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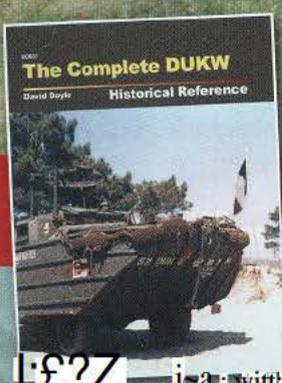
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The old man...went dashing to the Seine

General Patton And His M20 Armored Car



We picked August 1944, to be our target date to build the Patton's M20 around. We left the ring mount on it as it was on it at that moment in time. There is some photographic evidence that the ring mount remained on it till late fall, 1944. Our M20, GBK2937, was the 131st vehicle made in December 1944. Originally, it carried the registration number 60113709.

by Denny Hair

General Patton was a flamboyant Commanding General and one of the most skilled military tacticians the United States has ever produced. General Eisenhower assigned General George S. Patton Jr. to command the Third United States Army in February 1944" but it was kept secret from everyone but the two of them and General Marshal. That is a whole other story. As Patton assembled his beloved Third Army in England, he also assembled his personal motor pool. In early 1944, Patton had assigned to him two Jeeps, a 3/4-ton Dodge Command Car, a Packard, a CCKW Mobile command headquarters van, and an M20 Armored car.

Not long after assuming command, Patton adopted his beloved Willie, an English Bull Terrier, and both Willie and Patton inspected his newly acquired M20 for the first time. It was in April 1944, at Peover England, where Patton's headquarters was

(TOP) Always interested in General Patton, I had decided I wanted to recreate the M20 the General used in 1944-45. After a long search, I located a candidate, worked with many fine people and vendors to restore it, and made the decision to display it at the 2014 MVPA Convention.

located, that this armored car was brought for him to inspect. Patton took Willie with him to help him inspect it. Lady Leese, wife of General Leese of the British Army, was there as she had helped Patton find Willie and wanted to watch the General and his new companion inspect the M20.

The armored car had an interesting feature not seen any other. Near the front, attached to the outside of the fenders were two long metal feeler gauges, made of metal with a round flat indicator painted white. These were used by a number of countries, including the axis powers, to help judge objects as to their proximity to the fenders and to help center it. With the additions of the 3rd Army flags and rank recognition flag, these become very important visually. The driver needed it to be able to see around them. They were valuable in judging the distance the vehicle fenders were from objects. These were not common on US army vehicles, but Patton was always experimenting and trying out theories.

The first known writing to reflect Patton's use of his armored car came on August 4, 1944. Col. Codman, one of Patton's aide de camp, wrote home about this day and said, "AI (Major Alexander Stiller Aide de Camp) led off in the armored car, and I rode with the General in his peep. For the next three hours we pursued the 6th Armored up the Brest peninsula. Soon we were well ahead of our own Infantry and I found myself sympathizing with the division commander's concern in regard to his flanks and rear."

During the time of August 1-8, General Patton used his M20 to literally race though the different roads to meet with his various commands. The M20 was powered by a Hercules JXD 6 cylinder engine and had no governor. It was rated as capable of 57 miles per an hour, which was unheard of at the time. Patton would certainly have seen just how fast he could get it to go.

Patton's approach could be heard for miles down those duty August roads. As he did in all of his vehicles, he equipped them with duel air horns made by Buell Air horn company. They were made of brass, but painted OD and the bell was the same as the trombones of the period. The horns, coupled with the siren

made an unmistakable announcement that General Patton was coming to the front. In fact, during August 1944, Patton had his Third Army's three corps attacking in three directions at once. He found the stamina, not only to visit the corps headquarters, but almost all the front lines.

In what would develop into the Falaise Pocket, Patton set the stage for the envelopment of a German army. Lt. Col. Jack Widmer, one of Patton's headquarters staff quoted Patton and wrote, "I've not much word from higher headquarters, he said but I am not waiting. I've ordered the 79th Infantry and the 5th Armored to Mantes on the Seine. This should come close and bottling up an entire German Army... The old man pulled out of his headquarters in his armored car and went dashing to the Seine."

Patton continued to use his M20 in combination with his jeep, command car and L-5 reconnaissance plane as the Army's corps spread out further and further. In November, the weather had turn from wet and cooler to mud, freezing rain and some snow. On November 27, 1944, General Patton received a call from General Eisenhower. He wanted Patton to take the US Ambassador to Russia, Averell Harriman, to the front lines for a few hours. He was accompanied by Col. James F. Gault, SHAEF staff member.

The weather was cold and wet. Patton had his men fire up his M20 a six-wheeled utility scout car.

