

# Restoration of Ford GPW-I00709\*

By Tom Essary

At about age 11 or 12 on a ranch where my grandfather worked, “grampa Toby” let me drive the resident Willys jeep. I don’t recall how far the drive was, but I do recall that I loved it. My father was in the OK National Guard and I grew up with John Wayne war movies etc. We would eat supper and watch the Vietnam War on the nightly news. I had rubber fighting knives, toy canteens, and played war with every neighborhood boy that would play with me.

I joined the US Navy in 1981 and was “Haze grey and underway!” for the next 9 years. Living in apartments and moving often there was no idea about owning a hobby vehicle.

We moved to Arlington, TX in about 1991 and finally moved into a house in 2000. Slowly our toys got larger and larger. We were trailer camping in Nov. 2007 when we came across a 1948 Willys CJ2A ... I was in love. We own 2 ATVs and frequently drive them in the forestry land in SE Oklahoma. This was a big 4 wheeler! We decided not to buy a civilian jeep as I wanted an Army jeep. The fellow that I asked for advice about the ’48 CJ2A said “I have an Army jeep”. At first I did not discuss it with him, but less than a month later I drove over to see the jeep which I thought was a postal jeep ... from seeing it briefly some time earlier. Again I fell in love. I have done enough research to have some clue about all the military things to look for ... it had a nine slot grill, machine gun mount, rifle mount on the windshield, not side floor drains, etc. It was a Ford GPW to boot ... at first it was not a passion, but after we got it home and my wife started helping clean and paint parts, the hunt for the floral “F” was like “Where’s Waldo” she said.



R-L Back side of engine/bell housing plate; Shock mount; End of propeller shaft; Right fender (one on the left fender also).



Frame Serial Number --- not I for a 1 and the different 9 and the star is upside down.

A few years before the jeep, I started a restore on an ’82 Suzuki motorcycle. I developed a method that worked on the jeep ... Crank, Spark, Fire, Carburetor. Don’t fix the lights if the drive train isn’t working ...



Before – November 2007 in N. Dallas, TX

We went through lots of the same struggles as lots of hobbyists go through with a restoration. Room, time, tools, cleanup, finding parts, finding the parts once you have them at home and who knows where you put them etc. Saturday, 19 JAN 2008 the jeep was at home and after a few hours of tinkering the engine started and ran for about thirty minutes. I was elated.



Right side of engine during the early stages. I was in excellent running order ... the carburetor needs some attention and has been temporarily replaced by a new Solex carburetor for expedience.

The big hurdle was over ... the engine was running, everything else would be gravy.

The axles came off, the engine was running, the body was removed, next came the transmission, transfer case and the engine. Hum, that was about everything. I worked the frame first and got it sandblasted and powder coated.

Next was clean, inspect and repair the rest of the drive train. Other than seals and change the grease, a steering knuckle rZeppa kit was about the size of it. Oh, new break lines and hoses, kit for the master cylinder and wheel cylinders.



Transmission – After the first round of cleaning.



Transmission after cleaning and painting.

Next was the body. It was a bitter hour when I started cutting out the old front floor ... tearing away the 65 year old rusted out sheet metal was hard to do ... I have become attached to this old hulk and now I am ripping it up. I was happy with the job however. It was an important step in the restoration.



Old floor ... hat channel and floor rusted through ... lots of grease/dirt/rust. The tape shows holes in the floor ... use the bright green for contrast in the photos.

The original floor had huge holes and not a single spot on the top surface that was not rusted and pitted.

I make my own new floor and used store bought hat channel. The transmission hump was OK and left original. I left about a half inch of the old floor all the way around to weld the new floor to.



Hand made front floor and newly powder coated frame.

I was not willing to bend the edges over and try to get all that working. Also trying to remove that much spot welded edge was not what I wanted to do either. From the inside it looks great and from underneath it looks great to and I am the only one that really will ever see it. Most of the floor from the under side is covered up anyway.



Body after sand blasting.



New body panel on the right ... new hat channel and ready to weld in the front body panel. Almost ready for the axe and shovel. The parts were primed when they were reached ... hoping that the rust would be abated for another 65 years!

We had bids to paint the jeep body in pieces that ranged from \$700 to \$8,000. Needless to say, we looked for another route. We borrowed an air compressor and paint gun and over a Friday afternoon and Saturday night the jeep body was painted.



