

JEEP TAMER



(See Front Cover)

by Arthur Bartlett



Charles E. Sorensen plans postwar models

Meet a man who believes in the sturdy little war jalopy. He'll convert it to peacetime usefulness

"DID you hear about the jeep blisters?" Charles E. Sorensen asked me. "It seems an outfit that had been riding in jeeps came home, and half of them couldn't sit down. Had to eat standing up."

His steel-blue eyes narrowed, but there was still a smile in them. "We had it traced down," he said. "Not a single blister. Just another jeep story."

Charles E. Sorensen is president of the Willys-Overland Motors, Inc., which makes jeeps and intends to go right on making them, with certain adaptations for civilian use, after the war. And he doesn't care how many fantastic stories people keep telling about them.

"As a matter of fact," he told me, "I hope they don't stop. It's a sign of popularity. There are always plenty of clubs under a good apple tree. Remember all the stories they used to tell about the old Model T Ford?"

Sorensen remembers. He started to work for Henry Ford at the very beginning of Ford's career as an automobile manufacturer.

It's New and Original

SORENSEN is firmly convinced the jeep, after this war, is going to have the same phenomenal popularity that the Model T had after the last one. "It's the first completely new and original product of automotive engineering in years," he told me. "And it has just as many advantages for civilians as it has for the military."

He doesn't pretend that the jeep is or ever will be a luxurious passenger vehicle. But he thinks its go-anywhere, do-anything versatility will make it America's favorite motorized jack-of-all-jobs, even if people also want a standard car for their ordinary travel. He is so sure of it, in fact, that he came out of retirement to make jeeps.

"Cast-Iron Charley," as they call Sorensen in the automotive industry, had been the production genius of the Ford Motor Company for nearly 40 years when

he resigned and retired about a year and a half ago.

Various industrialists began making him offers, trying to get him back into the making of cars. He turned them down. But then, one day, Ward Canaday, chairman of the board of Willys-Overland, tried a new form of persuasion. He sent Sorensen a jeep.

Sorensen, of course, knew all about jeeps from the manufacturing standpoint. He had been making them at Ford. But now he began playing around with one as an ultimate consumer. He drove it around the farm — on the roads and off. He hauled things in it — using it as a light truck, which is its proper technical classification. He used it as a tractor, having it pull a plow and do a dozen other farm chores. He rigged attachments to it, and had it saw wood, spray trees and do other jobs as a mobile power unit. And within three months, he had adopted it as his postwar baby, and given up the idea of resting any longer. He accepted the presidency of Willys-Overland and went to work on the domestication of the jeep for civilian uses.

Announce New Details Soon

THERE is talk that other companies may make postwar jeeps, or something like them. In any case, Sorensen plans to have jeeps in mass production months before it will be possible to reconvert his plant for the manufacture of standard passenger cars. In fact, you can expect announcement of the details of his revamped civilian jeep within a few days.

It will look like the military model, except that it will be painted in gayer colors. Some engineering changes have been made, partly to meet criticisms of the military model — as to its gasoline consumption, for instance — and partly to incorporate improvements which Sorensen and his associates think will make it more suitable for civilian use. But it will still be a jeep.

Sorensen has found 27 different farm jobs that it can do, from plowing to filling a silo; but he thinks it will be just as versatile off the farm. Sportsmen will use it, he thinks, for hunting and fishing trips; tourists, for towing house trailers; scientists and engineers, for field work; policemen, for patrol and riot cars; industrial and commercial plants, for deliveries. In fact, he has listed more than a hundred different uses to which he expects it to be put, from fire fighting to plowing snow.

I asked him whether he thought my teen-age youngsters would want one to bat around in.

"You just ask them," he said. "They'll tell you."

I did, and they did. They think a New Day is dawning, and that Charles E. Sorensen is its prophet.

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The jeep is fine for fishing trips



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