desert.

After four years living in Dubai I moved to Muscat in the Sultanate of Oman, freshly wedded to my wife, Maria Luisa. I'd met her a year earlier on a train in France, our paths crossing briefly on our separate journeys but long enough to know we liked each other and to exchange addresses. We kept in touch by letter for the year after that and, taking advantage of a business trip (me) and vacations (her) in the USA, we arranged to meet up in Houston Airport on April 16, 1977. I arrived on an Air France flight from Paris and she an hour later on a Pan-Am flight from Mexico City. Nine days later we married in Mexico City. I suppose it could be called a whirlwind romance, swirling from France, through international postal services, to its final waltzing twist through Texas to Mexico, and then on to Muscat.

We found Muscat a very enjoyable place to live and work and spent two years there, during which time our son, Alexander, was born. But by the time he was almost one year old we felt it was time to leave Oman. It was 1979 and the Shah of Iran had just been

deposed, leaving a power vacuum in the Middle East, especially the Gulf area. But where should we move to? Back to my UK, to Maria Luisa's Mexico, or to somewhere else? Now that I was a husband and father, the decision was no longer just about me, but the UK? No! So it was Mexico, new and exotic enough for my wanderlust.

At that time, the Mexican economy was going through a boom thanks to new crude oil discoveries so we decided our next home would be in Mexico. After all, Maria Luisa's family there could help us get settled until such time as I could find suitable employment. But before leaving, we decided to take a two-week trip to India on vacation, taking advantage of the proximity to Muscat. What a fantastic country! We enjoyed our visits to Jaipur (the Pink City), Agra (the Taj Mahal was definitely *the* most amazing place we visited in our lives, perhaps partly because of the specific time in our lives), New Delhi and Srinagar, our baby son with us. He even learnt to crawl on the lawn of the Rambagh Palace Hotel in Jaipur.

On our way to Mexico, we stopped off in the UK to visit my family and friends and we celebrated Alex's first birthday there, finally, arriving in Mexico at the end of July, 1979. One of my longest periods of residence in one country was about to begin. It was to be just as long as my childhood, youth and young adulthood time in Britain. It was a period of what you could call 'normal life', new to me: *my* life became *our* life, the family life of Maria Luisa, Alexander (Alex), later Elizabeth (Liz) and myself. It was also 'normal' because jeeps weren't often on my mind, although the passion still lurked dormant inside me.

We stayed provisionally in my mother-in-law's apartment in Puebla while I decided what I wanted and was able to do for a living in Mexico. I made contact with Moto Equipos, S.A., the Mexican company that built Rolls-Royce C-Range 4, 6 and 8 cylinder inline diesel engines under license for industrial (non-automotive) applications, and I was taken on by them as Power Systems Manager. The job involved the engineering and sale of engine power units, pumping sets and generator sets, mostly for the oil industry, especially for onshore drilling and workover rigs.

We first set up home in Mexico City, where Moto Equipos was based, and our daughter Elizabeth was born there. However, as the company's focus changed, reflecting the decisions being made in the Rolls-Royce Diesel Division in Shrewsbury and its eventual sale to Perkins, we later moved back to Puebla because the company, under another name, set up repair facilities there. Following the devastating earthquake in Mexico in 1985, the company down-sized and I found myself without a job. I decided that the time

was right to set up my own business, doing on-site servicing and repair of industrial diesel engines, working not only on the R-R C-Range engines but also on Cummins, Detroit Diesel 53, 71, 92 and 149 Series, Deutz, Perkins, Lister, Volvo-Penta and MAN engines, mostly in power generation and pumping applications. We stayed on in Puebla even after I decided to close my business due to a downturn in the economy, and I worked in several different companies over the next few years while Maria Luisa and I brought up and educated our two children, mainly as Mexicans, and I became quite Mexicanized myself.

In all my time in Mexico, 23 years, I remember seeing only one war-time jeep, passing by but giving me time enough to identify it. It was a restored Ford Script being transported on a truck passing through Puebla. There were, and are, many Jeep® vehicles in Mexico, of course, almost all manufactured there along with millions of other vehicles, the product of the enormous automotive industry that's grown up in Mexico. Some models are still 4x4 potentially working and off-road models, like the Wrangler and Gladiator, but most are very comfortable, even luxurious, passenger vehicles, like the Compass and Grand Cherokee, all fairly or very expensive. The Jeep plants are in Saltillo, in the north of Mexico, and Toluca, in the centre, and most vehicles are exported, principally to the United States. The Jeep brand is now Italian-American, of course, owned by FCA US LLC, a subsidiary of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles. How times have changed! That's life.

