Origins of the Word "Jeep"

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Peter Matusov wrote:

> Nobody knows for sure where did the name > jeep came from and when - common notion is that it's from the > abbreviation GP (again, wrongly deciphered as General Purpose - > G stood for Gov't contract, and P - platform designation letter). > Sometime around '50 "jeep" became a nameplate, not only > a nickname.

Well, the derivation of "jeep" has been pretty well-established, if not widely known (the "General Purpose" error having gained such wide currency). Here it is, as described by J. E. Lighter, who did a column on word derivations for _The Atlantic Monthly_, in the January 1998 issue. Lighter is responding to a letter in which the origination of "jeep" is described as "GP" (for "general purpose"), and in particular "truck, 1/4-ton, 4x4, GP" as the military designation for the "jeep".

The word 'jeep' made its debut in Elzie Segar's comic strip "Thimble Theatre Starring Popeye" on March 3, 1936, as the cry of a small, odd-looking creature soon identified as "Eugene the Jeep."

Acknowledging Segar, the Halliburton Oil Well Cementing Company built a "Jeep" truck in 1937. Army command cars and heavy gun tractors were called "jeeps" in 1940-41, as were raw recruits. The soon-to-be-famous "jeeps" ("truck, 1/4-ton, 4x4") arrived late in 1940; some called them "peeps," to distinguish them from the larger vehicles. Field-testing selected Willys-Overland's "Model MA" over American Bantam's "BRC" and Ford's fortuitously named "Model GP." The well-publicized "jeep" driven up the Capitol steps in February of 1941 was a Willys. All three designs were scout cars, none was built to "general purpose" specs, and without Popeye, Ford's prototype "GP" might have been the "gupp."

BTW, the famous Jeep grille was actually developed by Ford as a cheaper stamped metal alternative to the welded bar grille designs used by Willys and Bantam, and was only later adopted by Willys. The details of this can be read at
http://www.ee1.com/history.com.

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79 widetrack Cherokee "S" -- a Jeep, not a "peep"!