Tom Essary the proud co-owner and newly painted jeep parts ... "In Olive Drab heaven!"



Both axles ... work mates and the engine lift were used to elevate the parts. Note craft paper covering the work mates.



Angle iron and 2 x 4's were hung from a basket ball goal to two step ladders. We wired things together to keep them from falling. 1/4" wire and rod were used to make hooks to hold all the parts. It was easy to move them around to get to all the side. The body stayed on the home made dolly and was rolled around as needed and then laid on its bottom when the down turned side needed painting after the other paint dried sufficiently.

Since there were no major drive, electrical or body components missing things went pretty smooth and the cost was not astronomical. E.g. we did not have to by a \$2400 body!



Things are going back together. Note the semi rigid fury rigged fuel tank behind the front left wheel.

The jeep came with an arctic top which was disassembled and stored for a later restoration. The work should only be to replace the glass seals and sand blast/paint the metal.

We hope to get top bows and a canvas top, but the arctic top will work for a while. I am working on plans to make folding bows for the arctic tops windshield that will make it substitute for the original windshield and work with both the canvas and arctic top. I like multi-purpose stuff.

It was 113 days from the time I brought the jeep home until it was drivable. 90% frame up restored. All work and not driving made Tom a dull boy. Every day for 2-3 hours and many more hours on the weekend for all except a few weeks when I was sick and one weekend when we went to Red Baling Through the Ozarks with the Arkansas Travelers, I was wrenching on GPW-I00709\*.

Back to the beginning: I was overwhelmed by how many jeep parts suppliers and the number of items on E-bay etc there are. I quickly made a few choices and picked five vendors that I determined A) had the lowest average prices and B) had a good/complete selection of jeep parts. I was able to see all the prices on one spread sheet when I would do comparisons and was not spending more time shopping than working with the parts I shopped for. There were several specialty vendors other than the main five: Jeep Panels Plus and Vintage Wiring of Maine for example. I did get stuff from more than the main five, but in general those were where the bulk of the new parts came from.

My "big five" are:

Brian Mullins Jeep Parts	RAPCO
Ron Fitzpatrick	Walcks 4X4
Beachwood Canvas	

There were a few local purchases from Auto Parts stores etc. Early on I should have found a machine shop, but I really did not need one until after it was on the road ... when the clutch was determine bad, I needed a new flywheel. It turned out that the local auto

parts store would do the work, but sent the parts to a central shop and I could get it back in 1 -2 days ... or take it to the shop and get it back today ... what should I chose? What is it about projects that we Americans want everything now or yesterday? Most of the restoration I was not in a great hurry. After it was drivable I want to drive it not wait on parts. The good news it that except that we wanted to take the jeep on a trip to the mountains and the clutch was found to be “busted” less than a week from the trip and I missed that dead line and was in a hurry ... go figure!

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend in June the jeep was ready for its First Shake Down Cruise. The only mishaps were a smoking parking break left engaged while driving and a busted lower radiator hose. Tom was able to catch a ride to an auto parts store and two new radiator hoses were purchased and installed. The jeep drove about 90 miles over rocky gravel roads and 10 of those were over steep hills and ditches in a gravel pit in four wheel drive.



Restored and roaming the earth. Nephew Gabriel Johnson after a hard hour of rough hill and ditch jumpin' in a huge gravel pit.



Some of the first mud tracks made by “Toby” in many years. The additional textured covering on the body and tires looks great and was fun spattering on. Everyone that day had fun in the dust and mud and beautiful wilderness of SE Oklahoma.



Regardless of the mishaps and missed busted parts and parts that I broke and parts that needed to break ... a World War II Army jeep is back to life and roaming the earth again. As was said from Vintage Wiring of Maine, it will have a much better life for the next 65 years than it had the last 65 years.

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*“Tom and Laurie Essary live in Arlington TX and are new to Arrowhead, Arkansas Travelers and the MVPA. They have spent 5 months reviving 1943 GPW-I00709\*. Look for more update about that soon. Tom can be reached at tom “AT” ad5zo.com See ad5zo.com for more info about the jeep restoration etc. Tom spent about 8 years in the US Navy as an ET3 and LTjg. He served as the Damage Control Assistant (DCA) on the USS Luce DDG-38 in '85 and '86.”*