During my mostly happy and interesting years in Puebla, I had the pleasure of meeting a man by the name of Douglas Ehlinger, though only briefly. His father was British and his mother, Mexican. He was known in motoring circles for his exploits in the Pan-American Road Races in the early 1950s, driving a Packard in the early races and then, in his last race in 1954, a Jaguar Roadster, but I was more interested in his experiences in the British Army during the Second World war. He'd been sent to Britain in the 1930s for his schooling, which he finished just about the time war was declared. Being unable to get passage home on a ship across the Atlantic, he was called up and trained as a tank commander. He saw service with the British Expeditionary Force in France, but was eventually ordered to retreat toward the coast and destroy his tank. He and other British troops were evacuated from a beach somewhere to the west of Dunkirk, the name of which he didn't remember. Back in Britain, he was demobbed and was able to get passage on a ship to the USA, from where he continued overland to Mexico. Sometime after participating in the Pan-American Road Races, he was named head of Traffic Police of the City of Puebla.

By 2002, after more than 20 years living in Mexico, María Luisa and I (both of us then around 57 years old) had started thinking it was time for a change. Our two children had

grown up and left home. Liz had married and Alex was living and working in Britain. We wanted to live in Europe too, but decided that a warm climate was important for us, so we opted to move to the Mediterranean area. Bilingual in English and Spanish, we felt that Spain would be the logical place for us, so after visiting friends in Marbella, we decided that we'd make our new home there. Within two weeks of arrival, in 2003, I'd found a job, rented an apartment and bought a car. The climate was indeed fantastic, we were surrounded by Andalusian scenery, history, restaurants and more – a wonderful place to live! It was the fifth country I'd lived in for 2 years or more (two of them for more than 2 decades each), and María Luisa's fourth. Perhaps I have nomadism in my blood as well as jeep-ism.

On that topic, jeeps, and the topic of history (which, as you may have gathered, is also one of my interests), I'd known for some time that Jeeps had been built during several years under licence in Spain, so after settling in, I started to investigate the history of the jeep in the country. To put everything in perspective, you have to understand that the 3-year long, fratricidal and bloody Spanish Civil War had ended just five months prior to the start of the Second World War. The nation was exhausted and its population divided, with hundreds of thousands of Spanish Republicans interned in prison camps or in exile, especially in France, where many were subsequently interned in German concentration camps when that country capitulated to Germany. General Francisco Franco, the Spanish nationalist leader, had won the Civil War with materiel and military assistance from Hitler and Mussolini, with German bombing and other German and Italian direct intervention, even against many American and British volunteers on the Republican side. So, although Spain remained ostensibly neutral during the Second World War, Franco was shunned by the Allies. Spain's neutrality wasn't absolute though: after Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, in 1941 the Blue Division and Blue Squadron volunteer forces were raised in Spain to fight against Soviet Communism alongside the Germans on the Eastern Front. These were disbanded in 1943 under pressure from Great Britain, obliging Spain to return to complete neutrality. It was during this same period that Franco, fearing a British invasion of Spain from neighbouring Gibraltar, built large numbers of concrete defence bunkers all around the Bay of Algeciras. Many of these bunkers can still be seen today, especially those built in the Reina Sofia Park in La Línea de la Concepción in front of the border crossing point to Gibraltar, La Verja. All that's history, so what about jeeps?

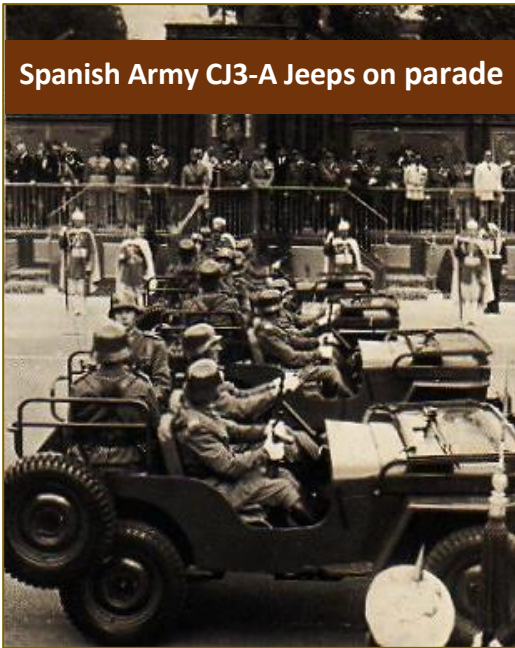
Well, after the Spanish Civil War, the Spanish Army (which had been Franco's Nationalist Army) was equipped with a number of battle-weary tracked and wheeled vehicles of Spanish, German, Italian and Soviet origin (mainly ex-Republican T-26 tanks, BA-6