By then, Patton had modified it somewhat. He had the ring mount taken off, and a post mount for his .50 added in its place. He had also added a windshield. Still, it was crowded but the armor provided some protection.

RECREATING PATTON'S M20

In order to reproduce Patton's M20 Armored Utility car, Pat-

(BELOW) We want to thank John Bizal at Midwest Military who reproduced a compartment door lid so well, you can not tell it from the originals. We did have to make a few parts, but they were small enough we could hand make them instead of sending them off to be re-manufactured.



ton's Third Army Living Historians decided to do photo-shop comparisons; to make sure the flags, horn and rank plate was the proper size. When we were almost finished, and in order to get it right, we took our M20, Patton's and his original M20 and then put Patton inside of ours. It all had to match in size and scale to be correct. We took all the known images of his M20 and photo-shopped them with ours to the correct scale.

The M20 we restored to Patton's configuration was manufactured in December of 1944. It saw service but its history is lost until 1988. Now lets go back to 1988.

Gary and Linda Haas, long-time members of the MVPA, bought an M20 armored car back in 1988. It had seen better days. The previous owner had little or no use for its military history and had cut on it to try and make it some sort of recreational vehicle. This did not sit well with Gary or Linda and he purchased it with the idea of bring it back to the way it once was in WWII. Restoring a M20, seventy plus years after it was manufactured is a tough job. Gary Haas did the really hard work in the late 1980s and into the 1990s.

Gary saved it, got it running gear repaired and restored, re-worked the engine, brakes and wired the engine. He repaired the armor, and found many of the parts before they dried up.

There was quite a lot of work done and the long process of assembling all the missing parts took place. Twenty-five years ago, the parts were a little easier to find, well most of them anyway. Time past and Gary's collection grew. The M20 was always part of his MV family, but like all of us, pressing projects were put in front of it.

An M 20 has many small spaces and it just got too difficult to maneuver in to work on it like Gary wanted it done. He looked around for a good home. Selling it for profit was not the motivating principal. He was going to sell it to someone who would continue the work and restore it.

Word came to Gary that MVPA member Denny Hair was looking for a M20 to restore back to the way General Patton had his in 1944. A meeting was set up to look at the M20.

Bill White, new to the MVPA, and part of Patton's Third Army Living Historians, was excited about getting into a project, Both Bill and Denny, along with an entourage that included Carlos Manning, Claude Vaughn and Ken Stewart proceeded to Burleson Texas. A deal was made.

There was a promise made to Gary and Linda Haas. We would not part it out or buy it to sell but buy it to restore. Gary knew of Denny's intention to restore it into a replica of General Patton's M20 Armored car. The agreement was made, and the journey began. Bill White and Denny Hair then started the long process of restoring an M 20.

BETTER THAN A YEAR OF WORK LAY AHEAD

As most everyone knows, Denny portrays General Patton and Gary was very pleased he would continue his work and restore it and use it in our Patton and his Third Army Living Historians as part of our educational program. As such, Bill White and Denny received help, from time to time, as we had many of them to volunteer and give up holidays and weekends to help. When one of our members, Ray Marino, moved to Texas, he became the third part of a work trio to work on the M20 on a day after day basis to see it done. Along the way, Michael Maloney, Ken Stewart, Will Huntington and Michael Ditto came by and lent a helping hand.

The long educational process began to discover what the



Bill White is an electrical engineering designer, and today, he designs and installs wiring harnesses for a large oil drilling trucks with tires twice as tall as he is. During his time in the service, he worked on Nike missiles with live nuclear war heads during the cold war. He had little trouble wiring the M20. That is good as it is snaked with wires, through armor, piping and conduits.

M20 needed. Photographs had been gathered from the Patton Papers from the Library on Congress and the Patton Museum of Leadership at Fort Knox. These proved invaluable in the restoration. These were studied intently and together with the written research, the project was begun.

We also needed to learn the ends and outs of an M20 armored car. We were fortunate to be able to visit with Paul Vien, whose M20 won first place at the MVPA Show. He is located about an hour away from us. His is truly a master piece of restoration and may just have one of the very best restored M20 in the world. Paul was gracious enough to allow us to inspect it and take pictures to help us know what was missing on ours. He also helped us with out many questions.

If you have ever been down and inside of a M20 driver's or assistant diver's compartment you know how truly small it is by today's standards. If you weigh over 200 pounds and are taller that 5' 8", of which most who worked on it were, you know just how hard it is to work on in a small space. You work upside down, on your back with your head is lower than your waist. Welding, wiring, painting, stenciling and getting in an out will wear you out. Once we got near completion and reinstalled the seats, getting stuck between them was no fun either. If you have an M8 or M20, or have driven one, I know you can relate.