armoured cars and ZIS-5 trucks) and some newer civilian trucks, mostly White, Chevrolet and GMC. But there was an international embargo prohibiting the supply of weapons and military materiel to Spain, and it remained in effect until 1953. The army was aware that war had become very mechanized and highly mobile and so in 1942 organized a series of conferences entitled "First Specialists Course in the Army Motor School" and published a course book entitled *Automovilismo y Motorización* (Motoring & Motorization). For the second course in 1944, the course book was entitled *El Motor en la Guerra* (Vehicles in War) and the illustration on the cover showed very clearly a... Willys MA! With Spain isolated from the Allied Powers, I find it surprising that a pre-standardized Willys MA was used to illustrate the book. Did they copy it from a photograph found in some US newspaper or magazine or had a member of the Blue Division come across a Soviet lend-lease vehicle on the Eastern Front and sketched or photographed it?

A digression: it's interesting to note that, on the losing side after the end of the Spanish Civil War, many of the Spanish Republicans that had gone into exile and managed to avoid being interned by the Germans by making their way to the French colonies of North Africa and the Middle East, joined the *Régiment de Marche du Tchad* of the Free French Army under General Leclerc, forming the 9th Company. Known as 'La Nueve' and equipped with armoured and soft-skinned vehicles of US origin, including standardized jeeps, they were some of the first Allied soldiers to enter Paris on the night of August 24, 1944, to liberate the city. Called 'Los Cosacos' by their captain, these experienced soldiers went on to liberate other French cities and were among the first to arrive at Hitler's Eagles Nest in the Bavarian Alps in 1945.

Back to jeeps in Spain. By the late 1940s, most of the Spanish Army's vehicles were either obsolete or wearing out due to a lack of spare parts, and, with the arms embargo still in effect, they were impossible to replace. Franco's government needed serviceable vehicles not only in Spain itself, but even more in its remaining colonies in Africa, Spanish Morocco (the northern part of the present-day Morocco), the coastal city of Ifni, Spanish Western Sahara (to the south of present-day Morocco), and Spanish Guinea. In 1948 under the guise of 'agricultural tractors', 36 Canadian built GMC C15TA armoured trucks were obtained from WW2 surplus stocks and imported into Spain via Irun on the border with France. A requirement for general service Army cargo trucks was satisfied in the early 1950s by acquiring a considerable number of German Ford Koln 3500-D 4x4 trucks, said to have been paid for with oranges, and, at about the same time, 214 Willys CJ3A Jeeps were imported via Canada as 'agricultural machinery' but were clearly intended

for military use as they were photographed on arrival at the Irun customs warehouse with black-out driving lights mounted on the left front fender. They were the first ‘real jeeps’ in Spain. The Ford trucks and the CJ3A Jeeps were in use until the mid-1960s.



It wasn't until 1953 that the Franco government was officially recognized by the Western Powers, and military aid soon started to pour in from the USA in exchange for access to airbases and the port of Rota. Franco was a fervent anti-communist and was seen as an ideal ally during the Cold War, and Spain later became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. The Spanish Armed Forces first received large quantities of WW2 and Korean War surplus armoured and soft-skinned vehicles, including jeeps, and as time went by more modern equipment and tanks were delivered.



At the same time, Spain developed its own arms industry and built armoured cars cars, trucks and jeeps to military specification. By 1960, the Kaiser-Willys Corporation had entered into an agreement with Construcciones y Auxiliares Ferrocarriles (CAF) to build the CJ3B under licence in the factory of its subsidiary, Vehículos Industriales y Agrícolas, S.A. (VIASA) in Zaragoza, in the north of Spain. At first they were sold under the Willys-Viasa name but later as Jeep-Viasa, Jeep-Avia and Jeep-Ebro, as the companies on both sides of the Atlantic went through mergers, buy-outs and restructuring. A long wheelbase version of the CJ3B was also built, and the CJ3B built especially for the Spanish military had black-out lighting, lifting shackles, pintle hook, rear seating for four people (two on either side over the wheel-arches) and a jerrycan holder mounted on the rear tailgate. Finally, the name Ebro, part of Motor Iberica, S.A., disappeared when it was bought out by the Nissan Motor Company

and the Jeep line was discontinued, to be replaced by the Nissan Patrol. In short, after being absent from Spain, jeeps became big there, then disappeared.

Of course, my life in Spain since 2003 hasn't been all about jeeps. It's been much more about family and getting to know our new country of residence better. Shortly after

Maria Luisa and I had started to settle into our new life, Liz, her husband and their young son arrived from Mexico, with plans also to settle in Spain. Not only that, soon our son Alex moved from the UK to Spain. For a while, we all lived crowded together in our two-bedroomed apartment, just like typical immigrants, until they could find their own accommodation nearby.

Maria Luisa and I would take advantage of any opportunity to travel near and far, getting to know places and Spanish culture and cuisine. Sometimes we'd visit places with the family, sometimes just the two of us, and when I was busy working, Maria Luisa would visit her new found friends, and she took up painting again, as a more serious hobby. We wanted to know everything about Spain and the Spanish people. We wanted to become as Spanish as we could, not just be ex-pats living in the country. In fact, Maria Luisa became a Spanish citizen after registering her birth with the authorities over sixty years after she was born! Although she was born in Mexico, both her parents were Spanish citizens at the time and this gave her the right to Spanish nationality.

We both enjoyed our life together in Spain, often receiving friends and family visiting from Mexico and showing them around. We managed to make a couple of trips together back to Mexico, but we both agreed that we'd made the right decision in moving to live in Spain. We also made one trip to the UK to visit my family there, one trip to Paris to relive our first meeting 30 years earlier, and we took a cruise together with Liz and family around the Eastern Mediterranean. We enjoyed every moment possible together. However, I have to confess that we'd only been settled in Marbella for a year when I decided it was time for me to acquire my next, my fourth, probably my last, jeep.

5. My fourth jeep... and life... and other things

As I started looking for a jeep, I found that the few ex-military MB/GPW, M38 and even the militarized CJ3A Jeeps in private hands in Spain were in general demanding high prices. I then turned my attention to the CJ3B, but found that prices were also at a premium for well-maintained or restored vehicles, and SV430s vans and pick-ups were very difficult to find in reasonable condition. Military CJ3Bs were fairly common as the Spanish army was disposing of many of them at the time but, according to Spanish law, the serial numbers had to be removed from the chassis prior to disposal and so it was virtually impossible to register one for civilian use. I suppose this was done to protect the local automotive industry. I therefore had to narrow my search to a C101 Jeepster Comando. I'd come across the US manufactured C101 on the Internet, and, in pristine condition, they were being sold at high prices internationally. The prices in Spain were

much lower but the main difference was in the engine. Very, very few Spanish C101s had been built with the Buick Dauntless V-6 gasoline engine (the most common engine fitted to U.S. built C101s) and most of those had gone for export, or even the F-134 Hurricane gasoline engine. The vast majority left the factory powered by a Spanish-built diesel engine, either the Perkins 4.108 or the Barreiros C60 which, although economical to run, were not really the most suitable for this particular jeep.

While I was searching for my fourth jeep, María Luisa and I were progressing into our second year of life in Spain. Our first year had been one of settling in and getting to know our surroundings. Our two children had rejoined us, Liz with her family, but within a few months they had each moved into their own apartments and had found suitable employment. Of course, one of the most important things we all had to do was obtain Spanish driving licences. That wasn't a problem for me as I still had one of the old 'grandfather licences' from the UK that was easy to exchange for a Spanish licence. For María Luisa, Alex, Liz and Juan Carlos (her husband), having Mexican driving licences, it was an entirely different matter. They had to attend classes, pass a written exam and then pass a driving test in order to obtain their licences. Being used to the Mexican way where one could usually obtain a licence 'over the counter', the European way proved to be much more stressful but, fortunately, they all passed the test at the first attempt.