THE FINISHED RESTORATION

We picked August 1944, to be our target date around which to build the Patton's M20. We left the ring mount on it as it was on it at that moment in time. There is some photographic evidence that the ring mount remained on it till late fall, 1944.

Since our M20 was manufactured a little later than General Patton's, though in the same year of 1944, we felt it better to leave it the way it was manufactured. This was done to keep the historic integrity of the original vehicle and to give us a bases to re-inventory the interior. We used a SCR-508 radio on the passenger side and a SCR-510 on the drivers side.

All of the interior is according to the US Army table of organization of the period. The addition of a Thompson SMG rack

holder, and set of horns would have been in keeping with general Patton's personal taste. Since he was a man that enjoyed the polished look, the seats were left in the raw and not painted but covered in a protective varnish style coating. Every effort was taken to keep the originality of the original M 20 and preserve its unique history under the trapping of Patton's M20.

THE MVPA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

In February 2014, we considered the work we had done on the Patton's M20 armored car. We felt it was good enough to show but had no idea where to take it for competition. We were not even sure we could finish it in time. It was certainly a goal we could have to see if we could finish it.

It is a lot different restoring a military vehicle to play with as apposed to showing it in a contest. We decided to register it in the MVPA's motorpool class to see if we could reach their standards. The convention was to be held in Louisville, Kentucky, the last week of June 2014. By mid-June, we had finished most of the work and touched it up as best we could.

OUR FIRST SET OF MVPA JUDGES

These guys were tough, thorough, but pleasant. They checked all the lighting, brakes, dash, and went down a long list. They were almost done and asked us to turn on the blackout lights over the front headlights. At that moment, it dawned on us we had tested the bulbs, but we could not remember having turned them on! Bill White hit the switch and They came on!

It was over, all that they ask to work, worked. They said we did well and went off to another vehicle.



We arrived at MVPA Convention on Monday and settled in. on Tuesday we awaited the arrival of our M20. Upon its arrival, we prepared it to show. Last minute detail work was in order-we spent most of the day unpacking and setting up.

OUR SECOND SET OF JUDGES

On Thursday, our next set of judges came by. They both said they owned M20s. They looked over the outside, and then climbed over the top and disappeared into the M20 for about an hour. Every once in a while, they would ask a question, seem satisfied with the response, and continued going down their long check list.

OUR THIRD SET OF JUDGES

We can't tell you a whole lot about these guys. A fellow came by and asked questions about our display, its history, and the history of General Patton's M20. He was very knowledgeable about General Patton. We answered all of his questions, and then he told us he was one of the display judges. We had no idea they had separate judges for that. He thanked us and moved on.

I been a member of the MVPA for over 25 years but had

never shown a vehicle. The other three members of our show team are members as well, though not as long. They had never shown one, either. After all the judging was done, we looked at each other, compared notes, and concluded, we had done our best, though we had no idea how we did.



The MVPA award the first place Military Vehicle Display award to our M20. We were blown away. Never had we thought we could place, not only win. We placed Gold in the Motorpool Class, Display Class, and 1st Place in the Military Vehicle Display award.

THE MVPA AWARDS BANQUET

Friday evening came, and we dressed for the award ceremony. We came in uniform to honor the greatest Generation and because we were a team.

After we finished the meal, the awards were given out. They got to the motor pool class, and several were mentioned. To our surprise, we won a gold award, the highest offered in the class. We all went to accept the award!

The awards went on and they then got to the coveted awards. The 1st Place award for Best Vehicle display is very tough and coveted award. We wanted to know who would get it. To us, it was "the top of the top."-We won!

A HIGHLIGHT OF THE SHOW FOR US

On Saturday, we had the honor and the privilege to visit with Norman Curtis, a 93-year-old WWII veteran who served in General Patton's headquarters. He told us of his experiences in WWII and his chance meeting of General Patton. He had come in after Normandy as part of the Signal Corps. He had laid communication wire across Europe and fought during the Battle of the Bulge. Near the end of the war, he helped liberate Dachau, the horrid Nazi extermination camp.

He told of meeting General Patton. He was ordered to enter the inner office of General Patton to make sure his clocks were in working order. There were no battery operated clocks then. The army had to work on Patton's time

He was told Patton was out of the office. He walked into the inner office and started to work. Then, all of a sudden, "The G'Damn Hell is that! It was the old man himself." Patton demanded, "What the hell are you doing in my office?" Curtis replied, "Sir, I am with your headquarters Signal Corps and ordered to wind your clocks, sir." He looked him up and down, smiled and said "Very good, carryon." O

For more info on Denny Hair's M20 and Patton's Third Army, visit <http://pattonthirdarmy.com/m20.html>