One of the reasons for our move to the Costa del Sol area of Andalusia was that María Luisa had always wanted to live in Spain at some time in her life, and also to live close to the sea. What better place then than the Marbella area? However, for me, that meant a change of career. Since arriving to live in Spain, Alex, Juan Carlos and I have worked in the tourist industry.

Shortly after settling in, María Luisa started modelling small figures out of French paste again, often working together with a close friend who modelled figures out of clay. After her friend passed away, María Luisa started taking art lessons in the local municipal art centre where she made a new group of friends with similar interests. Within a year after arriving to live in Spain, Liz and Juan Carlos had a baby daughter, Pamela, a sister for Juan Carlos Jr., their son.

Back to my search for yet another jeep. I came across one on e-Bay, a 1974 C101 Jeepster Comando, and bought it, sight unseen, for just under €2,000. The only trouble was that it was in Sabadell, near Barcelona, about 1,000 km. from our home in Andalusia. After agreeing with the seller that I'd collect it and pay for it two days later, I took the train from Malaga to Barcelona and then on to Sabadell on a local train. After spending a night

in a hotel in the town, I went to meet the owner and inspect the Jeep. Finding it to be in reasonable condition for its 30 years of age, and after checking the paperwork, I handed over the money and the Jeep was mine. We formalized the purchase by going to the local office of 'Tráfico' and the Jeep was transferred to my name.

It had been built in the Viasa plant in Zaragoza, Spain. Apparently, all the tooling for the C101 had been sent to Spain after American Motors commenced manufacture of the C104 in the U.S. It has a registration number from Navarra (an autonomous region of Spain neighbouring Aragon, where Zaragoza is the capital city), and the previous owner told me how he'd bought it from a friend in that area and had driven it to Sabadell. From the paperwork, the Jeep's original owner was 'Autopistas de Navarra', so it was clear that the vehicle had been used on highway construction, and I did find that it had had a communications radio installed, probably at that time. There were a few knocks and scrapes on the bodywork and the paint had seen better days. It had been repainted bright green over the original colour of 'Empire Blue'. The hard-top was still white. It was fitted with the Perkins 4.108, a dependable if somewhat under-powered little engine.

The next challenge was to get it home. I'd planned to take it on the overnight train from Barcelona to Malaga, but when I went to buy the tickets, I was told that the Jeep was 2 cm. too high to fit on the train. I suggested that I could let some air out of the tyres so it would fit but that was not acceptable as they had to take the dimensions as shown in the 'Ficha Técnica'. So on to Plan B, which meant driving it home, all 1,000 km, without knowing how well it would run. The Jeep did have a valid ITV (the Spanish equivalent of the British MOT) and was still covered by the previous owner's insurance. It had a spare wheel but I had to purchase a jack and wheel-wrench before setting off. Driving an unknown vehicle for the first time over such a long distance is always dodgy, especially one that's 30 years old!

I made frequent stops on the journey to check oil and water and let the engine cool off before continuing on my way. On level road, the Jeep ran very well, but going uphill it slowed considerably. I found that I had to change down quite often to third or even second gear on even the slightest gradient. The four-speed Warner manual transmission is probably more suited to the more powerful F-134 gasoline engine than the little Perkins diesel which puts out only 61 HP. A Spicer 20 transfer case and Dana axles, front and back, complete the drive train. Anyway, I made it home without one single mechanical problem. It took me almost 24 hours, including time for a nap on the way. The C101 isn't particularly comfortable to sleep in, although the non-original front bucket seats do recline a little. All in all, it's a great little vehicle.

I've had that Jeep for over fifteen years now. Although I don't use it very much, I do maintain it and keep the ITV valid. I may not start it for three months, especially over the summer when I may be busy working seven days a week, so it always surprises me to find



My fourth, and current, Jeep, a 1974 C101 Jeepster Comando, manufactured in Spain

that it always starts up with a little help from the 'Thermostart'. Over the years I've had the wheel cylinders rebuilt, the clutch disc changed and the DPA rotary fuel pump rebuilt because the seals were getting old and leaking fuel. And that's about it. I haven't removed the dents from the bodywork, nor have I had it painted. For the time being, I'll keep it like that as I prefer to have a Jeep that I am not afraid to drive and use

rather than one that I'd rather not take out and risk the nice new paint job.

So, that's been my life as a Jeep Fanatic, from early boyhood on a farm in Essex, England, UK, up to now, in Marbella, Andalusia, Spain, via Iran, Dubai in the UAE, Muscat in Oman, and Mexico. But, of course, I haven't been, and am not, just a Jeep Fanatic, just as you haven't been, and aren't, just a Historical or Detective Novel Fanatic, Blues or Opera Fanatic, Blog Fanatic, All-The-Above Fanatic, or Whatever Fanatic you've been or are now.

My solo years before meeting and marrying María Luisa were full of adventure, one way or another. Adventure on the farm with the animals in the fields, or discovering and making something in the tool shed, or exploring places on the trips I used to make with my mother to visit family and friends in and around Newbury, Berkshire, where she was from, or on holiday in Devon. Then at the ripe old age of 11, there was an opportunity for a trip overseas. Now, nobody in my immediate family had ever been abroad, except for an uncle who'd fought in Burma (now Myanmar) during the Second World War, so I didn't hesitate. Yes, I wanted to go. My primary school organized a trip to Belgium at the end of the school year for a group of around 30 pupils, accompanied by two teachers. I don't recall exactly how we travelled but it must have been by train and ferry over to Ostend. We stayed in a hostel in Brussels, and each day there were trips out to visit places in the city or to Waterloo or Bruges. Wow! The travel-bug had well and truly bitten me as well as the jeep-bug.

So, no more summer holidays in Devon for me. I convinced my mother that we should look further afield and the following year we took a P&O cruise to Malta, Palma (Mallorca) and Casablanca, before returning to Southampton. I loved Malta, but especially memorable was the trip we made from Casablanca to visit Rabat, the capital of Morocco. After an accident with an overloaded truck on the road to Rabat, our bus finally arrived at our destination and we visited several tourist sites before stopping at the 'suq' for some souvenir shopping. As it wasn't that long after the Suez Crisis, we found we weren't very welcome there and a lot of the shopkeepers closed up at the sight and sound of us, so there was really nothing to buy. Fortunately, before re-boarding the ship there were more opportunities for souvenir shopping and, in addition, the prices were getting cheaper and cheaper as we got closer to the ship.

The following two summers my mother and I holidayed on the Costa dei Fiori in Italy, flying to Nice on an Air France Caravelle (the second passenger jet to enter commercial service after the British Comet) and then by bus to the resort. And the next winter I had the opportunity to go on another school trip, this time to Austria, to learn to ski. Again, we crossed the English Channel by ferry, and then by train to our destination in Brixen im Thale in the Tyrol region. We stayed in a 'gasthaus' and took skiing lessons everyday on the nearby ski slopes. We all had a great time, especially some of the group that smuggled a bottle of rum into their room! The scenery was spectacular with mountains on all sides, and I left wanting to return to that area again one day. Back at home on the farm, I convinced my mother to take our next summer holiday in the Tyrol region of Austria, which is what we did, as I mentioned in Part 1 of this piece.

After that, came Sheffield in the north of England, Iran and Dubai. Then, I left bachelorhood behind, to commence my 41 years with María Luisa, which changed me enormously. From the moment I met her on the train leaving Paris for Calais, I fell head over heels in love with her. Yes, clichés, but it really was love at first sight, and she really was the love of my life! After we married, I dedicated my life to her as best I was able, and to our children when they arrived. I even quit one job so I could take on another that would allow me to be with them for more time every day.

María Luisa loved travelling as much as I did and we made many trips together and with the children as they were growing up. While we were living in Mexico City, we often went to Puebla, about two hours away, so that María Luisa could see her relations there, and our children could grow up in an extended family atmosphere with cousins, uncles and aunts around them. Then, when we went to live in Puebla, we often travelled in our 1980

Chevrolet C15 pick-up to the neighbouring states of Veracruz and Oaxaca and camped in the back of the vehicle, which I'd adapted for that purpose. They were happy days. In 1984, we flew to England to visit with my mother and the rest of my family there, and so that the children would understand that they also had British cousins and an aunt there. A few years later, in 1989 when the children were a little older, and after my mother had passed away, we spent two months touring Europe, including the UK, going as far as Istanbul before ending our journey in Madrid.

However, while María Luisa and I had many things in common, we were quite different in some ways. While she liked to talk about things and chat with people, I preferred to think about things, investigate and study them. I've always had one hobby or another on the go at any one time. I once asked María Luisa what her favourite pastime was and she replied that it was talking, chatting with friends and family. I always knew that she was very sociable, but until that moment I'd never thought that talking with people could be regarded as a hobby. I thought painting was her only real hobby and an important one for her, but apparently it was just her secondary hobby.

Unsurprisingly, then, there were times when she'd been chatting to me for a while and I hadn't noticed or even heard her because my mind was far away thinking about one thing or another. I always used to say to her that if she wanted to say something to me or talk with me, she should first call me by name and make sure she had my attention. Another difference was my penchant for collecting things, especially old things, while María Luisa was a minimalist and had no time for 'superfluous' things. I must admit that moving from country to country, town to town, or even house to house, so many times in our life together, collecting and keeping became impractical.

Like all long-term couples, María Luisa and I faced many quite difficult situations and issues together and found our way through them. In 2000, when we were still living in Mexico, María Luisa was diagnosed with breast cancer and had to be operated on immediately. After the operation, we were told that she was clear of cancer, and it seemed so for several years, but eventually turned out to be incorrect. Early in 2015, twelve years after our move to Spain, she was diagnosed with cancer again, and it was found to be a recurrence of her earlier cancer, now spreading to other parts of her body. She was hospitalized for a few days and I spent as much time as I could with her in the hospital.

When she was released, she had to use a wheelchair to get around. At the time we were living in an apartment on the second floor of a building without a lift, so we moved in

with Alex and his two sons in their three-bedroomed apartment which did have a lift and made it easy to move María Luisa in the wheelchair. Alex was working everyday so I quit my regular job and dedicated all my time to looking after her. I was often asked why I did that, given that Liz could be with María Luisa several hours a day and take care of her. For me, it was something I just knew I had to do, no question about it. After all, even though her initial treatment was in tablet form, she had to visit the doctor on a regular basis in our local hospital, and also occasionally go for studies to be done in a hospital in Malaga, an hour's drive away. Whatever she needed I would do for her, including taking her for a 'paseo' in her wheelchair or to a coffee shop or restaurant. She actually improved a lot with her initial treatment and was able then to get around with a stroller. She even managed to drive again for a while. But eventually she had to start more serious treatment, which meant going to the hospital on a frequent basis. I was there with her every day. She also received fantastic support from AECC, the Spanish Association Against Cancer, first in the form of regular home visits by a nurse, and later a doctor would visit her at home.

It was so sad, so distressing, to see her health deteriorating every day. We all tried to cheer her up as much as we could but the inevitable was in sight, almost like an approaching appointment. One week before she passed away, I made all the arrangements for her cremation. She left us early in the morning of November 2nd, 2018, a day celebrated each year in Mexico as the Day of the Dead. We were with her at the end, all of us: Alex and Liz, her children, Juan Carlos, her son-in-law, Juan Carlos Jr. and Pamela, her grandchildren, and myself. I miss her. Rest in Peace, my sweetheart.

Now here's a question: Why did I write all this about jeeps? I mean, why did I write anything at all, let alone about jeeps? Yes, because I was bitten by the jeep-bug as a boy, and some kind of addiction developed in me: jeeps are the overt theme of all these pages. Also because jeeps have been one part, though really quite small, of a much fuller life, in very different places, with very different people, and with very special people: all these pages have been about my life too, not just jeeps. But it must also be because I enjoy writing: reflecting, researching, and the actual process of writing. And also because of María Luisa: it's no coincidence that I wrote all this approaching and after 2018.

In a sense, it was María Luisa who got me writing, as well as developing into a fuller person. My first big bout of writing was that year of correspondence with her after we'd met on that French train, and you know where that led! Over the years I've written about other things as well: I seem to be a thinker and writer – of sorts! – more than a talker. Maybe now is the time to blow the dust off all the pages I've written and work on some

of them again, now that María Luisa won't be calling my name to get my attention any more, though she'll always be in my thoughts.

But let me conclude as the mechanical engineer I trained to be in order to do 'my life's work', earn a living and contribute to society, and on the overt topic of this piece of writing. Yes, back to jeeps. As a boy I was fascinated by them just as eye-catching vehicles on the roads around me. As a student of mechanical engineering and after I became fascinated by them as icons of human creativity, inventiveness, problem-solving and determination in the rush and chaos of a great crisis, the Second World War. And that's why I'm still a jeep fanatic.

And, with that, I'll leave those of you who've accompanied me this far to get on with whatever *you* are fanatical about, or just your normal life.